



## **Fijian Civil Service COVID-Safe Workplace Guideline June 2021**

### **1.0 Objectives**

- 1.1. The objective of this Guideline is to provide guidance to Permanent Secretaries to enact the necessary steps to ensure the safety of their employees and the general public through the effective implementation of COVID health and safety measures in Government workspaces while ensuring the continuity of services.

### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease known as COVID-19.
- 2.2 Fiji recorded its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020 and the Fijian Government has since put in place a number of measures to contain the spread of the virus.
- 2.3 The following principles outline the Fijian Civil Service's commitment to preventing the spread of COVID-19:
  - (i) As employers, we have a responsibility to ensure the provision of a COVID-safe work environment;
  - (ii) As employees, we have the right to a healthy and safe working environment and a responsibility to maintain this environment for the safety of our colleagues and the public who access our services;
  - (iii) We must implement all COVID-safe measures utilising robust risk management and decisive action;
  - (iv) As COVID restrictions relax, we must maintain and promote healthy and safe working practices;
  - (v) We must adhere to advice from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) and ensure observance of updated laws and regulations;
  - (vi) We must be committed to the continued provision of efficient and effective services to the public; and
  - (vii) We must be role models of COVID-safe workplace practices and hold those employees who are not adhering to these measures accountable in line with the Code of Conduct and all relevant Civil Service Guidelines.
- 2.4 This Guideline is applicable to all salaried employees, Government Wage Earners, temporary employees, project employees, and volunteers, in all Government Ministries and Departments, that fall under the purview of a Permanent Secretary.
- 2.5 It is the responsibility of each Ministry to ensure the effective and regular communication of workplace COVID-safe measures to all employees.

- 2.6 Each Ministry is required to closely monitor the adherence of all COVID-19 safety measures.

### **3.0 Definitions and Abbreviations**

**WFH:** Alternative working arrangement whereby an employee may remotely carry out the usual functions of his/her work from a home setting, utilising digital communication wherever possible to maintain a connection with colleagues and clients as if they were at the office.

**MHMS:** Ministry of Health and Medical Services

**OHS:** Occupational Health and Safety

**PPE:** Personal Protective Equipment

**Essential functions:** functions of the Ministry or Department that are identified by the Permanent Secretary as being necessary to be carried out from the place of work.

**Non-Essential functions:** functions of the Ministry or Department that are identified by the Permanent Secretary that can be undertaken by employees through WFH arrangements.

### **4.0 Risk Assessment and Action Plan**

- 4.1 Each Ministry should undertake a risk assessment of all customer service mediums and develop a comprehensive Action Plan on relevant safety measures to mitigate any and all perceived risks. A guiding template for this risk assessment is attached as **Annex 1** to this Guideline.

- 4.2 Risk assessments and related action plans should be updated regularly.

### **5.0 Contact Tracing**

- 5.1 Permanent Secretaries should ensure that all employees have been informed of the importance of having the careFIJI app installed in their smartphones and the device Bluetooth turned on at all times.

### **6.0 Workspace Bubbles**

- 6.1 Workspace bubble arrangements should be developed for employees who are reporting to the office.

- 6.2 In line with the operational requirements, employees in office locations, departments or office spaces should be regarded as a bubble, and should operate strictly within that grouping.

- 6.3 Ministries must utilise all technological platforms that would assist in their communication to minimise any and all interaction between bubbles.

## **7.0 Work From Home Arrangements**

7.1 Please refer to the revised June 2021 WFH Guideline. **(Annex 3)**

## **8.0 Rostering**

8.1 Ministries are encouraged to develop rostering arrangements, and implementation of effective monitoring and reporting processes in line with the WFH Guideline to minimise overcrowding in the office.

## **9.0 Physical distancing**

9.1 All employees should be trained on the importance, and methods of physical distancing of at least 2 metres where possible.

