GUIDELINES FOR SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS IN THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK IN LIBERIA
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1. WHAT ARE THESE GUIDELINES
   • These guidelines are for safe school environments in the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in Liberia and it defines the minimum requirements that must be in place in every school (Public and Private) to ensure that, from a health, water, sanitation and hygiene point of view, the school is a safe place for all students and school personnel
   • School administrators are responsible for ensuring that the guidelines are in place and fully adhered to
   • School administrators are further encouraged to create a school COVID-19 safety committee, including adult volunteers, youth and children, to assist with safe implementation of the guidelines. Members of this committee will also be trained in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)
   • School administrators are recommended to call a meeting of the Parent Teacher Association to share the contents of these Protocols with the community before the reopening of the school.
   • Parents must sign off before child can resume school to ensure that parents understand that they are required to keep sick children at home and also if they are exposed to a case
   • Active mandatory Parent Teacher Association (PTA) will play an important role in the implementation of the guidelines, supported by the Ministries of Education (MOE) and Health (MOH)

2. MECHANISMS AND FACILITIES THAT NEED TO BE IN PLACE BEFORE THE SCHOOL REOPENS
   • **HAND WASHING FACILITIES** must be in place at the school entry point and at the bathrooms (soap and clean water)
   • Entry to school must be controlled by measuring temperatures, wearing masks and washing hands every morning to prevent anyone showing COVID-19 symptoms from entering the school premises. The administration is responsible for organizing this
   • Each school has to identify a small physical space that will be used solely for the temporary isolation of students and school personnel with COVID-19 symptoms while waiting for the arrival of family/guardians and referral. This space should be easily accessible and easy to clean.
   • **A referral system** with a nearby health facility (including transport arrangement) must be in place before school reopens. School administrators will have to contact the County Health Team to agree on referral system for their school in accordance with the Ministry of Health (MOH)
   • **Voluntary COVID-19 testing** for all teachers and support staff as well as students accessing the school premises.

3. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE ONCE THE SCHOOLS REOPEN?

3.1 Monitoring daily access to school and or school transport
   Every day, at a clearly defined entry point, all students, school personnel, and any other person entering the school premises have to:
1) Get their temperature checked
2) Wash their hands with soap and clean water, and
3) Wear their face masks while maintaining a social distance of 1 meter

A trained school COVID-19 safety committee, of at least 2 people will measure temperatures of all incoming individuals. While taking the temperature, the Fever Monitors will ask everybody:
- If they feel sick (see symptoms below)
- If they have had contact with a suspected COVID-19 case (a person is considered to have “contact” if, in the last 14 days, they were exposed to a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case through; direct physical contact, sleeping in the same household, touching his/her clothes or linens, sharing food and bathrooms)

Before starting the first class of the day, the teachers will remind students about potential contacts and symptoms. School administrators and members of the school COVID-19 safety committee, measures each other’s temperature before they start working.

Access to school is prohibited to any person who meets any of the criteria below
- Has fever of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher
- Has any of the following symptoms (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea)
- Does not wear mask or wash hands for everyone’s protection

**3.2 WHEN FEVER OR OTHER COVID-19 SYMPTOMS ARE DETECTED AT SCHOOL**

Anybody displaying COVID-19 symptoms at school has to be managed carefully, following the steps outlined below, depending on when the symptoms are detected, however, it is also very important to remember to treat the person with care, affection and respect.

**Detection at School Entrance:**
- When a person is detected with fever of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher and/or any of the other symptoms listed above, the person will be accompanied to the pre-identified isolation location while keeping a distance of 1 meter (3 feet).
- School administrators inform his/her family guardians that he/she must follow the referral system agreed with the County Health Team (CHT). Somebody from the School Safety Committee steps in as long as family/guardians are not available.
- The health center keeps school administrators and family/guardians informed of the health condition of the individual.

**Detection during school hours:**
- When a teacher detects a possible COVID-19 case in the classroom, based on the symptoms listed above:
- The teacher immediately informs school administrators, who inform the parents/guardians that he/she must follow the referral pathway agreed with the County Health Team.
Somebody from the School Safety Committee accompanies the student to the pre-identified isolation location in the school premises, keeping a distance of 1 meter (3 feet).

If teacher or any other school personnel feels unwell:
- The teacher/other school personnel immediately notify school administrators, goes to the pre-identified isolation location in the school premises, and follows the referral pathway agreed with the County Health Team.
- School administrators contact his/her family.
- The health center keeps school administrators and family/guardians informed of the health condition of the individual.

**If COVID-19 is confirmed by a Laboratory:**
- School Administrators record it in a register (for both school personnel and students)
- The CHT must make a list of possible contacts with input from school Administrators and follow-up accordingly
- School administrators will further immediately inform the district education authorities who in turn will report to the county education authorities.

## 4. QUARANTINE PERIOD

The schools and all personnel that will become contacts shall adhere to the national quarantine procedures and timelines of 14 days as stipulated by the MOH/NPHIL in coordination with the County Health Team.

- During the quarantine period, the school should continue to provide ongoing support to either students or other school personnel.
- Persons with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 can return to school and normal work once they have been treated and released from the hospital, after consultation with the County Health Team.

## 5. SAFE HEALTH AND HYGIENE PRACTICES

While the enforcement of hygiene rules and practices is the school administrator’s responsibility, students, families and communities also have an important role to play in ensuring compliance.

### 5.1 Hand washing

It is the school administrators’ responsibility to ensure that hand washing facilities are available. Hand washing with soap and running water, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, or 70% alcohol solution can be used to help prevent infection of COVID-19 infection.

