



OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

To: Chief Directors
Directors
Centre Managers
All Staff

DEPARTMENTAL COVID-19 CIRCULAR 1 OF 2021: SECOND WAVE – ADJUSTED ALERT LEVEL 3

1. In his address to the nation on 28 December 2020, the Honourable President, His Excellence Cyril Ramaphosa, announced that the country would be placed on an adjusted level 3 with effect from midnight on 28 December 2020. The adjusted alert level 3 lockdown came into effect nationally from 00H01 on 29 December 2020, and was necessitated by the latest statistics that showed that the number of people infected with Corona virus passed one million mark, with over twenty eight thousand people who succumbed to the pandemic.
2. Pursuant to the announcement by the Honourable President, the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) on 29 December 2020 gazetted regulations in terms of Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 to give effect to the Adjusted Level 3 lockdown. In terms of mandatory protocols outlined in paragraph 34 (8): an employer must, adopt measures to promote physical distancing of employees, including –
 - enabling employees to work from home or minimising the need for employees to be physically present at the workplace;
 - the provision for adequate space;
 - restrictions on face to face meetings;
 - special measures for employees with known or disclosed health issues or comorbidities, or with any condition which may place such employees at a higher risk of complications or death if they are infected with COVID-19; and
 - special measures for employees above the age of 60 who are at a higher risk of complications or death if they are infected with COVID-19.
3. The Director General of the Free State Provincial Government has directed that all employees who were to report for duty for the week of the 4th-8th January 2021, should work from home, except Senior Managers and Managers in various Departments. In paragraph 6 of the circular, essential workers are excluded. Departmentally essential workers include Senior Managers, Physical Security staff, cleaning staff responsible for cleaning protocols as well as line function staff based at the departmental institutions.

4. This circular serves to inform staff members of the Department of Social Development about the protocols to be followed in the application of the Adjusted Level 3:

4.1 WORKPLACE PREPAREDNESS

The following measures have been put in place by the Department to ensure that the workplace is ready for the return to work in line with the regulations referred to in paragraph 2, above.

- All employees are expected to wear face cloth masks or any other item appropriate to cover nose and mouth, when entering the building and throughout the working day.
- Employees shall continue to observe social distancing at all times, including those sharing or in open plan offices.
- All employees are encouraged to use the sanitizers made available throughout the different parts of the workspace.
- Managers are expected to take responsibility in monitoring rotation of their respective staff in accordance with the rotational plan of each office.

4.2 SECURITY AND ACCESS CONTROL

- Access control, screening and use of elevators.
- For access control, employees must complete the attendance registers, on-line screening tool (or manual screening) on a daily basis.
- Security officers will also complete and keep registers for all visitors and non-employees. Security officers have undergone training to screen, sanitize, online screening and ensure that all persons entering our buildings are wearing masks.
- **Please note that security will only allow visitors and non-employees who made appointments to enter the departmental buildings.**
- **Staff from Districts/Institutions will not access the Provincial Office without necessary referral letters signed by their supervisors, and referral letters must specify the reason for visit to the Provincial Office. This must be produced at the security.**

4.3 SANITISING OF THE WORKPLACE AND THE PROVISIONING OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (MASKS, GLOVES AND SANITIZERS)

- The department during the first COVID-19 wave procured sufficient PPE and all staff have been issued with two cloth face masks as required by the Regulations issued by the Minister of Employment and Labour.
- Government buildings are sanitised as per the requirements and approved Occupational Health and Safety Protocols.
- Sufficient PPE is available for the remainder of the financial year 2020/2021 for both existing employees and new appointees.

- In order to ensure that sufficient health and safety / including special occupation specific PPE requirements are consistently available it is expected of all users to timeously provide SCM with their health and safety /PPE needs.
- The department has installed a foot operator/electronic sanitiser at the buildings.
- Staff are expected to regularly sanitise throughout the working hours.

4.4 SCREENING

- Employees will be screened before work commences each day to check their temperature. The employees who display abnormal temperatures will not be allowed to enter the premises. Staff who become unwell will be directed to isolation rooms for further advice.
- Employees who show COVID-19 symptoms to be subjected to further screening, test and assessment as required by the Department of Health.
- Workplace protocol including the surveillance of the disease and prevention of the spread of infections are implemented.
- All visitors will be screened and those that display abnormal temperatures will be denied entry to our buildings.
- Work permits signed by the relevant Directors will be issued to employees that will require to render an emergency service between **21:00 and 06:00** e.g. those on standby.

4.5 EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

- Employee Health and Wellness unit will assist employees with the provision of psycho-social support and contract tracing for all employees and family members for those employees showing symptoms of COVID-19, in line with National Department of Health (NDoH) guidelines.
- Wellness unit will also be instrumental in immediately dealing with confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff by adhering to guidelines as outlined by the NDoH.
- In the event of any employee testing positive for COVID-19 in the work place the approved Occupational Health and Safety Protocols will immediately be instituted.
- Where a staff member contracts workplace acquired novel corona virus, these must immediately be reported to the Employee Wellness Unit. Staff are hereby assured that Confidentiality will be maintained relating to all relevant documentation submitted in respect of vulnerable employees.
- A dedicated email address has been established departmentally under the control of the Employee Health and Wellness. Senior managers/Institutional Heads are required to utilize this email on regular basis. Details of the email are as follows:
covid-19.dsd@fscocdev.gov.za

4.6 SOCIAL DISTANCING

Employees must observe social distancing at all times, especially those sharing offices.

