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சுகாதார மற்றும் சுதேச வைத்திய சேவைகள் அமைச்சு
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Secretary/Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs
Secretary/Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation
Chairman/University Grant Commission

Guidance for Preparedness and Response for COVID-19 Outbreak in the Vocational/Youth Training Institutions and Universities (2020 May 12)

This interim guideline is issued at a point when the country has considered relaxation of imposed curfew with an attempt to resume normalcy in the country after closure of schools, youth training institutions and universities with subsequent lockdown of the country.

COVID 19 viral transmission is caused through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person generated through coughing and sneezing and individuals also get infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and by touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth).

The Ministry of Health strongly advocates that physical distancing with other hygienic measures of hand washing, sanitation, respiratory hygiene as the main mode in prevention of spread of the virus and currently all avoidable large gatherings and mixing of people should be curtailed. The current situation due to COVID 19 in the country situation does not warrant re-opening of the youth training institutions immediately. The timing of re-opening should only be decided after considering the epidemiological situation and the level of preparedness within these institutions for minimizing of risk once the clearance is given by the health authorities. When decision for reopening is made, if any institution has been used as a quarantine place, those places should be disinfected and at least kept closed for three days before re-opening.

This guideline provides instructions to all ministries conducting training programmes for youth to implement the preparedness plan, as outlined in this document in advance ensuring availability of all the facilities needed for prevention of COVID 19 infection.

1. Planning

The local decision of re-opening of institutions in a district can be decided with a committee comprising heads of district and institutional level authorities of relevant ministries and institutions, Regional Directors of Health services (RDHS), District Secretaries and other relevant officials. This decision making should be in line with national level decisions of the relevant ministries. This decision should be taken after careful evaluation of the local scenario, carried out by health, education, police and tri-forces, social service and transport authorities.

Decision making should be on:

- which institutions / universities to open
- when to open the institutions/ faculties
- which courses/ batches of youth need to be started by institution/university depending on possibility of maintaining the physical distance of 1 meter or more
- what methodologies to be used for specific training which need close contacts such as conducting practicals
- when to start residential courses and how many students that can be accommodated at hostels at a time maintaining physical distance of 1 meter or more in the hostels
- procedure to follow in case of closure of any youth institution (any worsening of outbreak etc.)

Decision making for each institution could be conducted by the same committee or by an institutional level committee consisting of Medical Officer of Health, Divisional Secretaries and other relevant stakeholders at the divisional level in addition to the heads of relevant institution.

Decision making per institution should be on:

- number of students to be accommodated at a time in a class room or lecture hall ensuring the physical distance of 1 meter or more
 - closing times for each year/ batch of students – facilitating minimum crowding at the gates
 - number of days and days of the week youth institutions will be opened
 - when to start residential courses and how many students that can be accommodated in hostels at a time maintaining physical distance of 1 meter or more
 - procedure to follow in case of any closure of youth institution (any worsening of outbreak etc.)
- Initially, plan to start selected number of youth institutions or few faculties in a university in low risk areas that can be manageable. Institutions with adequate hand washing facilities, adequate space to keep 1-meter distance between students, and with adequate monitoring can be prioritized (please refer the updated country map showing the risk levels of COVID 19 in Epidemiology Unit website: COVID 19 Distribution in MOH areas in <http://www.epid.gov.lk/web/>).
- Decide on the number of opening days per week by institution and the number of students at institution/faculty can accommodate per day maintaining 1-meter physical distance between two individuals
- Assess the situation of institution/university daily, during the first week and weekly for another month by responsible officials appointed by the institution/university using the given

checklist (Annex 1). Thereafter assessment should be carried out as per the frequency decided by the Intuition Committee, based on the country's COVID-19 situation.

