

Emergency Protocols¹ for Safety of Incoming GBV Survivors, Existing Residents and Shelter Staff amidst COVID-19 Pandemicⁱ

Last Updated: October 2020

Admission Guideline

1. New entrants should be mandatorily quarantined for 14 days. If Covid-19 testing is available, she may be tested after 72 hours but must observe quarantine till results are received. Maximum effort should be made to house them on a floor on which no children are residing.
2. Decision to take in new admissions must be based on the threat level faced by the incoming survivor and must be carefully weighed against the safety of the existing residents.
3. Shelter should take in new cases so long as there is no overcrowding in the facility. Common spaces can be converted into makeshift rooms if extremely high risk cases need to be accommodated.
4. All women seeking admission must be informed of the SOPs and Protocols and that admission is conditional on a voluntary consent to abide by these SOPs and Protocols.

Hygiene Measures

1. All residents and staff should regularly disinfect hands with an alcohol-based disinfectant (composed of 60-80% alcohol) when in contact with surfaces such as door handles, tables, other people, outdoors or common in-door areas before and after meals.
2. Wash/scrub hands, if disinfectants are not available, for twenty seconds each time.
3. In addition, all residents and staff should:
 - a. Avoid touching the face and head area in general;
 - b. Sneeze or cough into a flexed elbow;
 - c. Maintain least three feet or one meter of distance from others and avoid physical contact;
 - d. Use facemasks and gloves when there is risk of possible physical contact;
 - e. Avoid all unnecessary outdoor exposure or exposure to other people at all costs.
4. Sharing of clothes, personal items or any other objects should be avoided as much as possible because the surface life of the Corona virus is still undetermined. If it must be done, the object should be disinfected properly prior to use.
5. For usage of toilets and washrooms, each resident should be provided with bleach-based cleaning detergent (at least 1000 ppm sodium hypochlorite), to clean common surfaces such as taps, commode and handles before and after use.
6. Rooms should be properly ventilated at all times to further minimize the chances of spread.
7. All grocery packaging should be disinfected with an alcohol-based disinfectant before use.
8. Perishable items such as meat, vegetables, fruits etc. should be washed properly before cooking/use. Preferably, they should be disinfected with a chlorine diluted water solution.
9. Only the essential staff should be present in kitchen and be equipped with gloves and face masks while cooking or carrying out kitchen related chores.
10. All common areas should be disinfected with bleach-based cleaning products regularly to minimize chances of exposure to the virus.
11. Cleaning staff should also wear gloves and facemasks when carrying out cleaning tasks.
12. Garbage disposal should be done properly in a dumpster that should be placed in area not frequented by staff/residents.

¹This document is subject to revision as the pandemic situation evolves.

Quarantine/Social Distancing Measures:

1. Residents and staff should not congregate in common areas unnecessarily.
2. For all necessary congregations, residents and staff should be one meter (three feet) apart at all times such as meal times, working on day-to-day chores, in the office, watching television etc.
3. If required, mark common areas with calculated distance of one meter/three feet as an added safe measure.
4. Residents must be constantly advised not to touch other residents except their own children (as minimally as possible).
5. For sleeping arrangements, all beds should be placed at least one meter/three feet apart. Rooms should be assessed for maximum capacity based on distance between beds. No one, including the resident staff members, should share beds.

Safety Protocols for All External/Internal Activities:

1. Residents should be advised not to go outside the facility except in situations of medical emergency. If it is unavoidable, they should wear protective gloves and masks at all times, follow social distancing rules and isolate them upon returning until they disinfect properly.
2. If a resident insists on going out of the facility without a valid reason, the Crisis Management staff may terminate residency at the shelter.
3. In-house (resident) staff may also only leave the facility for procurement or grocery or accompanying a resident to the hospital/doctor. In case of any other emergency, the staff members should seek permission from the Crisis Management Office or Executive Director.
4. Avoid allowing non-essential staff, repairing and maintenance personnel unless absolutely necessary.
5. Where it is absolutely necessary to allow for above, ensure minimal contact with residents by temporarily vacating the area where any repair/maintenance work is to be carried out.
6. Instruct repairing and maintenance personnel to wear gloves and face-mask and they should be in constant supervision by staff members during their work.
7. Once the repairing and maintenance personnel exit, the area should be disinfected properly before allowing resident access.
8. All other activities should be done via video-link, such as therapy, skills training, workshops etc.
9. For court appearances and visiting police stations for police statements, they should wear protective gloves and masks at all times, follow social distancing rules and isolate themselves upon returning until they disinfect properly.

Visitation Policy:

1. Aim to avoid in-person meetings and let residents have access to video-calls and allow for more frequent telephone calls so as to reduce the need for in-person meetings.
2. Where absolutely necessary to allow visitation, ensure that the meetings take place in an area not frequented by staff or residents.
3. Visitors must follow all precautionary measures – sanitize their hands, wear gloves and a face mask and maintain safe distance from the residents.
4. Any visitor who shows any symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 should not be allowed inside the premises.
5. After visitors leave, the resident should take all necessary steps to disinfect her if there was close contact and observe distancing from other residents and staff members till she has followed the sanitization protocol.

