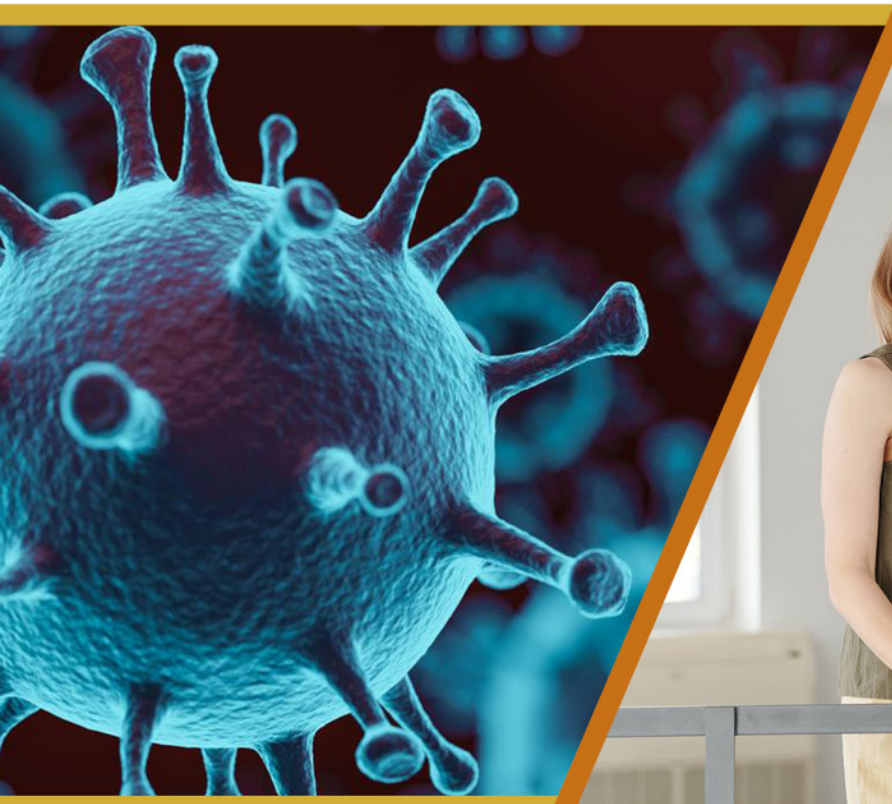
basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA







STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

for teachers, non-teaching staff and learners on the coronavirus (2019-ncov) or covid-19 outbreak in South Africa

Read to Lead
A Reading Nation is a Leading Nation

2030 NDP

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR THE PREVENTION, CONTAINMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

CONTENTS

1. **PREAMBLE** 4
2. **PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT** 5
3. **OBJECTIVES** 5
4. **TARGET AUDIENCE** 5
5. **PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS ON THE PREVENTION OF THE SPREAD OF COVID-19** 6

5.1. The role of schools in responding to COVID-19 6

5.1.1. Steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school 7

5.2. Roles and responsibilities of the School Magement Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB) and staff 9

5.2.1. Access control for parents and third parties 10

5.2.2. Screening for COVID-19 10

5.2.3. Learner hygiene 11

5.2.4. Food preparation and serving 11

5.2.5. Social distancing 12

5.3. Management of COVID-19 cases in a school 12

5.3.1. Action to be taken when a child or learner appears ill or displays symptoms associated with COVID-19 12

5.4. Action to be taken when a case of COVID-19 is confirmed 13

5.4.1. Action to be taken when a child/learner may have been exposed to a suspected/probable case of COVID-19, or a suspected case for whom testing for COVID19 is inconclusive as reported by the laboratory 13

5.4.2. Action to be taken when a child/learner may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 14

5.5. Procedures for heads of department and supervisors on COVID-19 procedure regarding employees 14

5.5.1. An employee tested positive for COVID-19 15

5.5.2. An employee exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 16

5.5.3. An employee exposed to an unconfirmed case of COVID-19 16

5.5.4. An employee appears ill and reports for duty displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19 16

5.5.5. An employee refuses to report for duty citing fear of being infected with COVID-19 17

5.6. Management and monitoring of absenteeism 17

5.7. Learner transport 18

5.8. Management of school hostels 19

5.9. Closure of a childcare facility or school if an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 20

5.9.1. Considerations for keeping a school open after dismissal of learners 20

6. PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO LEARNERS, TEACHERS AND NON-TEACHING STAFF 21

6.1. What to do before schools reopen 21

6.2. What to do when schools reopen 22

6.4. What is the process to follow if a learner or staff member is identified with one or more of the above signs? 22

6.5. What are the whole-school activities to use? 22

6.6. Sources of psychological support 23

7. COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY 23

ACRONYMS

BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DEL	Department of Employment and Labour
DoH	Department of Health
DEL	Department of Employmnet and Labour
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DSD	Department of Social Development
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
HOD	Head of Department
NDoH	National Department of Health
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Diseases
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
PED(s)	Provincial Education Department(s)
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PUI	Person Under Investigation
SBST(s)	School-Based Support Team(s)
SMT(s)	School Management Team(s)
SOP(s)	Standard Operating Procedure(s)
WHO	World Health Organization