- Institutions should communicate with the area Medical Officer of Health (MOH office) regarding the implementation progress/any issues arising related to infection prevention and control (IPC).
- Update or develop institutional emergency and contingency plans
- Cancel all social events/workshops/ meetings/ exhibitions/ sports festivals that usually take place on institutional/university premises until further notice.
- A separate place or room needs to be identified to place /isolate a youth/staff member who is identified with COVID 19 suspected symptoms, until sending them home or to a healthcare facility
- Continued access to quality education/ training by using appropriate technology should be supported in case of absenteeism/sick leave or temporary closure of the institution.
- Limit the movement of students from outside the premises as per their curriculum such as field training during COVID 19 outbreak
- Substitute activities that need close contacts such as practicals by using distant educational methods or limiting number of trainees
- Specific guidelines may be adopted for your institutions/universities depending on the special circumstances while adhering to the principles in this guideline

2. Safe institutional operations and maintaining infection prevention and control measures

2.1 Special considerations on eligibility of persons to attend youth institutions

- Any student / staff /nonacademic staff with COVID 19 like symptoms (Fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose) should be strongly advised to avoid attending to institutions
- Youth with immune-compromised diseases and who are on immune-compromising medication should not attend institutions until further notice.

2.2 Precautions to be taken while entering the premises:

- Avoid gathering at the entrance and ensure physical distance of 1 meter or more. There should be a person to screen youth and other staff entering the institution (eg: verbally ask for relevant symptoms and if any person is having such symptoms isolate them until steps are taken to send them home) or check the temperature of all persons at the entrance to the institution and if any person is found to have a temperature above 98.4⁰ F or 37⁰ C should be isolated until steps are taken to send them home.
- Facilities to be established at the entrance to the institution (near the gate) for hand washing with adequate facilities avoiding overcrowding. Anyone entering the premises should wash their hands with soap and water or alternatively use hand sanitizer.
- Spraying disinfectants on people or disinfection cubicles are not recommended
- All students, staff members and visitors should wear face masks inside the institution. Ensure that face masks (ordinary medical masks) or paper tissues are available for those develop a runny nose or cough and to have adequate closed bins for hygienically disposing of used paper tissues or face masks

2.3 Precautions to be taken at the premises and general measures for social distancing:

- Establish hand washing facilities in or near lecture halls/ practical rooms and at the toilets. Clean and disinfect institutional buildings, lecture halls /floors at least once a day, before starting the day
- Maintain regular housekeeping practices. Disinfect all the surfaces which are frequently touched by many people, should be disinfected twice daily: before starting of the institution and after three hours of starting of the institution (eg: railings, lunch tables, door and window

handles, switches for lift operator, switches in lecture halls/ practical rooms, teaching and learning aids and toilets etc.) (Annex II).