Transport Guidelines for Necessary Travel:

1. All transport vehicles should be regularly cleaned and disinfected properly.
2. It is advised to keep windows of the vehicle shut when in traffic or crowded areas.
3. Vehicles should be parked in as sparsely occupied areas as much as possible.
4. Travelers should wear gloves and face-masks while travelling and be seated at least one meter/three feet apart, which ideally means no more than three travelers per car.
5. All travelers should isolate and disinfect after travel and before accessing areas of common use.

Mental Health Care During the Pandemic

1. Residents should be given constant reassurances and accurate, verified information by staff members for fighting the pandemic with strength, patience and exercising due caution.
2. They should have access to mental health care experts through telephone/video-calls as required.
3. Residents and staff should strictly avoid sharing false news/methods of prevention so as to control spread of fear and panic.
4. They should be exposed to different activities virtually such as watching documentaries, movies, seminars and video tutorials of desired skills so as to occupy their time productively.

Reporting in Case of COVID-19 Symptoms or other Illnesses:

1. If symptoms such as difficulty in breathing, fever, coughing and sneezing are being experienced, the resident should immediately inform the Home Manager.
2. Home Management staff must also remain vigilant in case any resident is showing any symptoms of the virus and immediately seek medical assistance and isolate the resident from others.
3. In case of any other health related complaints, Home Management staff should either call the paramedics at 1122 before taking them directly to a hospital emergency or consult one of the doctors available for online/virtual support.
4. Shelter should try to seek online health consultations for its residents as much as possible unless physical examination is essential.
5. In case any of the Home Management or Kitchen Management staff are showing aforementioned symptoms, they must immediately inform the Crisis Management Office and practice self-quarantine.
6. Staff members should be excused from all duties and duly recommended to stay in complete isolation for 14 days or until required.

Emergency Steps in Case of Identification of Symptoms/Confirmed Cases of COVID-19:

1. Avoid any form of self-medication (especially any antibiotics).
2. Call National Hotline 1166 for COVID-19 testing.
3. In case of negative test results, isolate the resident for 14 days as a precaution, to eliminate the chances of a false negative.
4. In case of a positive test results, follow due procedure for departure of the said resident before her being transferred to a quarantine facility or hospital as required.
5. Families of the infected resident should be informed of her departure unless she expressly states otherwise.
6. Families should be mandatorily informed in case of death of the infected resident.
7. Area where the infected resident resided should be properly disinfected with bleach-based cleaning products and the person cleaning should wear gloves and mask to decrease exposure to the virus.

8. If an infected resident recovers and returns, they should be isolated for 14 days just in case to protect other residents and staff members.

Conveying Information to the Residents

1. All necessary infographics should be clearly displayed on entrance and exits and common areas which residents frequently access.
2. Residents who cannot read should be shown videos of necessary measures in preferred language or explained clearly by the staff of the rules mentioned above.
3. All of the above should be done for all the accompanying minors in a simplified manner and mothers should be advised to ensure that their children are following all necessary protocols.

Infographics for display:

کورونا وائرس سے بچاؤ: احتیاطی تدابیر

آگاہ رہیں، احتیاط برتن

کورونا وائرس سے بچنے کے لیے احتیاطی تدابیر سے ہم سب کو آگاہ کرنا ضروری ہے۔
کورونا وائرس سے بچنے کے لیے احتیاطی تدابیر سے ہم سب کو آگاہ کرنا ضروری ہے۔
احتیاطی تدابیر و علاج

کھانے سے پہلے ہاتھوں کو 20 سیکنڈ تک دھوئیں

چہرے کو ماسک سے ڈھانپ کر رکھیں

کھانے یا چھینکنے وقت منہ کو کپٹی سے ڈھانپیں

دوسروں سے 6 فٹ کا فاصلہ رکھیں

Website: www.dastak.org.pk

Crisis Centre Helpline: 00 92 (0) 333 4161610

کورونا وائرس سے بچاؤ: احتیاطی تدابیر

ہاتھ بار بار دھوئیں

چہرے کو ماسک سے ڈھانپ کر رکھیں

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End Notes

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- ⁱ 1. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
 2. <http://covid.gov.pk/guideline>
 3. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
 4. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/coronavirus-resource-center>
 5. https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Infectious-Disease-Toolkit-for-CoCs-Preventing-and-Managing-the-Spread-of-Infectious-Disease-within-Shelters.pdf?utm_source=HUD+Exchange+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=453c25fdc2-Health+Prepare+CoC+3.2.20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f32b935a5f-453c25fdc2-19224069
 6. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19_Homeless-H.pdf
 7. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/guidance-for-homeless-shelters-covid19.pdf>
 8. <https://www.chp.gov.hk>
 9. <http://www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources>
 10. <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/ur/>