9.2 Physical distancing should be especially considered in confined spaces such as lifts, corridors and depending on workspace requirements, advice on occupancy should be provided.

9.3 Work stations should be well spaced out.

9.4 Mass gatherings or unnecessary groupings should be avoided – this may require the rostering of employees in break rooms, kitchens or meeting spaces.

9.5 Where face to face contact is essential, masks must be worn correctly at all times.

9.6 Non-contact methods of greetings should be adopted.

## **10.0 Meetings**

10.1 Face to face meetings should be minimised – where possible online platforms should be utilised.

## **11.0 Safety, Cleanliness & Hygiene**

11.1 All toilet facilities should have adequate supply of soap or hand wash or hand sanitisers.

11.2 Surfaces which are frequently touched should be disinfected regularly throughout the day – including lift buttons, sensor panels, and door handles.

11.3 Ways to improve ventilation within office spaces should be considered.

11.4 Ministries must conduct regular disinfection of vehicles and office premises.

11.5 Ministries should provide appropriate PPE for high risk or highly mobile employees.

11.6 Ministries must also ensure the proper disposal of PPE.

11.7 The workspace should be properly disinfected if there is exposure to a COVID19 – positive case.

## **12.0 Transport**

12.1 The Fijian Government Transport Policy (**Annex 4**) should be adhered to strictly.

12.2 Official vehicles should be regularly cleaned and a log kept of recent sanitisations. Transport officers are responsible for the monitoring of this work.

12.3 Masks should be worn at all times by passengers and drivers in the vehicle.

12.4 Employees travelling in official vehicles are required to have their careFIJI app activated throughout their journey.

12.5 Transport can be provided according to Ministry or Department bubble arrangements when it is unsafe to travel in public transport.

12.6 Employees travelling in personal vehicles or public transport should be advised to adhere to COVID-safe measures at all times.

## **13.0 Thermal scans**

13.1 Ministries should provide thermal scanner guns to conduct temperature checks for employees and visitors. When an employee or visitor's temperature is 38 degrees or above, entry to Government premises should be barred and the person(s) should be referred to the nearest COVID-19 screening clinic.

## **14.0 Swabbing**

14.1 Ministries should develop a swabbing arrangement with MHMS for highly mobile employees such as drivers, messengers and all employees who have a high degree of contact with the public.

14.2 Results will be directly communicated to the employees by MHMS, and the employees should then notify the HR immediately.

## **15.0 Employees Presenting with COVID-19 like symptoms**

15.1 Employees who present with COVID-19 like symptoms are required to call the MHMS number 158 or visit the nearest screening clinic.

15.2 The employee should be encouraged to stay home and remain isolated until symptoms dissipate, or are cleared by the screening clinics.

15.3 Employees may apply for sick leave or WFH arrangements can be approved.

## **16.0 Employees who are Positive or are Primary Contacts**

- 16.1 Employees diagnosed with COVID-19 will be entitled to sick leave as per the General Orders.
- 16.2 If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, or has been identified as a primary contact, he/she must immediately notify the immediate supervisor and/or HR, and must strictly follow the directions of MHMS.
- 16.3 Employees or clients who have had recent contact with an employee who has tested positive, or is a primary contact, should be informed, and this information should also be shared with the MHMS.
- 16.4 Employees may be asked to self-isolate by the MHMS or the Permanent Secretary and in line with the Work from Home Guideline, self-isolation is considered WFH.
- 16.5 Following self-isolation orders by MHMS or the Permanent Secretary, employees should return to work only after receiving clearance from MHMS.
- 16.6 Ministries should maintain high levels of confidentiality in regards to possible or positive COVID-19 cases. Information on employees who have tested positive with COVID-19 is considered confidential, and violations of this confidentiality are considered a breach of the Civil Service Code of Conduct. Permanent Secretaries may institute disciplinary action for non-adherence.
- 16.7 Employees who have recovered from COVID-19 are required to submit confirmation of their negative tests and/or discharge from the MHMS, to their respective Permanent Secretaries through their HR departments, before they can return to the workplace.