- Maintain a database of all the personnel at each institution with their contact details (eg: lecturers/ demonstrators, students, other staff members)
- Supply all necessary items for personal protection (Eg: soap, masks-ensure all logistics are available)
- Arrange and put up signage to show the walking directions to arrange the flow of students in a unidirectional manner– to minimize physical contact of each other with bi directional flow. (e.g.: obey all way finding signs mark on the floor in corridors/ stairways).
- Keep common doors opened (eg: class room, main door to toilet) to minimize touching
- Maintain 1-meter distance between students as well as academic and non-academic staff members inside the institution at all times in all settings (Lecture halls, practical sessions, assignments, at examinations, viva voce, cafeterias etc.)
- Avoid any teaching/learning/ group activity requiring close proximity. Avoid the activities sharing equipment.
- Educate the youth and staff members on prevention of COVID-19 and on healthy life style specially strengthening psychosocial wellbeing (yoga, mindfulness). Display health educational messages in the institutional premises. Delivery of health messages can be made as announcements at the beginning of the day or at a specific time and avoid gathering of students for giving these messages.
- Youth or staff members should avoid sharing belongings such as stationary and text books, meals or drinks. Also avoid sharing laboratory equipment by students as well as staff.
- Advise youth to avoid any kind of gatherings within or outside the premises. Avoid usual gathering of youth at the beginning and end of the day.
- Sports that involve shared play equipment, with close physical contacts and which can disrupt physical distancing should be avoided.
- Exercises that can be done while maintaining one-meter physical distancing should be encouraged.
- Avoid giving lunch break to all students at the same time so that overcrowding can be avoided in canteens/ lunch room
- All students and staff should wash hands with soap and water before meals and should use separate water bottles, glasses, cutlery and food items or drinks. Youth should be encouraged to bring their own lunch packet and water bottle. They should not drink water directly from the tap. (i.e. mouth to tap. They can refill their own container)
- Waste disposal- there should be waste bins with a lid to put infected waste and should be safely disposed (burnt in a separate place).
- Avoid all unnecessary staff gatherings /meetings / workshops.
- Aware youth on infection prevention and control practices while travelling within institution and at home:
- All youth should adhere to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health while travelling to and from home to the institution. (Please refer Annex 111)
- After returning home from institutions, before entering home should wash hands properly with soap and water and, remove shoes/slippers outside and wash them before wearing them again. Keep the bag in a separate place in the house and if possible wipe the outer surface of the bag with a soap soaked cloth (not in the bed room or living room) and disinfect mobile phone, spectacles, wrist-watch with alcohol sanitizer, wash the clothes and have a bath if possible before entering the home or immediately after entering the home

3. If a youth /staff gets sick within the institution

Precautions have to be taken to prevent the spread of the infections if a youth / staff member becomes sick while in institution (Please refer Annex 1V for more information)

4. Instructions for hostels in institutions

The head of the institution should liaise with MOH / PHI in planning of reopening and functioning of the hostel. All COVID-19 prevention measures to be implemented within the hostel. (Please refer Annexure V for details)

5. Instructions for cafeterias in institutions

Youth coming from home should be advised to bring food from home and to minimize the use of cafeteria facility as much as possible. Infection control procedures should be adhered to when establishing canteen facilities. (Please refer Annex VI for information)

6. Psychosocial support needs

It should be understood that youth can behave indifferently due to current stressful situation. It is normal to feel different. Convince them that life has ups and downs. Even if we are psychologically down now, we can return to normal soon.

- Do not discriminate the youth when their family members are affected by COVID-19. Encourage youth to discuss their questions and concerns through counselling
- Explain that it is normal that they may experience different reactions and encourage them to talk to instructors/lecturers / counsellor/ a responsible person appointed by the institution if they have any questions or concerns.
- Guide youth on how to support their peers and prevent exclusion and bullying.
- Encourage the lecturers, instructors or demonstrators to maintain their personal health and wellbeing
- Work with MOH and staff/ instructors/lecturers to identify and support youth and staff who have signs of distress.
- Publicize help lines via text messages/ notices/ notice boards: Mental health help line - 1926 / Health Promotion Bureau – 1999
- Promote regular health promotion activities such as exercises, yoga, mindfulness practice, recreational activities like arts, dancing and music while maintaining the physical distance.
- Youth should be allowed to share their experience with others.
- If any person shows signs of stress/distress, refer to counselling officer or MOH/MO-MH. (The signs of stress/distress presented in Annex VII)
- Youth protection and security to be ensured. (helpline - 1929).

7. Responsibilities of youth

Youth should be empowered to pay attention to the following:

- Recognizing the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath) and how-to seek medical advice by first calling your health facility/1390 and then follow the medical advice
- As symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common, they should be responsible to stay at home if they are sick and notify the institution regarding your absence and symptoms.