At the absolute minimum, the following 2 locations in the school have to have hand washing facilities:
- The school entry point, for hand washing with soap and running water
- The bathrooms, for hand washing with running water and soap

Any additional hand washing stations on the school premises should also use water and soap. School administrators are requested to put up posters illustrating how to wash hands correctly at all hand washing stations, and to organize practice sessions when schools reopen where trained school personnel teach all students and school personnel how to wash hands correctly:
- Rub hands together for 20 seconds
- Rinse well
- Dry hands without using a towel, by shaking hands in the air

**Anyone who enters the school must wash their hands:**
- At the school entrance
- After using the bathroom
- Before and after eating
- After coming in contact with their own or other people’s bodily fluids (tears, nasal secretions, saliva, blood, sweat, urine, vomit, etc.), even if wearing gloves

**In addition to the above, education personnel must wash their hands:**
- Before preparing food, eating, or helping students eat
- After helping a student use the bathroom
- After helping a student blow his/her nose

If a school does not have a reliable water supply, school administrators are responsible for organising the provision of water from a source in the community. The minimum requirements, including for drinking and hand washing, are:
- 3 litres of water per student per day for day students
- 20 litres of water per student per day for boarding school students

**5.2 Wearing face masks at all times**
All persons; school staff, students, parents and people visiting the school premises must wear face masks at all times. The school administrators should ensure that additional face masks are available on the school premises.

**N/B: Please consider using face shield for children with asthma**

**5.3 Regular cleaning, spraying and disinfecting of bathrooms (every one hour and after every use)**
School administration is responsible for having designated people for cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms. The area should be cleaned with a 0.5% chlorine solution.
- People must be trained and provided with protective equipment
  - Heavy duty reusable gloves and rubber boots
  - Aprons and face shields or masks

**5.4 Regular cleaning of surfaces and spraying of door knobs**
Regularly touched surfaces such as door knobs and all frequently used facilities will have to be cleaned, disinfected and sprayed often.

**5.5 No touch policies at school**
- No contacts/ close sports or recreations
- Consider reducing/adjusting after school activities to prevent crowding
- Staggering break times to limit the number of students socializing at one time

**5.6 Maintaining a social distance of 1 meter or more in classrooms whether chairs, benches or desk.**
The school as well as classrooms should be set up with the minimum of 1 meter social distance at all times. This also applies to teachers’ lounge and other public places on the school premises as well as during recess and breaks.
5.7 Limit movement between classrooms and mandate handwashing when moving between buildings or at scheduled intervals for smaller children

5.8 Safe food preparation and handling
School administrators, with the help of Parent Teacher Associations and other community members, should mitigate the risk for students and school personnel to be infected by COVID-19 when they eat or drink on the school premises during school hours, by respecting the following rules:

- Clean drinking water must be available for all students and school personnel.
  
  **When food is sold inside the school compound:**
  - It should only be sold by vendors authorized by school administrators and the Parent Teacher Association.
  - School administrators are responsible for ensuring that the area where food is sold is clean at all times.
  - Food vendors must follow the same procedures for school entry (temperature check, answering questions about other symptoms and contact, hand washing) when entering school premises

- **Students should not:**
  - Eat food that has touched the ground.
  - Share the same cup or utensils for eating or drinking.
  - Leave the school yard to buy food if food is available at school.

- **If the school provides utensils and supports communal eating:**
  - Purchase additional cups, bowls and utensils, or
  - Ask parents/guardians to provide students with their own cup, bowl and utensils to take to school

6. PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND REDUCING STIGMA
School Administrators are responsible for ensuring that students who need psychosocial support when required, in a confidential manner, students should be referred to the teacher-counsellor, psychosocial worker and if necessary, to child protection services. The psychosocial team conducts mental health and psychosocial training for teachers and school administrators including focal persons.

*Psychosocial support and risk communication in schools* will be mandatory, both to create awareness and to limit stigmatization.

7. MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES
The MOE, MOH, NPHIL and partners will ensure that regular monitoring is done. They shall monitor adherence to these guidelines by school administrators, education personnel, parents, students and visitors to school campuses.

8. COMPLIANCE
School administrators are required to ensure full compliance with these guidelines.

Any school found not adhering to these guidelines will be penalized as deemed necessary by the Ministry, which may be:

- A fine (that hurts) will be paid into Government Revenue.
- Suspension of the school’s Operation Permit.
- Withdrawal/Banning of the principal from participating
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The school has a water supply or sufficient water is provided from the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school entry has a functioning hand washing station with soap and running water</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A functioning hand washing station with running water and soap in place at the bathrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENERAL HEALTH</td>
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<tr>
<td>School personnel and students are wearing face masks at all times</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Classrooms are arranged with 1 meter spacing distance in between</td>
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<tr>
<td>School personnel and students adhere to the required social distancing guideline</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school has at least two (2) thermometers (Thermoflashes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra batteries are available for thermometers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra face masks are available for personnel or students that may forget theirs</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school has agreed on a health referral system with the County Health Team</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The school has identified a small physical space for temporary isolation

**CLEANING**

- The school has a cleaning staff
- The cleaning staff have been trained in disinfection
- A back sprayer, bucket, towel and floor mop are available for cleaning
- Reusable gloves, rubber boots and googles are available for cleaning

**EATING AND DRINKING PRACTICES**

- Students do not share the same cups and utensils for eating and drinking without adequate washing
- School vendors selling food in the school compound are authorized by school administrators (skip if not applicable)
- School vendors selling food in the school compound follow the procedures for school entry (skip if not applicable)