

To:
All SMS members
Provincial Bargaining Council members
Deans of Health Science Faculties: Universities of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Western Cape; CPUT

CIRCULAR H 50/2020: INDIVIDUAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR VULNERABLE STAFF WITH POTENTIAL WORK-RELATED EXPOSURE TO COVID-19

Purpose

1. The Department wishes to provide guidance about identifying and responding to potential COVID risks in the work setting.
2. This document provides a four-step guide to evaluate and manage the risk to employees in the context of the current SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic.
3. This policy circular is part of the Occupational Health and Safety commitment of the Department.

Implementation

1. Each SMS member needs to conduct individual risk assessments of the staff in his/her component.
2. Appropriate human resource responses are then to be applied per local setting as per this guideline, yet maintaining uniform approaches across the Department.
3. For immediate implementation.
4. For further enquiry regarding this policy:

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Introduction

Health and Safety (H&S) legislation, specifically the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), and the Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations (HBA Regs), require employers to provide and maintain as far as is reasonably practicable a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of employees. Employers are required to take steps such as may be reasonably practicable to eliminate or mitigate any hazard or potential hazard before resorting to personal protective equipment (PPE).

**Individual Risk Assessment Checklist for COVID-19
for At-Risk Staff Groups**

The main aim is to avoid unprotected coronavirus exposure

<u>Completing the risk assessment:</u>	<u>Key considerations:</u>
<p>This should be completed for all vulnerable staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This can be undertaken by line manager or supervisor 2. Involve the member of staff 3. Ask advice from Occupational Health or Infectious Diseases if needed 4. Identify risks using risk matrix 5. Consider actions to minimise risk 6. Agree risk management with the staff member <p><i>The manager and staff member should consider together, in the light of the risk assessment, whether alternative work arrangements are appropriate and practicable.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limit duration of close interaction with patients (e.g. prepare everything in advance away from patient) and colleagues 2. If possible maintain >1.5m distance from others 3. Consider whether public transport /rush hour can be avoided through adjustments to work hours 4. Use PPE appropriately (see guidelines) 5. Consider moving to non-patient facing role 6. Consider remote working if the staff member is enabled including access to equipment and internet 7. Special leave considered in consultation with Occupational Health

STEP 1: Classify the employee vulnerability

<p>VERY HIGH VULNERABILITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid organ transplant recipients • People with specific cancers or receiving immunosuppressive treatment for their cancer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer ◦ cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment ◦ receiving immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer ◦ receiving targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or Poly ADP-ribose Polymerase (PARP) inhibitors • People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppressive drug. • People with severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe and unstable asthma and severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), or current active tuberculosis of the lung. • People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell). • People on immunosuppressive therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection. • Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.
<p>HIGH VULNERABILITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age >60 • Chronic lung problems (moderate to severe asthma, previous complicated TB, etc.) • Serious heart conditions • Those who are moderately or intermittently immunocompromised • Severe obesity (BMI >40) • Underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as diabetes, renal failure, hypertension or liver disease • More than 28 weeks pregnant
<p>MEDIUM VULNERABILITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 28 weeks pregnant, but otherwise healthy • Age between 40 and 60, with controlled medical conditions (hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc.) • Previous lung TB, but recovered without complications
<p>LOW VULNERABILITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiologically young • Healthy

STEP 2: CLASSIFY THE EMPLOYEE EXPOSURE RISK GROUP

VERY HIGH EXPOSURE RISK: Jobs involving PROCEDURES on COVID patients. Examples include

- Healthcare workers (e.g. doctors, nurses, dentists, paramedics, emergency medical technicians) performing aerosol-generating procedures (e.g. intubation, cough induction procedures, bronchoscopies, some dental procedures and exams, or invasive specimen collection) on known or suspected COVID patients.
- Healthcare or laboratory personnel collecting or handling open specimens from known or suspected COVID patients (e.g. manipulating cultures from known or suspected COVID patients).
- Mortuary workers performing autopsies, which generally involve aerosol-generating procedures, on the bodies of people who are known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19 at the time of their death.

HIGH EXPOSURE RISK: Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID. Examples include:

- Healthcare delivery and support staff (e.g. doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff who must enter patients' rooms) exposed to known or suspected COVID-19 patients. (Note: no aerosol-generating procedures may be performed)
- Medical transport workers (e.g. ambulance personnel and porters) moving known or suspected COVID patients in enclosed vehicles
- Mortuary workers involved in preparing (e.g. for burial or cremation) the bodies of people who are known to have, or suspected of having COVID-19 at the time of their death.

MEDIUM EXPOSURE RISK: Frequent and/or close (<1.5m) contact with people not known or suspected with COVID. This includes employees with contact with the general public (e.g. in schools, high-population-density work environments, such as labour centres, consulting rooms, point of entry personnel and some high-volume retail settings).

LOW EXPOSURE RISK: Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact (<1.5m) with the public and other co-workers

STEP 3: CALCULATE THE RISK SCORE

		Exposure risk group			
		1. Low	2. Medium	3. High	4. Very High
Employee vulnerability group	1. Low	1	2	3	4
	2. Medi	2	4	6	8
	3. High	3	6	9	12
	4. Very	4	8	12	16

Key: 1 – 6 Acceptable risk (low to medium)
 7 – 8 High risk (only acceptable under critical conditions)
 9 – 16 Unacceptable risk

STEP 4: TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE THE RISK

As far as is possible, steps should be taken to reduce the risk. Discuss the options with the employee and use the attached checklist to indicate which measures will be implemented.

The Department appreciates the co-operation of all to provide a safe working environment where staff feel cared for.

Yours sincerely _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Cloete', enclosed in a thin black rectangular box.

DR K CLOETE

HEAD: WESTERN CAPE GOVERNMENT HEALTH

DATE: 09 April 2020

**Individual Risk Assessment
for vulnerable staff with potential work-related exposure to Covid-19**

Staff Member Name				
PERSAL number				
Job Role				
Ward / Department				
Name of Assessor				
Date of Assessment				
Employee conditions of concern (causing vulnerability) – please attach evidence				
Employee vulnerability group	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Employee work conditions resulting in exposure risk				
Employee exposure risk group	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Employee risk score				

Agreed action plan to manage the employee Indicate those that have been agreed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dedicated alcohol-based hand rub provided for the employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Protective isolation and physical distancing (e.g. providing a dedicated, clean office, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adaptation of duties or shifts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Limit duration of close interaction with patients, colleagues and/or the public
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative placement/ redeployment in a lower exposure-risk area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing alternative transport arrangements to prevent public transport exposures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Restriction of certain duties (not allowed to perform high risk procedures)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementing a co-worker screening programme
<input type="checkbox"/>	Specific training programme by IPC and/ or OHS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) required (consult with IPC & Occ Health)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Referral to Occupational Medicine & IPC for recommendations (risk score = 6)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Require specific Occupational Health support (risk score = 8)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Working off-site (remotely), and the necessary equipment, internet access, etc. is available
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommend for specialist review for special leave recommendation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Others, please specify:
Occupational Health Support	If you need advice from OH, please contact the occupational health team, and send the completed risk assessment, your relevant query and contact details for you and the member of staff.