- Learning and practicing hand and respiratory hygiene practices
 - frequent hand washing
 - covering cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed lined bin and washing hands properly.
- Wear mask properly and avoid touching the mask as well as mouth, eyes and nose
- Maintaining social distance of 1 meter or more
- To have homemade food
- Not sharing any personal items
- Should understand their responsibility in taking preventive measures advised by the health and institutional authorities.
- Understand this is a temporary situation faced by the entire world and should understand even if they are psychologically down now, can come back to normal soon.
- Not to tease or stigmatize anyone with disease or suspected of having COVID 19

It is expected that the content of this guide should be communicated to the relevant authorities and all institutions should coordinate with public health staff for these preparatory activities.

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 Chairperson/Director, National Youth CORPS
 DDG Public Health Services I
 DDG Public Health Services II
 Chief Epidemiologist
 Director Maternal and Child Health
 Director Health Promotion Bureau

Annex 1
Checklist for institutional administrators and staff

		Check
1.	<p>Before opening the institution, verify the availability of the below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Running water and soap are available for hand washing for youths, staff and other staff (security, etc)- at least 1 tap should be available for 50 youths b) Availability of washing stations c) Adequate number of lined bins (ideally pedal operated lined bins) with a lid should be available at least one per class to put used tissues d) Posters / notices have been put up to aware the youth / staff on respiratory etiquette, hand washing and physical distancing e) Preparedness plan available on what to do if a youth/ staff becomes ill f) Separate isolation room (preferably with an attached bathroom) is identified to temporary isolate the ill youth/ staff till the transport/ ambulance is available g) Adequate stock of masks is available to be used in a case of emergency h) Adequate masks, gloves are available for cleaning staff i) Adequate amount of disinfections / bleach is available for disinfecting toilets/ classes/ frequently used places and surfaces 	
2.	<p>Promote and demonstrate regular hand washing and positive hygiene behaviors and monitor their uptake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Availability of clean and separate toilets for girls and boys b) Availability of soap and safe water for hand washing stations c) Frequent and thorough washing 	
3.	<p>Clean and disinfect institutional buildings, lecture rooms and especially water and sanitation facilities at least twice a day,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, teaching and learning aids etc.) minimally twice a day b) Use sodium hypochlorite at 0.5% (equivalent 5000ppm) for disinfecting surfaces & 70% ethyl alcohol for disinfection of small items c) Availability of appropriate equipment for cleaning staff 	
4.	<p>Increase air flow and ventilation where climate allows (open windows, switch on a fan to blow the wind in one direction.</p>	
5.	<p>Post signs encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices and physical distancing</p>	
6.	<p>Ensure trash is removed daily and disposed of safely</p>	
7.	<p>Minimize individual communication and use public speaking systems /written notices to convey essential messages</p>	

Annex 11
**Disinfection and cleaning of surfaces that is subjected to contamination
by frequent touching**

Clean and disinfect particularly surfaces that are touched by many people, before starting of the school and after three hours of starting of the school (eg: railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.)

1. Surface cleaning in sick room/separate isolation room
 - Door knobs/window handles – wipe with 70% Ethyl alcohol
 - Other metal surfaces - wipe with 70% Ethyl alcohol
 - Non metal surfaces -Hypochlorite at 0.1% (equivalent 1000ppm)

2. Surfaces that are touched frequently
 - Railings/lunch tables – 70% Ethyl alcohol
 - Teaching and learning aids - 70% Ethyl alcohol

3. Reusable dedicated equipment (eg: thermometers)
 - 70% Ethyl alcohol

4. Toilets
 - Hypochlorite at 0.5%

5. Cleaning equipments (mops/dust pan)
 - Hypochlorite at 0.5%

6. Infectious waste
 - Burning in a separate place

Annex 111
Instructions for travelling

1. While using transport facilities all should adhere to the physical distancing measures and with minimum touching of the surfaces of the vehicle.
2. The youths/instructors should wear masks and practice proper hand washing practices.
3. All van/bus drivers within the institution should be notified that if they are having respiratory symptoms should stay at home and inform the relevant authority.
4. If vans and buses owned by institutions these vehicles should be disinfected before loading the youth and staff
5. Waiting for transport- wait youth with distancy and do not crowd to get in to the vehicles