1. PREAMBLE

On 7 January, 2020, Chinese scientists confirmed a cluster of pneumonia cases that been identified in the city of Wuhan, in Hubei Province, China in December, 2019, were associated with a novel coronavirus. The virus has been named *SARS-CoV-2* and the disease it causes has been named *coronavirus disease 2019* or *COVID-19*.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) International Health Regulations Emergency Committee declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30 January, 2020 and South Africa activated its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) on 31 January, 2020.

South Africa 's first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on 5 March, 2020 by the Minister of Health, Dr Zwelini Mkhize. On 15 March, the first internal transmission of COVID-19 was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa, who declared a national state of disaster and a partial travel ban. President Ramaphosa announced travel advisories and discouraged the use public transport. School closures were mandated, and gatherings of more than 100 people were prohibited.

This was followed by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, designated under Section 3 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) ("the Act "), declaring a national state of disaster, published in Government Gazette No. 43096 on 15 March 2020, in terms of Section 27(2) of the Act, after consulting the relevant Cabinet members.

Following this declaration, the various organs of state, including the Department of Basic Education (DBE), instituted drastic measures to curb the spread of the virus. Schools closed on Wednesday, 18 March, 2020, in accordance with the pronouncement by the President on 15 March, 2020. This decision was informed by the warnings issued by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) and WHO, highlighting the increased number of infections in South Africa, particularly among people without a travel history, thus indicating local transmission of the virus. Schools have been identified high-risk areas, in terms of ease of transmission, due to the close contact of large numbers of people.

The DBE issued circulars providing containment/management guidelines for ordinary public and independent schools to all provincial education departments (PEDs), unions and school governing bodies (Circulars No 1 and 3 of 2020: Containment/management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities). After briefings with education stakeholders, Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, delivered media statements regarding the sector's response to the pandemic.

This standard operating procedure (SOP) for the prevention, containment and management of COVID-19 must be adhered to by all the administrators of schools in the basic education sector. This SOP must be read in conjunction with the key and relevant legislation, policies, guidelines and frameworks.

2. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The *Standard Operating Procedure for the Prevention, Containment and Management of COVID-19 in Schools and School Communities* provides guidelines for all administrators on the approved steps that must be taken to prevent the spread of, and manage cases of COVID-19 within the basic education sector.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the SOP are to:

- help administrators of primary and secondary schools (hereafter referred to as "schools") to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among learners, educators, support staff and officials;
- provide considerations for the isolation of suspected cases of COVID-19;
- help schools to understand the protocol to be followed should a case of COVID-19 be suspected or identified; and
- detail the procedures for the closure of schools due to COVID-19.

4. TARGET AUDIENCE

This SOP applies to:

- DBE and PEDs;

- National and provincial Departments of Health;
- National and provincial Departments of Social Development; and
- Any other partner involved in the provision of health, and other essential services in schools.

5. PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS ON THE PREVENTION OF THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Schools play an important role in the efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. Schools must therefore take steps to circulate information about the disease and its potential transmission within the school community. Schools must prepare to take the steps necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among their learners and staff, should health officials identify the need.

School plans should be designed to minimise the disruption of teaching and learning, and protect learners and staff from social stigma and discrimination. Plans can build on the recommended everyday practices (*the Golden Rules*): encouraging conscientious hand hygiene (frequent and thorough handwashing and avoidance of touching of the face and eyes), cough etiquette, staying at home when sick, and monitoring absenteeism and communicating routinely.

The DBE has developed guidelines for childcare facilities and schools, based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of COVID-19. The guidelines are available on the DBE website (www.education.gov.za), and will be updated as new information emerges. Please check the NICD website (www.nicd.ac.za) for updates on the approved guidelines.

