



Province of the  
**EASTERN CAPE**  
EDUCATION

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR SCREENING OF LEARNERS AND  
SCHOOL STAFF/PERSONNEL IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

**MAY 2020**

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## 1. Acronyms

COVID-19	Novel Coronavirus 2019
DBE	National Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education (Province/District)
DoH	Department of Health (Province/District)
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
NDoH	National Department of Health
NHLS	National Laboratory Health Services
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Diseases
PHC	Primary Healthcare
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PUI	Person under Investigation
SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2
SBST	School Based Support Team
SCT	School Screening Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TB	Tuberculosis
2019-nCoV	novel coronavirus

## **2. Background**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. The official disease name was established after material creation, any mention of nCoV refers to COVID-19, the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy. More information on COVID-19 is available here [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za) ; [www.health.gov.za](http://www.health.gov.za) and [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za) .

Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases to help ensure learners have safe and healthy learning environments. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) announced plans to re-open schools on 1 June 2020 for learners using a staggered approach whereby learners will return to school grade-by-grade over a two-month period.

It should be noted that whilst all efforts are made to protect children from becoming infected with COVID-19, outbreaks may still occur. However, the vast majority of learners will experience no or mild symptoms; the main risk posed by re-opening of schools relates to learners infecting older family/household members who are at risk of developing more severe disease. It is therefore important that learners and school personnel are encouraged to follow hygiene and social distancing measures, not only during school hours, but also at home.

## **3. Purpose of the standard operating procedure**

The purpose of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to provide guidelines to schools for the screening of learners and all school staff/personnel for symptoms of COVID-19. Secondly, to ensure that all “persons under investigation” (PUI) are managed appropriately within the school space and referred for testing. The overall purpose is therefore to detect potential cases of COVID-19 and efficiently manage them to avoid further transmission and risk to other school personnel.

The School Screening team is required to work very closely with members of the School Based Support Team (SBST) for co-ordination purposes within the school. If the school does not have an SBST, a person from the School Management Team (SMT) should be selected to be the key point of contact.

## **4. Screening for COVID-19 symptoms**

### **4.1. Recommended schedule for screening**

#### **4.1.1. Who should be screened?**

Screening of all school personnel/staff and all learners will take place. School personnel includes the school principal, school management teams (SMT), all educators, learner support agents, peer educators, cleaners, other school staff and all visitors to schools including School Governing Bodies (SGB) and parents.

#### 4.1.2. Who will conduct the screening?

The School Screening Team as established by the school principal, depending on the local human resources available, the School Principal must establish the School Screening Team which may comprise of SMT, educators, security and School Support Teams as indicated in the Head of Department's memorandum of 21 May 2020. For ease of reference the memorandum is attached.

Volunteer "Queue Marshals" will be an essential part of the screening team to ensure that learners and school personnel maintain physical distancing and that screening is conducted in an orderly manner.

Each school must be linked to the nearest clinic and/or a Professional School Health Nurse will be responsible overall for the screening process and ensuring that learners who require testing, management or referral receive the appropriate services. It should be noted that the nurse does not need to be on-site on a permanent basis and that a full-time nurse could cover a number of schools (approximately five). Likewise, a nurse at a local clinic could be assigned to cover a number of schools. Schools, Circuits and Districts are to contact their nearest health facility for assistance in this regard. ECDoE has officially requested the Department of Health for assistance for schools, Circuits and District Offices.

Health Education will also be important during this process to ensure that each learner and school personnel is very clear about the reason for screening and also how they can prevent COVID-19 transmission. School Principal, SMT and School Support Teams can fulfil this function and be responsible for educating all learners on the importance of physical distancing, hand washing, cough etiquette and the basics of coronavirus and COVID-19.

All the screening team members and additional volunteers will need to wear face masks, wash/sanitise their hands regularly and adhere to physical distancing measures.

#### 4.1.3. Frequency of screening for each category

Each learner and school personnel will be screened on the first day back at school. Daily temperature screening must be conducted for learners, teachers, personnel/staff at school. Questionnaire screening which is part of screening should be conducted at least once a week, and more where possible. SMT, teachers, staff/personnel can undertake self-screening on a daily basis.

A specific day should be selected for learner screening. A local plan for screening should be set up between the schools and the nearest clinic and/or Professional Health Nurse/Practitioner so that the screening can be supervised by the Nurse and that the appropriate referrals can be made.

#### 4.1.4. Options for the location of screening

Screening should take place before the learners and school personnel reach the respective classrooms or offices within the school premises, ideally after immediate entry through the school gates. The School Screening Team should allocate a large enough space for mass screening of learners and school personnel to ensure that social distancing measures are

adhered to. Physical distancing requires that everyone is positioned 1.5 to 2m away from each other. Examples of sites for mass screening can include the assembly hall or the playground, ideally as close to the school entrance gates as possible.

#### **4.2. Equipment required for screening**

The following equipment will be needed to ensure safe and efficient screening is conducted:

- Face masks
- Hand sanitisers (70% alcohol content)
- Digital Thermometer
- Data collection Tool

#### **4.3. Preparation for screening**

The screening team should meet at least 45 minutes before the school opens for the day so that preparations can be made for the screening process. During this initial preparation, the team will need to make sure that all equipment is available and disinfected.