Annex 1V

If a youth / staff member gets sick while in institution

1. Establish procedures if youth or staff found to have symptoms of COVID-19 infection- inform the relevant MOH and area PHI, the family members of the youth or staff member
2. Communicate the plans to local health authorities (Relevant MOH and area PHI)
3. Update emergency contact lists and make those visible to all.
4. Ensure a procedure for separating youth who have fallen sick and staff from those who are well – without creating stigma. Show empathy and kind approach.
5. If the sick person is having fever, sore throat, difficulty in breathing or other symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 like illness, - should wear a mask immediately if not already wearing one.
6. If an emergency, call the ambulance/ Suwasariya 1990. The youth/staff may need to be referred directly to a health facility, depending on the situation/context, or sent home.

Annexure V

Instructions for hostels in Institutions

1. Take all possible measures to avoid overcrowding in these accommodation facilities (Institutional Committee should decide the number of youths can be accommodated with keeping social distancing at all places including bed rooms and halls with the advice from local health authorities MOH).
2. Ensure availability of supplies for personal protection (e.g: soap, masks-ensure all logistics are available)
3. Arrange and put up signage to show the walking directions to arrange the flow of students in a unidirectional manner– to minimize physical contact of each other with bi directional flow. (e.g.: putting guidelines on the floor in corridors/ stairways).
4. Keep common doors opened (eg: class room, main door to toilet) to minimize touching
5. Disinfection should be carried at least twice a day
6. Everyone entering the premises shall wash hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer. Slippers/shoes shall be kept outside the entrance or at least outside the rooms.
7. Meal times should be allocated for different sections at different times so as to avoid overcrowding in meal rooms or canteens.
8. If food is served as buffet, there should be a dedicated person/s to serve food instead of self-serving. That person should follow infection control procedures and should be wearing mask and gloves.
9. Ensure one-meter distance among persons at all common places including meal rooms.
10. Avoid sharing glasses, plates and other utensils during meals.
11. Display COVID-19 control measures adopted in the facility in notice boards and other relevant places and request all residents to adhere to them. Visitors shall be restricted
12. There shall be a dedicated vacant room for isolation of any person who developed fever with or without respiratory symptoms
13. Establish procedures if youths or staff found to have symptoms of COVID-19 infection- inform the relevant MOH and area PHI, the family members of the youth or staff member
14. Communicate the plans to local health authorities (Relevant MOH and area PHI)
15. If anyone is having fever with or without respiratory symptoms take appropriate measures. In the event of detecting a suspected case in the hostel, seek assistance from hotline 1390 and follow the instructions given or alternatively transfer the worker to the nearest government hospital, by ambulance. Suwasariya ambulance service can be contacted by dialing 1990. The suspected person should continue to wear a mask and kept in isolation and all relevant precautions should be taken to limit the spread of the disease, until transfer to hospital. If this person tests as positive the health authorities will visit the facility and will instruct on further preventive measures

Annexu V1
Instructions for cafeterias

1. Lunch breaks and tea breaks to be given in batch-wise manner to prevent crowding the canteen.
2. The minimum distance of one meter is to be maintained among persons in the canteen and the furniture should be arranged to encourage this.

Avoid sharing glasses, plates and other utensils during meals.

Meals served in buffet style must be served by dedicated person(s). That person should follow infection control procedures and should be wearing mask and gloves. Students and staff should not be allowed to serve themselves as it leads to cross contamination

Annex VII

Signs of stress and Distress

How to identify the signs of stress/distress in youth

- Lack of interest in things which they like to do
- Lack of sleep / increased sleeping time
- Behavioural problems / aggression and violence
- Lack of self esteem
- Poor memory
- Poor concentration ability
- Somatic symptoms – change of appetite, headache
- Irritability
- Behaving like a child
- Being oppositional and disobedient

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