



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

**Plan and guidelines for gradual resumption of
services based on the risk adjusted strategy**

Alert level 2

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the plan is to

- Ensure the safety of employees while on Departmental premises
- Provide directions for a seamless and smooth return to work of employees
- Minimise the risk of employees contracting the coronavirus

2. BACKGROUND

The President of the Republic of South Africa announced the risk-adjusted strategy for economic activity on 23 April 2020. The strategy seeks to relax some of the measures that were implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 since the declaration of the state of disaster on 15 March 2020.

In his address, the President announced that the relaxation of restrictions will be done in a phased approach. An alert system with five levels has been introduced to allow for flexibility and responsiveness to the level of the COVID-19. Depending on the rate of the infections, the level will be adjusted and also inform the amendments of the Disaster Management Regulations. The significance of the risk-adjusted strategy is the maintenance of a balance between lives and livelihoods. In line with the pronouncement by the President, the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs signed the amended Regulations on 25 April 2020 to give effect to the President's pronouncement.

Subsequent to the pronouncement, various ministers followed with the respective pronouncements of their respective Departments to implement the return to work in phases as pronounced by the President. Similarly the Minister of Basic Education gazetted dates upon which schools will reopen with a phased-in return of different grades to schools. This would allow schools and Departments to better plan for these learners and to ensure that schools were now ready to continue with curriculum delivery in such a way that the lives of learners and educators would be safe and schools would not become the new epicentre for the spread of the virus.

Subsequent to this the President announced on 16 August 2020 that the alert level had been adjusted to alert level 2 with effect from 18 August 2020 and that the State of Disaster had been extended to 15 September 2020. The minister of COGTA, in line with this, issued amendments to the Disaster Management Regulations on 17 August 2020 through the addition of Chapter 5 to the Disaster Management Regulations to provide regulations for the alert level 2.

The Minister of the Department of Employment and Labour issued on 04 June 2020 directions on the return to work of employees. Clause 17.2 of those directions provides that Departments should develop a plan outlining the protective measures in place for the phased return of its employees before opening, which should be in line with Annexure E of the Disaster Management Regulations dated 29 April 2020 that provides guidelines on the matters that the plan referred to should address. In response to this the Department had drafted its return-to-work plan to respond to the movement to alert level 4. With the movement to alert level 2 this document provides amendments to the approved alert level 4 return-to-work plan.

3. LEGISLATION

- Disaster Management Act, 2002
- Disaster Management Regulations as amended through Government Gazette Number 891.
- Public Service Regulations, 2016
- DPSA Circular no 07 of 2020: Guidelines for the containment/management of COVID-19 in the Public Service
- DPSA Circular no 11 of 2020: Directions in respect to leave for employees affected by COVID-19
- DPSA Circular no 15 of 2020
- DPSA Circular no 18 of 2020: Public Service Return to work guideline after easing of the national lockdown
- COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety measures in workplace COVID-19; (C19 OHS), 2020

4. THE DATE THE BUSINESS WILL OPEN AND THE HOURS OF OPENING

With the change of the lock down level from alert level 3 to level 2 the Department is required to review its return-to-work plan to be in line with this.

Departmental offices (Head Office, District and Circuit Offices) will be open for normal business from 07h30 to 16h30. All branches are therefore required to ensure that service delivery points and frontline offices are appropriately staffed for this purpose.

5. THE TIMETABLE SETTING OUT THE PHASED RETURN-TO-WORK OF EMPLOYEES

5.1. Clause 1.9 of the Department of labour and employment directives provides that

“As the identified sectors of the economy are allowed to come online in terms of different levels of alert, government departments responsible for providing regulatory, support and administrative services to these sectors should ensure sufficient capacity to provide these services, is available in conjunction with the necessary precautionary health and safety measures”.

5.2. Under alert level 5 services offered by different officials were required as per DPSA circular 15 of 2020 to be analysed in order to determine those services that could be classified as critical. Officials rendering these services were supposed to be provided with permits so that they could travel to their place of work.

5.3. Table 3 of the amendments to the Disaster Management Regulations, dated 17 August 2020 however now provides that:

“...persons will be permitted to perform any type of work outside the home, and to travel to and from work and for work purposes under Alert Level 2, subject to:

- a) Strict adherence to health protocols and social distancing measures;*
- b) The return to work being phased-in in order to put in place measures to make the workplace COVID-19 ready*
- c) The return to work being done in a manner that avoids and reduces risks of infection...”*

5.4. Due to the above provision the previous classification of services as per DPSA circular 15 of 2020 will no longer apply in determining the return to work and frequency of reporting for work of officials. The determining factor will thus be health protocols and social distancing measures as per point a) above. This is noting that point b) above, pertaining to getting the workplace COVID-19 ready, has been complied with through the comprehensive cleaning and sanitation program that was undertaken in the Department in July 2020.

5.5. In this regard all officials are therefore required to report for work with effect from 01 September 2020 subject to the following conditions meant to ensure social distancing at the work place:

- a) Officials that share offices should ensure that a distance of 1,5m is maintained between the office occupants
- b) Where the 1,5m distance cannot be complied with the supervisor should draft a roster, to be approved by the HOD, for rotational reporting to work for these officials. For such arrangements preference should be given to weekly rotation subject to the operational and functional needs of the unit.

5.6. However as per clause 62(5) of the Disaster Management Regulations amendment (17 August 2020) consideration will be given to those officials that are over 60 years old or those with co-morbidities. Such officials may be granted permission to work from home upon submission of a medical certificate from a medical practitioner.

5.7. Supervisors of the officials who have been granted permission to work from home should ensure compliance with the provision of clause 7.4 of the DPSA circular 15 of 2020 that deals with "eligibility criteria for remote work".

5.8. A report on all officials who have been granted permission to work from home will be provided to the DPSA.

6. THE STEPS TAKEN TO GET THE WORKPLACE COVID-19 READY

To ensure that the work place is ready for officials to return to work the following steps have been taken:

- The offices have been sanitised
- Sanitisers have been placed at the entrance to all departmental buildings and at the gate to be used by members of the public and all officials.
- Each official has been provided with a hand sanitiser to use in their office.
- The biometric system at the entrance to the offices has been disabled to prevent the spread of the virus.
- All visitors and officials will be screened upon entering the departmental premises.

7. VULNERABLE PERSONNEL

The following officials are categorised as vulnerable, including those with comorbidities and are encouraged to work from home. Those with comorbidities must submit proof from their medical practitioner to their supervisor and should however note that regulation 57 of the Public Service Regulations should still apply to the above staff to ensure continuity of services:

- Older employees above the age of 60 years
- Employees with serious long term medical conditions
- Persons with disability, depending on the nature of the disability
- Pregnant women.

8. ARRANGEMENTS FOR CUSTOMERS OR MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING SANITATION AND SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

Regulation 53 of the Public Service Regulations 2016 bestows the onus on the Head of Department to establish a safe and secure service delivery environment for members of the public. In this regard the following steps be implemented as a minimum to adhere to the aforementioned provisions:

- a) Waiting area for member of the public will be cleaned regularly
- b) Provision of hand sanitisers has been made at strategic places for member of the public
- c) The numbers of members of the public allowed on the premises will be consistent with the protocols and guidelines of the department and management of crowds in waiting areas or/and queues.
- d) A queue management system will be implemented to ensure that the 1,5 m social distancing is maintained.
- e) Every member of the public will be screened in line with the health protocols before entering departmental facilities. Members of the public displaying symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be guided to a medical professional in line with the Department of Health protocol
- f) Awareness material on COVID-19 to be made available in Departmental public spaces for members of the public and
- g) Ensure poster on COVID-19 are displayed in strategic locations where members of the public and staff members can be informed.

9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1. Head of Department

- a) Provide strategic direction for the implementation of regulations and guidelines on the return-to-work and other related services
- b) Protect the health and safety of all officials and members of the public in the workplace
- c) Provide administrative support to the Departmental COVID-19 Steering Committee
- d) Approve all the departmental COVID-19 guidelines and plans.
- e) Approve and sign-off reports to be forwarded to the Office of the Premier.

9.2. Executive Management Committee

- a) Provide oversight role to the work of the Departmental COVID-19 Steering Committee
- b) Process reports from the Departmental OHS COVID-19 Committee
- c) Fully cooperate with the Departmental OHS COVID-19 Committee
- d) Ensure that all matters raised by the OHS COVID-19 committee that pertain to their areas of responsibility are addressed and a progress report on the matter submitted to the Compliance Officer

9.3. Senior Managers

- a) Develop schedules for remotely working employees
- b) Submit chief directorates and directorates reports for remotely working employees to branch heads
- c) Ensure seamless return-to-work of employees
- d) Ensure adherence to social distancing

9.4. Employees

- a) Observe and adhere to the departmental COVID-19 guidelines
- b) Report if they show symptoms of COVID-19
- c) Produce a record of work performed remotely
- d) Sign attendance records

9.5. OHS committee

- a) Monitor the implementation of the COVID-19 guidelines
- b) Process reports to be submitted to the EMC and Office of the Premier
- c) Facilitate and ensure the safety of employees during the phased-in return-to-work
- d) Identify COVID-19 hazards to the health of the employees and advise the Head of Department on the mechanism to address the hazards and any other related matters.
- e) Monitor compliance with health and safety measures in the Department
- f) Monitor and enforce all directives and guidelines on COVID-19

9.6. Compliance Officer

- a) Develop a checklist to ensure that all COVID-19 protocols are adhered to.
- b) Ensure that all employees and stakeholders comply with all health and safety COVID-19 directives, guidelines and regulations.

- c) Monitor the implementation of workplace safety protocols
- d) Compile a compliance report and submit it to the steering committee and EMC

9.7. Chief Financial Officer

- a) The Chief Financial Officer shall identify and reprioritise budget to cater for all COVID-19 compliance-related equipment and PPEs.
- b) Timely procurement of all the required PPEs.

9.8. Corporate Management

- a) Initiate change management
- b) Develop COVID-19 workplace communication plan

9.9. Risk Management

Risk management is the first step towards the development and response to COVID-19 in the workplace. Risk assessment and management plan will assist the Department to develop an effective and efficient return-to-work COVID-19 plan. In view of this, the risk management directorate should constantly review the Department's risk register to account for changing conditions when there are changes in the alert level. The directorate should also conduct a risk assessment where a positive case has been detected in the departmental offices.

9.10. Infrastructure

- a) Ensure that all departmental facilities are habitable
- b) Availability of water in all the departmental facilities
- c) Assessment of the conduciveness of all the offices and institutions
- d) Identify an area or office space for isolation for any employee who may require isolation while at work.

9.11. Other branches

- a) Cooperate with and support the work of the Departmental COVID-19 Steering Committee
- b) Submit reports as requested by the Steering Committee
- c) Provide the lists of essential service workers, remotely working employees and how the branch will comply with the social distancing requirement.

- d) Proactive identification of the required PPEs and liaise with auxiliary service for central procurement.

10. CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

COVID-19 has ushered in what is called the “new normal”, which means that things have to be done differently and urgently. The Department will also have to appreciate the “new normal” and take employees through a change management process to ensure that employees are not left behind. The following shall be done:

- a) Change management will be developed and the mechanism for implementation will be discussed by the Departmental OHS Committee.
- b) Communicate relevant COVID-19 information on all department’s communication platform.
- c) Create and distribute contact details of departmental representatives dealing with COVID-19.
- d) Develop COVID-19 “do’s” and “don’ts” to guide all employees.

11. CONTACT TRACING

- a) A register will be kept of all people entering the departmental premises that reflect their names, addresses and ID numbers.
- b) All clients, service providers and employees must sign the register when they enter the departmental premises.

12. REFUSAL TO COME TO WORK

Refusal to come to report for duty, contrary to the instruction of the supervisor means that such absence will be treated as unpaid leave and should be dealt with in terms of the disciplinary code.

13. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- a) All employees will be screened daily upon entering the departmental premises
- b) Employees will be provided with two cloth face masks without which they will not be allowed to enter the departmental offices.
- c) Surgical masks will be provided for those employees who are in isolation in the sick bay and those working in dusty environments.
- d) PPE will be provided to all cleaners. This will include gloves, safety boots, work suits, disposable aprons and caps.

14. REVIEW

The plan shall be reviewed based on the pronouncements by the National Command Council and regulations and guidelines put in place after the pronouncements.

Approved by:



Dederen KO
Head of Department (acting)

01/09/2020
Date