In the designated screening area, the team should prepare for screening as follows:

- 4.3.1. Tables must be set up where the individual screeners will receive the learners or school personnel for screening. The number of tables will depend on the volume of learners and school personnel to be screened. For example, if the screening space is large enough, set up 6 tables so that 6 separate orderly queues can be made. Physical distancing requires everyone to be 1.5 to 2m apart.
- 4.3.2. Each table should be thoroughly disinfected at the start of each day using disinfectant cleaner. The school cleaners can assist with this process of cleaning tables as part of their duties to disinfect the schools each day.
- 4.3.3. Clearly mark physical distancing spaces of at least 1.5m for the screening queues.
- 4.3.4. The thermometers will need to be sanitised using a 70% alcohol solution regularly throughout the screening.
- 4.3.5. Each person conducting screening must wear a face mask.
- 4.3.6. Each person conducting screening must regularly wash their hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser (70% alcohol) during the course of screening.
- 4.3.7. The queue marshals should stand at the entrance to the school, ensure that all learners and school personnel have their face masks on appropriately before entering the school. The queue marshal should then direct each learner/school personnel/staff to the screening stations where they will be met by other queue marshals who will be managing orderly queues.
- 4.3.8. Once the screening team is set up and ready with all the above criteria fulfilled, the screening can commence.

#### **4.4. Procedure for screening**

- 4.4.1. The learner or school personnel should approach the table where the screener will be standing on the other side.

- 4.4.2. Collect the health questionnaires (attached to this memorandum) and parent consent forms (to be arranged by the schools) from the learners that have been completed by the parents/carers.
- 4.4.3. The learner/school personnel/staff temperature will be taken and recorded.
- 4.4.4. The following table provides an example of the questions that will be asked. The form on an ECDoE letterhead to be completed by learners and personnel/staff is attached at the end of the memorandum.

General information		
Date		
Name		
Parental/carer consent and health questionnaire form completed by parents/carers	Yes /No	
Temperature recorded		
Screening procedure		
Question	Yes	No
Do you have a high temperature?		
Do you have a cough?		
Do you have a sore throat		
Do you have difficulty breathing (shortness of breath)		
Do you feel weak and tired today?		
Can you taste food and drinks normally?		
Can you smell normally?		

NB. If the answer to all the questions is “No”, the session will end and the learner/school personnel/staff can enter the school.

**NB. If the temperature taken is higher than 38°C or any 1 of the questions are answered “yes” the learner/school personnel will become a “person under investigation” (PUI) and must be referred for testing.**

NB. High risk learners/school personnel can also be identified if the following criteria are met and should be treated as a PUI:

- Has a close contact with someone who is suspected to have COVID-19 or has been diagnosed positive with COVID-19.
- Attended/worked at a healthcare facility that has treated patients with COVID-19

## 5. Testing for COVID-19

### 5.1. Criteria for referral of “PUI” for testing

The latest NICD guidelines recommend that any person who has a sudden onset of any ONE of the following symptoms: cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, or fever (which is either measure as more than or equal to 38°C or reported by the learner/school personnel) should be classified as a PUI.

Ensure the learner or school personnel/staff understands that a fever (or “high temperature”) is when they are sick and feeling very, very hot or very, very cold. They may even have a very hot head whilst the rest of their body feels very cold.

In addition, if the learner or school personnel has had a close contact with a confirmed or probably case or COVID-19, or they live in or have travelled to an area with local transmission, OR attended a healthcare facility where patients with COVID-19 were being treated without Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the last 14 days, then the client is considered to be a very high risk, and testing should be prioritise for them.

### **5.2. PUI waiting area in schools**

Once a PUI has been identified through screening, they must be asked to wait in the designated PUI waiting area. Each PUI must continue to wear a face mask and must continue to adhere to physical distancing rules. The PUI waiting area must be selected carefully within the school. It must be a private room or classroom (with no thoroughfare possible) that is big enough to seat up to 4 PUIs with chairs that are spaced. The PUI will wait to be instructed on the process for referral for testing and/or collection by parents. Parents who wish to arrange for private testing may do so, parents must advise the school of the outcome of the test.

### **5.3. Referral to other testing sites**

The PUI should be referred to nearest testing facility. The Screening team/SBST must inform the testing facility ahead of time that the learner or school personnel/staff is on their way for testing. Schools must assist the learner/staff member to reach a testing site and/or request the nearest clinic and or Professional Health Official to assist.

### **5.4. Management of confirmed COVID-19 case**

If the school health Team Leader is contacted by the laboratory and informed that one of the learners or school personnel has tested positive, what should happen?


- The Laboratory has an obligation to contact the learner, staff member and/or parents of the learner and the school and to advise of further measures to be undertaken when an individual tests positive for COVID-19.
- The school must inform the District and Head Office and a record of the COVID-19 positive case must be kept.
- Learner, school personnel/staff must wait at home for their COVID-19 tests and not return to school until a negative test is confirmed.
- The learner, school personnel/staff member cannot return to school until they test negative for COVID-19.
- A learner or school personnel PUI needs to recall who they had close contact with in the past two weeks (14 days) before onset of the symptoms, on the day the symptoms started and on the test. The names of all those should be recorded on the contact list and sent to DoH.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

It is strongly recommended that parents must not send their children to school if they are sick. Parents need to take their children to the nearest clinic if they are sick, not feeling well



and/or have COVID-19 related signs and symptoms as indicated above. This is in order to avoid infecting other school children and the entire school community.



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Eastern Cape Department of Education

22 May 2020



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### SCHOOLS SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

This form is for the screening of school learners and staff/personnel.

General information		
Date:		
Name:		
Parental/carer consent and health questionnaire form completed by parents/carers	Yes /No	
Temperature recorded:		
Screening procedure		
Question	Yes	No
Do you have a high temperature?		
Do you have a cough?		
Do you have a sore throat?		
Do you have difficulty breathing (shortness of breath)?		
Do you feel weak and tired today?		
Can you taste food and drinks normally?		
Can you smell normally?		

School Screening Team Members Name:

Signature: