



## L - WCED Guideline: Managing Covid-19 cases in schools

Branch: Institution Development and Coordination	L - WCED Guideline: Managing Covid-19 cases in schools	
L – WCED Guideline	Issued: 23 May 2020	To be reviewed as and when necessary

Approved by the Head of Department:



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## **L – WCED GUIDELINE: MANAGING COVID-19 CASES IN SCHOOLS**

### **1. Purpose**

To advise principals and school management teams on how to manage confirmed or suspected cases of Covid-19 in schools.

### **2. Ongoing procedures and preparations**

- 2.1 All learners, teachers and non-teaching staff must be screened every day as per the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Guideline.
- 2.2 A sick bay is to be prepared to temporarily isolate learner(s) or staff members should a learner or staff member display symptoms of Covid-19.
- 2.3 Information on who to contact as next of kin, should a learner or staff member appear to have symptoms of Covid-19, must be readily available for all learners and staff members.
- 2.4 Information on what to do should someone have symptoms should be readily available and distributed to the learner, their parents or staff member (please see pamphlet: Treatment on <https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/back-school-covid-19-resources-schools>).
- 2.5 In the event of a class, section of a school, or school requiring decontamination, the school must liaise with the district which will confirm the need to do so and ensure the procurement of the service.

### **3. Action to be taken when a learner appears ill or displays symptoms associated with Covid-19**

The following applies when a learner is suspected to be ill or displays symptoms such as persistent dry cough, high fever, respiratory distress or shortness of breath, sore throat etc. at school:

- 3.1 All learners must be screened every day.
- 3.2 The sick bay is to be prepared to temporarily isolate learner(s).
- 3.3 Should a learner show symptoms associated with Covid-19, isolate the learner and keep him/her separate from other learners or staff until they can be collected or taken home.
- 3.4 The parents/guardian of the learner should be informed immediately and requested to collect the learner.
- 3.5 On collection of the learner, the parent/guardian should be provided with information on what to do and who to contact when a learner displays symptoms of Covid-19.

#### **4. Action to be taken when a case of Covid-19 is confirmed in a learner**

- 4.1 The principal must report all confirmed cases to the circuit manager/district director immediately, as well as information pertaining to the case such as:
- when last the learner was at school;
  - with whom they were in **direct** contact; and
  - with whom they were in **casual** contact.
- 4.2 The principal and district officials will do an assessment of the case and the district official will confirm the actions to be taken.
- 4.3 The Department of Health will be responsible for identifying people with whom the learner has been in contact with and will advise the WCED on any further actions or precautions to be taken.
- 4.4 In most cases, closure of the facility or school will be unnecessary.
- 4.5 Remember that only the Head of Department can authorise the closure of an educational institution. The Head of Department will be informed by the district and will act on the advice of the Department of Health.

#### **5. Actions to be taken when a learner has been exposed to a possible case of Covid-19.**

- 5.1 If a learner has been in contact with a suspected case, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for Covid-19 are awaited.
- 5.2 There is no need to close the school or send other learners or staff home.
- 5.3 The school must continue to observe all Covid-19 requirements.
- 5.4 Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known, there is no action that staff members need to take.

#### **6. Actions to be taken when a learner has been exposed to a confirmed case of Covid-19.**

- 6.1 Anyone with **close** contact with a confirmed Covid-19 case must be identified and requested to stay at home for a period not exceeding 14 days from the date of exposure while being monitored for symptoms. They may not attend school. (Close or direct contact e.g. a handshake or hug. Just being in the room with no direct contact is regarded as casual contact with no risk.)
- 6.2 All **casual** contacts (no direct physical contact) should continue to attend school.
- 6.3 Should the learner who came into close contact show any symptomatic signs whilst at home, the Western Cape Government or National Institute for Communicable Diseases hotline numbers can be called for medical assistance and further testing.
- 6.4 Learners who are not close contacts of a confirmed case should attend school.
- 6.5 Learners who have interacted with a healthy contact of a confirmed case must attend school.