5.1. The role of schools in responding to COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. There is no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19 at present. Thus, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19. Preventing transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy. Schools, working together with local health departments, play an important role in slowing the spread of diseases, to ensure that learners and educators have safe and healthy learning and working environments. More detailed information on COVID-19 is available on the following websites and sources:

- National Department of Health: http://www.health.gov.za
- National Institute for Communicable Diseases: https://www.nicd.ac.za
- National Institute for Occupational Health: http://www.nioh.ac.za
- World Health Organization: https://www.who.int
- Department of Basic Education: https://www.education.gov.za
- National Health Laboratory Service: https://www.nhls.ac.za
- COVID-19 Online Resource & News Portal: www.sacoronavirus.co.za
- NICD Toll-Free Emergency Hotline for COVID-19: 0800 029 999
- WhatsApp Support Line for COVID-19: Send HI to 0600 123 456

It is critical that schools **plan and prepare** to mitigate community transmission. As the global outbreak evolves, schools should prepare for the possibility of sporadic community-level outbreaks, as well as the possibility of stay-at-home or lockdown orders for learners, staff, whole classes or grades, or the entire school, if recommended by health officials. Decisions regarding appropriate public health interventions should always be made in consultation with public health officials who have access to all of the relevant latest information. These decisions include: a) whether learners or educators should stay at home for a period of time; and b) whether learners in sections of a school or the entire school should be dismissed from attendance.

5.1.1. Steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school

The education sector supports the national efforts to fight the spread of COVID-19 by providing knowledge regarding prevention, treatment, care and support of those who are infected among learners, educators, school support staff, parents and school communities. Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) must advise employees who show symptoms associated with COVID–19 not to come to work and to take paid sick leave in terms of section 22 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA). Similarly, schools must advise parents to keep their children at home if they are unwell. This can only be achieved through diligent adherence to the SOPs and meticulous monitoring that the directives are being adhered to.

Principals must take measures to:

- Ensure that learners and employees are screened when the schools reopen using the NDOH COVID-19 procedure and questionnaire. Learners and employees should report any of the following additional symptoms: body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness;
- Ensure that learners and employees are informed, trained and instructed as to the correct use of cloth masks; and
- Ensure that a risk assessment is conducted to identify categories of employees requiring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Those employees should be provided with the accredited PPE in accordance with Department of Health guidelines.

All learners, educators, support staff, officials, parents and communities should:

- heed the directives issued by the President and the guidance provided by the Ministry of Health wrt COVID-19;
- avoid gatherings as the disease is spread through direct contact with the respiratory droplets of an infected person, which are generated through coughing, sneezing or talking. Regulation 11B(8)(c) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, restricts attendees to a funeral or cremation to 50 people. All other gatherings are prohibited. As lockdown measures are revised, the Regulations regarding gatherings may be adapted;
- maintain a social distance of at least 1.5 to 2 meters with others, where possible. It is recommended that a phased approach to the arrival and departure of learners and employees should be followed to further limit social interaction. Staggering break times will prevent a concentration of learners in common areas;
- every learner, staff member and visitor must wear a cloth mask at all times.
- avoid direct contact with others e.g. shaking hands or hugging;
- frequently wash hands with water and soap. If water is not available, use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitiser. Resources should be available to all learners and staff to practice uninterrupted hygiene;
- avoid touching the face (i.e. eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands;
- consult a healthcare facility if there is a suspected COVID-19 infection;

- inform the education authorities **immediately** if a learner, educator, support staff or parent/caregiver has been in direct contact with an infected person, or if they are diagnosed with COVID-19; and
- eradicate all forms of stigma and discrimination as a result of COVID-19.

5.2. Roles and responsibilities of the School Magement Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB) and staff

SMT, SGB and staff members must:

- stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources and share this information with all stakeholders;
- establish a COVID-19 committee in the school;
- place signs or posters encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices;
- prepare and maintain handwashing stations with soap and water within 5meters of toilets and bathrooms;
- Place 60% alcohol-based hand sanitisers in each classroom, at entrances and exits, at the reception/front office and near lunchrooms;
- Implement an education programme for learners and staff on COVID-19 using the Life Orientation/ Life Skills subject as an anchor;

NOTE: The education programme should explain what it is, the symptoms, how it is spread, how to prevent spreading it and emphasise the importance of when, why and how to wash hands correctly and to discourage all forms of stigma and discrimination.

- ensure that cleaning staff clean and disinfect school buildings thoroughly and regularly, following the ***DBE Guidelines on Maintaining Hygiene in Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic*** and environmental health cleaning and decontamination protocols;

NOTE: Classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities are to be cleaned at least once a day (preferably twice). Surfaces that are touched frequently by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids, etc.) must be cleaned more frequently.

- ensure that trash is removed daily and disposed of safely; and
- ensure that the school principal procures and has available sufficient quantities of hand sanitisers, soap and disposable drying material for all classrooms, toilets, offices and staffrooms.

5.2.1. Access control for parents and third parties

The SMT and SGB must ensure that:

- entry by visitors, parents, and vendors is prohibited unless it is essential;
- strict access control measures are established and adhered to, including the signing of a register by all visitors. Visitors, parents and vendors should not be allowed on school premises unless essential. See also the ***DBE Guidelines for Schools on Maintaining Hygiene during COVID-19;***
- all visitors must wear a face mask and sanitise their hands at the entry point;
- all visitors must report to the reception area;
- all visitors, except government officials, to make an appointment and state the nature of their visit ;
- there is regular communication with parents via newsletters, telephone, bulk SMS messages, emails, etc. to minimise meetings/gatherings with parents; and
- there are very limited class-based parents meetings.

NOTE: If it is necessary to meet parents, meetings must be limited to one parent per learner and maintain the social distance of at least two metres respecting the social gathering restrictions.

5.2.2. Screening for COVID-19

Below is an example of a screening questionnaire from the DOH, depicting the type of questions that may be asked

Screening procedure		
Question	**Yes**	**No**
Do you have a high temperature?		
Do you have a cough?		
Do you have a sore throat		
Do you have difficulty breathing (shortness of breath)		
Do you feel weak and tired today?		
Can you taste food and drinks normally?		
Can you smell normally?		

If the answer to all the questions is “No”, the session can end and the learner/employee permitted to enter the school for a temperature check.

NB. If the temperature taken is higher than 38^0C or any one of the questions are answered “Yes”, the learner/employee will become a “person under investigation” (PUI) and must be isolated and referred for testing.

	In the past 14 days have you:
HIGH RISK	Travelled outside of South Africa to a country with lots of coronavirus, or worked somewhere where there are a lot of international travellers
	Travelled within South Africa to an area with local transmissions: Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Free state, Eastern Cape
	Had close contact with someone who is suspected to have COVID-19 or has been diagnosed positive with COVID-19
	Attended/Visited/Worked at a healthcare facility that has treated patients with COVID-19

If an employee, learner or visitor answers "Yes" to one or more of the questions in the above table over the past 14 days, they are at high risk of COVID-19 infection and the necessary precautions should be instituted immediately for screening.

5.2.3. Learner hygiene

Learners should be encouraged to:

- wash their hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- keep their nails and teeth clean;
- refrain from touching their eyes, mouth and face;
- not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others;
- sneeze or cough into a bent elbow or tissue, and to discard the tissue safely in a bin with a lid, then wash their hands immediately;
- refrain from teasing anyone about being sick;
- share what they learn about preventing disease with their family, friends, and siblings; and
- tell their teacher or parents, if they feel sick, and to stay at home.

5.2.4. Food preparation and serving

Transmission of COVID -19 through food can occur if a person infected with the virus prepares or handles food with dirty hands and contaminates it. Cooking food thoroughly and observing good hygiene practices when handling and preparing food are effective at preventing contamination. Food handlers must:

- wash their hands with soap and water before and after touching any food during preparation;
- wash their hands with soap and water before serving food to learners;
- clean and sanitise all work surfaces (i.e. tables, stoves and other resources) sinks and floors regularly;

- keep all appliances clean;
- wear clean kitchen attire at all times;
- wear head gear and masks to cover their mouths and noses;
- wear closed shoes to protect feet;
- ensure proper food storage practices;
- rinse all foodstuffs thoroughly before cooking;and also fruit before serving to learners;
- cook food thoroughly; and
- ensure that learners do not share utensils, food or drinks.

5.2.5. Social distancing

- Schools should work on the practicality of implementing social distancing per class to apply the 1.5m social distance norm, wherever practicable. Consequently the number of learners per classroom must be reduced, where possible.
- Practising thorough hygiene, the continuous use of cloth masks, symptomatic screening and enforcing practical social distancing for all learners and teachers will be the most effective way of curbing transmission of COVID-19 at schools.
- Schools or school halls should not be utilised for funerals or any other public gatherings to minimise contamination of school facilities and to observe the social gathering restrictions.
- Schools must identify an isolation room for suspected cases and persons under investigation by the local health authorities.

5.3. Management of COVID-19 cases in a school

Extra precautions should be taken with learners and staff with pre-existing medical conditions, or staff over the age of 60 years with one or more chronic illnesses, as they are at higher risk for a serious COVID-19 illness. It is advisable that such learners and staff should be allowed to work from home, where possible.

5.3.1. Action to be taken when a child or learner <u>appears ill</u> or <u>displays symptoms</u> associated with COVID-19

When a child/learner appears to be sick or displays symptoms of COVID-19, such as dry cough, high fever, respiratory distress or shortness of breath, or report a sore throat, the procedure below must be followed:

a) **Isolate** the learner and keep them separate from other learners and staff until they can be assessed by a health professional.
b) Provide the learner with a **face mask** if they don't already have one on.
c) **The parents or guardians of the child/learner must be informed immediately.**
d) Call the school nurse or the facility manager of the nearest health facility, the NICD toll- free emergency hotline for COVID-19 (0800 029 999) or the provincial officials whose details are listed in the DBE Circular 1 of 2020.
e) The school will be advised on any further actions to be taken.

5.4. Action to be taken when a case of COVID-19 is <u>confirmed</u>

- The school will be contacted by the relevant public health officials to discuss the case, to identify people who have been in contact with the infected person and advise on any further actions or precautions that should be taken.
- If a school has not been contacted regarding a possible case of COVID-19 in the school, the administrators must contact the relevant provincial official whose details are listed in the DBE Circular 1 of 2020 or the NICD toll-free emergency hotline for COVID-19 on 0800 029 999 for referral to the relevant contact.
- Public health officials, with the assistance of relevant staff, will conduct a risk-assessment and give recommendations on the management of children/learners and staff.
- In most cases, closure of the school will not be necessary. The decision to close will be school- and context-specific, and must follow the procedure in Section 5.9 below.

5.4.1. Action to be taken when a child/learner may have been exposed to a suspected/probable case of COVID-19, or a suspected case for whom testing for COVID19 is inconclusive as reported by the laboratory

- If a child/learner has been in contact with a **suspected** case of COVID-19 in a school, no restrictions or special control measures are required until the laboratory test results for COVID-19 have been received.
- There is no need to close the institution or send other children/learners or staff home.

5.4.2. Action to be taken when a child/learner may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19

- All close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case are required to **quarantine in their homes for 14 days** while being monitored for symptoms. They may not attend school.
- Learners who are not contacts of a confirmed case should attend school. Family and friends who have not had close contact with the confirmed case do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities such as reporting to school or work, unless they begin to develop symptoms.
- Learners who have interacted with a healthy contact of a confirmed case, specifically, should not be excluded from school. A person who comes into contact with the healthy contact of a confirmed case, is unlikely to result in transmission.
- All case contacts who become symptomatic will be immediately tested by health authorities for COVID-19 and if they test positive for COVID-19, active contact tracing and self-quarantine of all contacts will be implemented.

NB. *Keeping learners at home or closing schools is a serious decision which may restrict the learners' ability to acquire education, amongst other considerations. The decision to direct learners to stay at home, because of possible exposure to, or infection with COVID-19 should be justified by the available scientific evidence and must be directed by the accountable health authorities.*

5.5. Procedures for heads of department and supervisors on COVID-19 procedure regarding employees

The public service is the largest employer in the country and has the legal obligation in accordance with Section 8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, (OHSA), 1993, as amended to, where reasonably practicable, provide and maintain a safe, healthy work environment that is without risk to employees.

Regulation 53 of the OHSA provides that a head of department (HOD) shall establish and maintain a safe and healthy work environment for employees of the department and a safe and healthy service delivery environment for members of the public.

Given its ability to spread rapidly, the management of confirmed and suspected COVID-19 cases is of paramount importance. In this regard, guidance is provided to HODs for the following scenarios. The following steps must be observed as the minimum in any case.

5.5.1. An employee tested positive for COVID-19

- The relevant public health officials will discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with the patient, and advise on any action or precautions that should be taken.
- The HOD should formally grant approval for sick leave, in accordance with the *Determination and Directive on Leave of Absence in the Public Service,* or incapacity leave and ill-health retirement processes, if the employee has exhausted their normal sick leave.
- An assessment will be undertaken by the public health officials and advice on the management of pupils or learners and staff will be based on this assessment.
- A risk assessment will be undertaken by the educational establishment, advised by the public health officials.
- The HOD should formally grant approval for all employees who worked closely with the infected employee to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days, in accordance with *Public Service Regulation 51* of the *Public Service Regulations, 2016*, to ensure that the infection does not spread. This must be done in consultation with the relevant DoH authority.
- A list of these employees must be kept and submitted to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and contact must be maintained with such employees as a means of monitoring and support.
- Reports of cases of COVID-19 and those who are in quarantine must be submitted to the DPSA, in the required format, via the dedicated email address: COVID-19@dpsa.gov.za
- Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the infected person's workspace must be conducted.
- If an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and isolated in accordance with the Department of Health Guidelines, an employer may only allow an employee to return to work on the condition that they have undergone a medical evaluation confirming that the employee has been tested negative for COVID-19.

5.5.2. An employee exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19

- In terms of the NDoH's guidelines, all employees who were in contact with the infected person are required to self-quarantine at home for a period of 14 days or for a duration as prescribed by the DoH while being monitored for symptoms.
- The HOD should formally grant approval for all employees who worked closely with the infected employee to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days, or as prescribed by the DoH, in accordance with *Public Service Regulation 51* of the Public Service Regulations, 2016, to ensure that the infection does not spread. This must be done in consultation with the relevant authorities. Such employees can be requested to work remotely.
- The HOD must ensure that all the workspace(s) of those exposed are cleaned and disinfected thoroughly.
- Contact must be maintained with employees in quarantine as a means of monitoring and support.
- All cases of those exposed must be reported to the DPSA, in the required format, via the dedicated email address: COVID-19@dpsa.gov.za.

5.5.3. An employee exposed to an unconfirmed case of COVID-19

- If an employee has been in contact with a person who is a suspected case but has not yet received a positive result for the COVID-19 test, the HOD will decide whether restrictions or special control measures are necessary. The HOD's decision will be guided by NDoH, Legal Services and Human Resources.
- Once the results are known, NDoH protocols must be implemented, if applicable.
- All cases must be reported to the DPSA, in the required format, via the dedicated email address: COVID-19@dpsa.gov.za

5.5.4. An employee appears ill and reports for duty displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19

- If an employee presents with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 such as a fever, respiratory distress and a dry cough, they must be advised to contact the NICD toll-free emergency hotline for COVID-19 on 0800 029 999, consult a medical professional and follow the NDoH protocol for COVID-19.

- The employee should be temporarily isolated in the school sickbay or a room identified for temporary isolation, while arrangements are made for them to be transported to a medical facility. They should be provided a face mask to wear.
- Any further action must be taken once there is a diagnosis confirmed by a medical professional.
- All cases must be reported to the DPSA, in the required format, via the dedicated email address: COVID-19@dpsa.gov.za
- Employees must be encouraged to seek medical attention if they display flu-like symptoms and to not report for duty.

5.5.5. An employee refuses to report for duty citing fear of being infected with COVID-19

- The employment relationship is the legal link between employers and employees and stipulates that a person will perform work or a service under certain conditions in return for remuneration.
- The onus is on the employee to demonstrate that the workplace poses a risk and is an unsafe space where transmission of the virus is possible and likely.
- Refusal to report for duty, contrary to the instructions of the supervisor or HOD, amounts to an unlawful absence which must be dealt with in terms of the *Disciplinary Code*.

5.6. Management and monitoring of absenteeism

School administrators must manage and monitor absenteeism by:

- reviewing attendance and sick leave policies;
- encouraging learners and all staff (educators and support staff) to stay at home when they are sick;
- remaining flexible, when possible, to allow staff to stay at home to care for sick family members;
- discouraging the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives as these may encourage learners and staff to come to school while sick;
- identifying critical job functions and positions, and planning for cross-training staff to stand in; and

- determining what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning, and make the necessary plans to mitigate this.

5.7. Learner transport[1]

5.7.1. Loading capacity of learner transport: Regulation 11C as amended

The Department of Transport is responsible for all legislation, regulations, licencing and enforcement thereof, of all matters of transport including vehicles transporting learners to school and back. All commuter transport services including passenger bus services, taxi services, and private cars transporting learners to school must adhere to the regulations issued in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act no 57 of 2002), and the amendments thereto, as well as all the directives set out in the schedule to address and contain the spread of COVID-19 according to the lock-down level provided that**:**

a) bus services, taxi services and e-hailing services and private vehicles shall not carry more than the licensed capacity; and
b) all directives regarding hygienic conditions and the limitation of exposure to COVID -19 are adhered to.

5.7.2. **Provision of improved access and hygiene, disinfection control in learner transport**

In terms of the *Measures to Prevent and Combat the Spread of COVID-19 in the Public Transport Services*, published through General Notice No. 412 of 26 March, 2020 in Government Gazette No 43157, all operators of learner transport facilities must, at regular intervals, provide adequate sanitisers or other hygiene dispenser for handwashing and disinfection equipment for learners and drivers.