## **17.0 Employees with underlying conditions**

- 17.1 Employees may choose to volunteer information in regards to underlying health conditions which place them at a higher risk of infection, and of greater health complications if diagnosed with COVID-19. Based on this information, work arrangements should be amended to mitigate the risk for these employees.
- 17.2 Amended work arrangements should ensure that these employees are provided with meaningful work, congruent with their remuneration levels.

## **18.0 Customer Interaction**

- 18.1 The development of online service portals should be prioritised as an alternative to minimise crowding.
- 18.2 Entry ways should be regulated to avoid overcrowding.
- 18.3 Areas of customer engagement should be sanitised regularly.

- 18.4 Customers should be informed of updated requirements to have the careFIJI app installed or contract tracing details should be recorded.
- 18.5 Physical distancing measures in customer waiting spaces should be communicated and enforced.
- 18.6 Customers/clients and visitors should be prohibited from accessing office space, this also includes non-essential vendors and deliveries.

## **19.0 Workplace Gatherings**

- 19.1 Unnecessary workplace social gatherings should be avoided.
- 19.2 The consumption of yaqona or alcohol on government premises continues to be banned. The sharing of cigarettes is not permitted at designated smoking areas.

## **20.0 Workplace Violence and Aggression**

- 20.1 Workplace violence or aggression is where employees face abuse, assault or harassment as a result of the work that they do.
- 20.2 Anxiety, stress and apprehension may increase the risk of workplace violence or aggression, especially in areas where employees are required to work with the public or external clients.
- 20.3 Acts of workplace violence and aggression can include:
- Physical assault such as scratching, biting, kicking, pushing or grabbing;
  - Deliberate acts of coughing and spitting;
  - Harassment, which encompasses unwanted physical or sexual contact, verbal threats and abuse, yelling and swearing in person and through email.
- 20.4 Risk Assessments and Action plans should identify hazards that may lead to the increased risk of workplace violence and aggression, and ways to implement controls to minimise these risks. Assessments and Action plans should include contingency strategies for removing risks or de-escalating situations.

## **21.0 Local and International Travel**

- 21.1 Any local travel requests should be considered in line with MHMS advice and unnecessary travel should be curbed.
- 21.2 Overseas official travel must be approved by the Minister for Civil Service.

## **22.0 Supporting Employees Mental Health**

- 22.1 Employees may need additional mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 22.2 Managers and supervisors are required to keep in regular contact with their employees to ensure that they are supported and motivated whether they are present in the office, on WFH arrangements or deployed to assist in COVID-19 efforts.

22.3 Managers and supervisors should ensure that employees have clear expectations and priorities.

22.4 Employees should be encouraged to protect their mental health by accessing on-site or remote services (e.g. telehealth) for therapy, advice and other forms of support.

### **23.0 Employees Supporting Dependants with COVID-19**

23.1 Employees may be required to support or care for dependants who have tested positive for COVID-19. In this context, “dependants” refers to members of their immediate household.

23.2 In this instance, WFH arrangements should be approved, following the provision of the necessary documentation.

23.3 Ministries should be empathetic to the needs of employees and ensure that if required for severe cases, flexible leave arrangements can be approved involving WFH, and available Family Care Leave and Annual Leave balances.

### **24.0 Awareness and Training**

24.1 Working within the guidelines and advice from MHMS, the Occupational Health and Safety Committee of each Ministry, with the Corporate Service Division, is responsible for coordinating training and creating awareness of COVID-safe measures for all Ministry employees.

24.2 Posters, pamphlets and other materials are available from the World Health Organisation, MHMS and Fijian Government websites or social media pages for distribution in respective Ministries and Departments.

24.3 Ministries must ensure that only factual and evidence – based information approved by the MHMS is shared in Government offices and on Government premises. The sharing of misinformation is considered a breach of the Civil Service Code of Conduct, and disciplinary action can be taken.