## **7. Action to be taken if a staff member is tested positive for Covid-19**

- 7.1 The Covid-19 positive staff member must apply for sick leave.
- 7.2 All staff members and learners who were in **close** contact with the affected person are to self-isolate for a maximum of 14 days since the last contact.
- 7.3 All staff members required to self-isolate must apply for special leave.
- 7.4 A list of such staff members must be kept and submitted to the relevant district office.
- 7.5 The district office must keep records and submit these to Head Office's People Management Practices (PMP) section.
- 7.6 The cleaning/disinfecting of the affected space must be facilitated as described in (2.5).
- 7.7 Contact must be maintained with such staff member or learner as a means of monitoring and evaluation.

## **8. A staff member was exposed to a possible (unconfirmed) case of COVID-19**

- 8.1 If a staff member has been in contact with an unconfirmed case, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for Covid-19 are awaited.
- 8.2 The staff member must continue to work.
- 8.3 The school must continue to observe all Covid-19 requirements.
- 8.4 Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known, there is no action that staff members need to take.
- 8.5 If the results are positive, apply measures as described in point 9.

## **9. A staff member who was in contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19**

- 9.1 All those staff members who were in **close** contact with the infected person are required to self-isolate at home for a maximum of 14 days from last contact. (Direct contact e.g. a handshake or hug. Just being in the room with no direct contact is regarded as casual contact with no risk.)
- 9.2 Staff members required to self-isolate must apply for special leave.
- 9.3 The principal must ensure that the work space of people required to self-isolate is thoroughly cleaned.
- 9.4 Contact must be maintained with such a staff member as a means of monitoring and evaluation.
- 9.5 The names of the staff are to be recorded by the school and a copy submitted to the district office.
- 9.6 The district office must submit this information to Head Office.

**10. A staff member or a learner displays symptoms associated with Covid-19 while at school.**

- 10.1 Isolate the staff member or learner temporarily in a sick bay or room identified for temporary isolation.
- 10.2 Advise the staff member to go home or contact the learner's parents/guardian.
- 10.3 Advise the staff member or the learner's parent/guardian to call the hotline numbers.

**11. Substitutes for teachers falling ill.**

- 11.1 As soon as it is confirmed that a teacher is ill due to Covid-19, the school must apply for a substitute.
- 11.2 The school should also apply for a substitute if a teacher is absent from work because of the maximum 14 day self-isolation period.
- 11.3 Substitutes will be considered if affordable.
- 11.4 Schools may consider the utilisation of screened volunteers if it becomes necessary.

**12. Management and monitoring of absenteeism**

- 12.1 Attendance registers are to be completed daily as per norm for teachers, non-teaching staff and learners. This is a normal WCED requirement but it is also a Covid-19 requirement to help with tracing.
- 12.2 Identify critical job functions and positions at the school and plan appropriately for alternative suitably qualified staff at the school to fill the gaps that might arise because of the consequences of Covid-19.

**13. If schools are closed, the following should be considered to continue learning and teaching**

- 13.1 All learner and parent contact information, including digital contact information, where possible, must be up to date and readily available to relevant staff members.
- 13.2 Learning material should be prepared for a period of four weeks in advance, at all times, in the event that a school might need to be closed as a result of alert level restrictions or other factors.
- 13.3 Continue to develop learning material for learners when the school is closed.
- 13.4 Make use of the lessons provided by the General Education and Training and/or Further Education and Training Curriculum Directorates.
- 13.5 Encourage online learning via the WCED ePortal.
- 13.6 Provide parents with information regarding lessons on radio, television and the telematics programme.
- 13.7 Ensure continuity of education:
  - review continuity plans for teaching and learning; and

- implement eLearning plans, including digital and distance learning options where feasible and appropriate.
- 13.8 If necessary, determine, in consultation with district officials or other partners:
- how to train teachers to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons;
  - how to manage 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 learner access to computers and the internet at home.
- 13.9 Make available a list of available, suitable resources from radio, television and other media platforms to learners and parents.
- 13.10 Ensure continuity of school feeding programmes, if applicable.