5.7.3. Embarkation of learners in the vehicles

- All operators must ensure that public transport vehicles are cleaned and disinfected before picking up and after dropping off learners.
- Operators must ensure that all learner transport vehicles' door and window handles, armrests and handrails are cleaned/wiped with a disinfectant before picking up and after dropping off learners.
- Operators must ensure that all learner transport vehicles are clean and tidy.

[1] Also refer to the *DBE Guidelines for Schools on Maintaining Hygiene during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

- All drivers and passengers (learners) must wear a mask.
- Hand sanitisers with a minimum of 60% alcohol content must be available in the vehicle at all times.
- Transport coordinators must ensure that learners sanitise their hands before getting into the vehicle.
- Vehicles should be monitored for compliance by departmental officials.

5.8. Management of school hostels

School hostels must apply all the rules and regulations concerning COVID 19 applicable to schools as stipulated under 5 above. Extra caution should be taken with regard to social distancing and hygiene practices in particular, as the hostel environment has a number of learners and employees living in an intimate setting.

The following applies to school boarding/ hostel facilities:

- Schools must have infra-red thermometers for easy screening of all hostel learners and staff;
- Hostel staff including house fathers and mothers must be trained on COVID19;
- Sanitizers or/and running water with soap must be available in all hostel entrances and exits, dining halls and study rooms for hand washing;
- Learners and teachers must observe physical distancing of 1.5 – 2 metres where possible, including between their beds;
- Learners must bath daily with warm water and soap and wear shoes to bathrooms;
- Cleaning staff must regularly disinfect and sanitize surfaces in all areas: hostel rooms, doors, walls, bathrooms, passages, dining halls, kitchens and study rooms;
- Libraries can only be used under strict supervision, with wearing of masks and a limited number of persons, to allow the recommended physical distancing;
- All visits to other boarders' rooms are prohibited;
- No sharing of beds, utensils inclusive of plates, cups, squeeze bottles, etc. is allowed;
- All support staff members must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when on duty;
- Preparation of meals should be under strict adherence to health and hygiene rules;
- Meat and eggs must be well cooked;

- Dining should be conducted under supervision to ensure that the recommended physical distancing is observed;
- A learner, teacher or hostel staff not feeling well should immediately be isolated and health services immediately informed; and
- Everyone in the hostel must wear a mask.

5.9. Closure of a school if an employee has tested positive for COVID-19

Preparing for the possible closure of a school should only be considered following recommendations from the accountable public health official**.** Temporarily closing a school is a possible strategy to prevent or slow the continued spread of COVID-19 in the school community. School administrators are not expected to make decisions about dismissals or closure of schools and must follow the Departmental procedures in this regard. Schools must seek guidance from local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps. Large event cancellations or school dismissals may be recommended for 14 days, or possibly longer, if advised by local health officials, the Provincial Head of Department, and the DBE. The nature of these actions (i.e. the scope and duration) may change as the local situation evolves.

5.9.1. Considerations for keeping a school open after dismissal of learners

During school dismissals, schools may stay open for staff members (unless they are ill) while learners stay home. Keeping facilities open will allow educators to develop and deliver lessons and have access to teaching resources and materials remotely, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning. Furthermore, it will allow other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts.

If schools are dismissed, school administrators should discourage learners and staff from gathering or socialising anywhere e.g. meeting at a friend's house, a restaurant, or a local shopping mall. An important consideration is how to ensure the **continuity of education**. During school dismissal schools should:

a) review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching and learning;
b) implement e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options, if feasible and appropriate;

c) determine, in consultation with district officials, if necessary:
   - how to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and how to train educators to do so;
   - how to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff;
   - how to encourage appropriate adult supervision while learners are using distance learning approaches; and
   - how to deal with the potential lack of learners' access to computers and the internet at home.

d) consolidate a list of suitable resources available via radio, television and other media platforms where learners and parents can access education content to help facilitate remote learning;

e) consider ways to distribute food to learners that benefit from the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP); and

f) design strategies to avoid transmission in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd, if there is community spread of COVID-19, e.g. "grab-and-go" packed lunches or grocery pack distribution.

6. PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO LEARNERS, TEACHERS AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

The World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that a major pandemic entails a psychosocial disturbance that may exceed the affected population's capacity to manage. The COVID-19 pandemic is such a state. The most common reactions include anxiety, distress and depression. These reactions may result from a fear of contracting the illness, the ability to recover from the illness or even experiencing the death of family members, colleagues or classmates. Learners, educators and school management have a responsibility to care for themselves and each other.

NB: In cases of extreme distress or emergency, the regular procedures detailed in the SIAS Policy are by-passed and an appropriate emergency protocol is followed.

