2021 USCHA Moved to Virtual Format Due to COVID Spread

The U.S. Conference on HIV/AIDS has been rescheduled to December 2nd and 3rd.

August 10, 2021 By Paul Kawata

This is the letter I didn't want to write. When we announced the 2021 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS was going to be in person, I was joyous about the thought that we could come together. Unfortunately, the Delta variant of COVID is too easily transmitted, even by people who are fully vaccinated. What seemed like a reasonable decision in May now feels impossible. After a long discussion with our board, NMAC will move USCHA to the virtual space. I am so sorry. I know this is very disappointing. NMAC must always prioritize the health and well-being of people living with HIV (PLWHIV). Data from Berlin about the impact of COVID on people living with HIV along with new information about the Delta variant made an in-person meeting with thousands of participants too much of a risk.

The virtual USCHA will be pushed back to December 2-3 (World AIDS Day Adjacent). These later dates give staff time to close-out and pivot to a virtual meeting. Also, the Biden-Harris Plan to End the HIV Epidemic is slated to be released on World AIDS Day, so there is much to be discussed.

I'm sure you have a lot of questions. Join us for a Facebook Live chat this Thursday, Aug. 12, at 1:00 PM on our Facebook page. Our Conferences Director Tara Barnes-Darby, and our Treatment Director Moises Agosto will be available to answer questions. You can also check out the FAQ page on the USCHA website.

This decision was based on data from two key reports. The first was the report out of Provincetown that revealed that vaccinated people can transmit the Delta variant as easily as those who are not vaccinated. The second was the study of people living with HIV over 65 in Berlin that found high risk of death from Covid. Those two reports convinced us that we could not guarantee the safety of conference attendees.

Dr. Anthony Fauci will be part of USCHA's Opening Virtual plenary. He will join Dr. Rachel Levine to update our movement on efforts to end two epidemics. We all know how busy COVID is keeping him, so NMAC is extremely grateful that he will be part of this session. Given his busy schedule, it will be recorded in advance. It is not easy being the face of the Trump and Biden COVID response. He has shown a grace and grit that he learned fighting HIV/AIDS.

As you can imagine, ending an in-person conference creates financial issues. Our cancelation

insurance does not cover meetings that we cancel. NMAC will be fine in the long haul, but we ask for your grace and patience. We hope that most attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors will still be a part of the virtual meeting. This is the second year that we were unable to hold USCHA and your support is needed and appreciated. The agency also understands this is not the event that we all wanted, so we will give refunds.

During the week of August 9, NMAC will send out an email from the registration portal to all registrants with instructions on transferring or cancelling your registration. If you have not received your email by August 13, contact the Conferences division at conferences@nmac.org. Please be patient; refunds will be processed in 3-4 weeks.

The registration fee for the virtual USCHA is $295. NMAC will automatically refund the difference. If you do not wish to attend this year's USCHA, you can either:

- Option 1: Keep your registration to attend the virtual USCHA Conference. NMAC will refund the difference.
- Option 2: Transfer your registration to the 2022 USCHA in Puerto Rico.
- Option 3: Cancel your registration and get a full refund.
- Option 4: Donate your registration payment to NMAC.

If you need immediate assistance, please contact the Conferences Department at conferences@nmac.org. Raise any concerns directly with me, Paul Kawata. I am an old Asian queen who knows my value.

This is not the USCHA that was discussed. NMAC hopes Sponsors will continue to support this important meeting and NMAC. These are scary times for all nonprofits, so please know how much we appreciate and need your support. Sponsors will get a call from Robert York. A new prospectus will be available soon. Thank you for understanding as we navigate these challenges.

If you purchased an exhibit booth for the in-person conference, please let us know if you'd like to have a virtual exhibit or if you'd like to cancel your booth purchase. The virtual exhibit fee is $595. NMAC will refund the difference. If you'd like a full refund, then send an email to conferences@nmac.org by September 24, 2021. Thank you for your support.

Information about the virtual meeting will be posted shortly. We hope that most of the in-person workshop presenters are willing to switch to virtual. Presenters will get an email from Conferences offering you options for moving forward. You can expect the email by the end of August. If you can't wait, then please email the wonderful Alison McKeithen.

USCHA will continue to give out scholarships, but now they will be for a virtual and not an in-person meeting. Since staff must address these other issues and the virtual meeting is being pushed back to World AIDS Day Adjacent, notifications about 2021 scholarships will be pushed

back to October 1, 2021.

If you have made a reservation in the USCHA group block at the Marriott Marquis hotel they will automatically cancel your reservation and process refunds for any deposits. Refunds will be issued in 4-6 weeks. It is not necessary to contact the hotel to cancel your reservation.

If you made a reservation OUTSIDE of the USCHA group block, you should contact the hotel directly to cancel your reservation.

Additional information about cancellations for the Courtyard hotel will be posted soon.

This was not an easy decision and probably no one is more disappointed than the board and staff of NMAC. I am truly sorry. Thank you for your continued support.

God is Love and Love is for Everyone,
Paul Kawata

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