- No hugging or hand –shaking is allowed. Employees are also discouraged from sharing food or eating together as this may pose a risk for the spread of the virus.
- Direct contact is only allowed if an operational requirement dictates such.
- Cloth masks to be worn by all employees at all times.
- Meetings, as far as possible, will be conducted through electronic means. Where face-to face meetings are unavoidable such meetings should be held subject to hygiene, physical and social distancing and adequate space parameters as prescribed for containment of COVID-19.
- Where absolutely necessary, visits to the workplace by non-employees must be by prior arrangement. This excludes service recipients at service delivery points.
- Staff are expected to remain in their office and limit contact to work related matters.
- Staff if at all possible should avoid the lifts and utilise the stairs when moving between floors.
- A maximum of 2 employees per lift is permissible.

4.7 FACE MASKS

- All staff **shall wear a face mask at all material times**. Wearing of a face mask is compulsory for every person. A person who does not wear a face mask covering over the nose and mouth at work and in a public place will be committing an offence.
- A person who does not wear a mask could be arrested and prosecuted. On conviction, they will be liable to a fine or to imprisonment or to both a fine and imprisonment.
- Departmentally any employee that does not wear a face mask shall be subjected to the disciplinary code and procedure.

5. PHASED IN RETURN TO WORK

- The phased in return to work for staff of the Department of Social Development will be as follows:

Category	Date	Comment
Senior Managers and office support staff	04 January 2021	100% of SMS. Apply social distancing norms in respect of support staff
Deputy Directors and OSD equivalent with own office	11 January 2021	100%

Assistant Directors and OSD equivalent with own office	11 2021	January	100%
Other staff with own office	11 2021	January	100%
Staff that share offices	11 2021	January	50% of staff at all times, where social distancing is possible. If 3 employees occupy offices and social distancing allows two should be present at all material times. If not then one employee must be present at all times.
Other staff (with no office) not office bound	11 2021	January	In accordance with staff rotation plan of each directorate

- Staff currently on vacation leave will be required to only report upon completion of such. No request to amend such leave during this period will be considered unless operational requirements of the employer dictate such.

6. STAFF ROTATION/STAGGERING PLAN

- In accordance with the COVID-19 adjusted level 3 Regulations social distancing is a prerequisite.
- Circumstances now dictate an adjustment in the number of required staff in order to limit unnecessary contact.
- Employees will report for duty in line with the rotational plan of each component. This rotation plan must be submitted to the Employee Health and Wellness on a weekly basis.
- Employees that share offices / work space will report for work on a rotational basis as determined by the relevant Senior Manager.
- **Managers will identify the relevant individual employees to form part of the rotational groups whilst ensuring that all the functional areas of the unit are sufficiently catered for and represented in terms of capacity.**
- Managers are expected to take responsibility in monitoring rotation of their respective staff. Staff members **without comorbidities** should in a **staggered fashion** report for duty between **07:30 and 08:00** in the morning to avoid congestion at the entry/exit points and at lifts.
- **Members of staff who are 60 years and older as well as those with disclosed health issues on the vulnerable list of the department, which was completed during the previous alert levels, and who do not occupy a single office, must work from home.**
- These staff will only frequent the premises of the employer when operational requirements dictate such.

- For those members of staff with disclosed health conditions whom for reasons of the nature of their work cannot work from home, their respective managers must create an environment in the workplace which would be conducive for them to perform work without putting them at risk.
- Staff below 60 in the comorbidities category that are the single occupant of an office are required to render service at the office and implement safety measures within their environment. These staff members shall report for duty daily. **A concession in this category is that such staff members in a staggered fashion report for duty at 09:00 in the morning and leave from 15:00 onwards.** Times to be monitored by the Deputy Directors/Senior Manager.
- **Staff that refuse an instruction to report shall be subject to disciplinary procedures.**

7. Senior Managers/Managers are also reminded that the Department is required to submit weekly working schedules, and these must be submitted every Monday by 10H00 to Ms. Palesa Mphosi, Deputy Director: Employee Health and Wellness using email address Palesa.Mphosi@fssocdev.gov.za

8. Kindly feel free to contact the under mentioned staff for further information:

Name	Section	Phone	Email
Ms. NP Ntombela	Acting Chief Director: Corporate Services (COVID Compliance Officer)	066 486 7089	Nelisiwe.Ntombela@fssocdev.gov.za
Ms. Palesa Mphosi	Deputy Director: Employee Health and Wellness	062 896 6742	Palesa.Mphosi@fssocdev.gov.za
Mr. Freddy Finger	Director: Human Resources Management	072 954 3160	Freddy.Finger@fssocdev.gov.za
Mr. Phila Miya	Acting Director: Security Administration, Anti-Fraud and Corruption	083 707 0283	Phila.Miya@fssocdev.gov.za

9. Lastly, I encourage all staff members, as the President requested, to download the COVID-19 SA Mobile Alert app. preventing the spread of the virus within the department is in the hands of all employees, and remain the responsibility of all employees. In addition to the above,

Let's fight this pandemic COVID-19 together

Let's practice social distancing

Let's keep our workplace safe by practicing good hygiene

Let's regularly wash our hands with water and soap for at least 20 seconds

Let's stop handshaking – and use other noncontact methods of greeting

Let's create habits and reminders to avoid touching faces

Let's wear masks
Let's cover coughs and sneezes with our elbows
Let's increase ventilation by opening windows.

10. The co-operation of all employees in adherence to the content of this communication will be highly appreciated. It is the responsibility of senior managers/middle managers and supervisors to re-distribute this circular to the staff under their control.

Kind Regards



ADV. T.J. PHAHLO
ACTING HOD: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DATE: 9/01/2021