6.1. What to do before schools reopen

Schools must identify organisations, stakeholders and partners in the community or district that can provide additional social, emotional and psychological support.

6.2. What to do when schools reopen

Brief the school-based support teams (SBSTs) and educators on the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on learners and adults. Provide information (as below) about how to identify when someone needs help. This process must be followed each time a new grade of learners returns to school.

6.3. How to identify when someone needs help

One or more of the following signs may be present:

- persistent fear, worry and anxiety;
- persistent sadness, hopelessness and other overwhelming emotions;
- withdrawal from others (This is not to be confused with the *social distancing* prescribed by the DoH.);
- loss of interest in personal appearance and unusual lack of energy;
- expression of rage or anger;
- missing work or classes; and
- use of, or increased use of drugs or alcohol.

6.4. What is the process to follow if a learner or staff member is identified with one or more of the above signs?

- **A learner is identified:** The class teacher can speak with the learner to determine whether they (the teacher) is able to provide emotional or other support. They may refer the learner to the SBST for basic counselling or referral to specialised services.
- **An educator or non-teaching staff is identified:** The SMT can determine what kind of support is required and either provide the support, or a referral to specialised services.

6.5. What are the whole-school activities to use?

- Talk to each class about the emotional effects of COVID-19.

- Teach each class about identifying and interpreting emotions: how to handle or react to fear or anxiety; how to identify the signs of depression; and to inform a teacher when they identify a classmate or friend that is experiencing any of the above.
- Teach and encourage positive self-talk.
- Provide counselling for the school and at-risk groups.
- Refer those that need specialised services.

6.6. Sources of psychological support

In addition to health professionals, the Employee Health and Wellness Programme in Provincial Education Departments should be contacted for psychological support. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) offers free remote counselling (**SADAG helpline 0800567567** or send a **SMS** to **31393)**. Other contact details for support services are listed below, and should be shared with all learners:



7. COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

It is important that school communities are made aware of the basic health and safety precautions as mentioned throughout this standard operating procedure (SOP). The SOP must be implemented

immediately within all South African schools and applies to all entities and individuals that may enter school premises.

Schools should devise strategies for sharing information with staff, learners, and their families in ways that are simple, easy-to-understand and age-appropriate. Appropriate signage and posters must be displayed throughout the school premises. The websites of the national and provincial education and health departments, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) (www.nicd.ac.za) and World Health Organization (WHO) (www.who.int) all have useful information, fact sheets and posters for download in various languages.

Provincial education departments are obliged to ensure compliance to the SOP as well as to secure adequate resources to protect the health of school communities. Below are important contact details in the health department:

Provincial Communicable Disease Control Directorate			
Eastern Cape	Thomas Dlamini Nosimphiwo Mgobo	thomas.dlamini@echealth.gov.za nosiphiwo.mgobo@echealth.gov.za	083 378 0189 060 579 9027
Free State	Dikeledi Baleni Babsy Nyokong	balenid@fshealth.gov.za nyokongb@fshealth.gov.za	083 757 8217 082 463 7499
Gauteng	Chika Asomugha Caroline Kesebilwe	chika.asomugha@gauteng.gov.za caroline.kesebilwe@gauteng.gov.za	082 330 1490 083 490 8165
KwaZulu-Natal	Premi Govender	premi.govender@kznhealth.gov.za	071 609 2505
Limpopo	Marlene Freda Ngobeni Mashudu P. Mudau	marlene.ngobeni@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za prudance.mudau@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za	079 491 1909 071 678 3864
Mpumalanga	Mandla Zwane Hluphi Mpangane	mandlazw@mpuhealth.gov.za hluphim@mpuhealth.gov.za	082 229 8893 076 522 8511 / 013 766 3411
North West	Chriseldah Lebeko	clebeko@nwpg.gov.za	082 421 7985
Northern Cape	Gloria Hottie	hottieg@webmail.co.za	072 391 3345 / 053 830 0529
Western Cape	Charlene Jacobs	charlene.jacobs@westerncape.gov.za	072 356 5146 / 021 483 9964
Port Health and Environmental Health			
Central Region (Gauteng, Free State, Northern Cape)	Funeka Bongweni	funeka.bongweni@health.gov.za	012 395 9728 060 993 0107
Northern Region (Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West)	Ockert Jacobs	ockert.jacobs@health.gov.za	012 395 9417 082 372 0556
Coastal Region (KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Western Cape)	Antoinette Hargreaves	antoinette.hargreaves@health.gov.za	031 301 0381 083 460 0935