### **25.0 Monitoring of the Guideline and Action Plan implementation**

25.1 Following the development and implementation of the Ministry’s Action Plan, the Ministry is responsible for monitoring the execution of the plan to ensure ministry wide adherence to announced measures, policies and procedures. A checklist is at **Annex 2**.

25.2 Regular reports should be provided to the respective Permanent Secretaries, through OHS workplace committees, or other Ministry specific arrangements

25.3 The Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations through the OHS Division will conduct checks on all Ministries to ensure compliance with the above.

## **26.0 Non Adherence to COVID-safe measures**

26.1 The Permanent Secretary may institute necessary disciplinary measures for non-adherence to COVID-safe measures in this Guideline.

Ministry of Civil Service

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## FIJIAN CIVIL SERVICE COVID-19 SAFETY ACTION PLAN

MINISTRY \_\_\_\_\_

DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Risk Key: High Risk  Medium Risk  Low Risk

Service Provided	Risk level & Who is at risk?	Actions to minimize risk	Further Action	Responsible Officer	Timeline
For example: Government Service Centre	Clerical Officer GSC  Customers accessing information	Masks to be worn  Physical distancing at all times	Perspex barrier to be built for additional protection.  Online Government Service Referral Centre	CO GSC, PCSO GSC	
Policy Advice to Ministries	Policy Development Implementation and Monitoring Unit	No meetings to be taken – zoom or telephone calls  Physical distancing  Masks to be worn at all times	Not required	Director, Business Unit Support Officer	Ongoing

### Workplace Violence and Aggression Risk Assessment:

Areas of Increased Risk	Mitigation Strategies	De-escalation Strategies
Long lines – no shady area	Communication of requirements beforehand using signs and infographics	Officer is alone in GSC, additional security or assigned employees to be considered.



## FIJIAN CIVIL SERVICE COVID-19 SAFE WORKPLACE GUIDELINE CHECKLIST

Risk Assessment	Yes	No	Action Needed
Have you a system in place to keep up to date with the latest advice from the Fijian Government to adjust your plans and procedures in line with that advice?			
Have you developed and implemented your COVID-19 Action Plan aligned to the Risk Assessment and the COVID-Safe Workplace Guideline?			
Have you developed and implemented a communication system to provide your workers with information and guidance on infection prevention, control and measures you have put in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, and what is expected of them?			
Have you provided a system for workers to raise issues or concerns, and to have them responded?			
<b>Work From Home</b>			
Have you assessed who can do their work from home and given them the facility to do so?			
Have you identified employees who are not able to work from home and assigned them work to assist with the MHMS screening efforts or MRMDNDMO assistance to the public?			
Have you put in place a monitoring and reporting process for WFH arrangements?			
<b>Returning/Reporting to Work</b>			
Do you have Bubble Arrangements in place for employees?			
Have you communicated the adjustment of employee rosters, organising of teams, breaks etc. needed to reduce the number of people in the workplace at any one time and to maintain physical distancing measures?			
Have you set up workstations, desks and tables in line with physical distancing measures?			
Have you developed an arrangement to monitor and ensure adherence to COVID-19 safety measures in the workplace?			

Have you arranged to carry out meetings, training and information sessions online or by telephone as much as possible?			
Have you stopped all non-essential business / work travel? Check MOHMS for the most up to date information on this.			
Is a designated isolation room identified in case an employee is unwell and shows COVID-19 symptoms while at work?			
Is there a register maintained for any employee rostered to be at work and has not arrived since they are unwell?			
<b>Transport</b>			
Have you developed an SOP for the safe transport of employees in official vehicles?			
Where workers need to share a work vehicle or travel to/from work with others in a vehicle, are they travelling within bubble arrangements? Have you advised them to wear face masks, and to wash their hands before and after travelling together, in line with Public Health advice?			
Are drivers provided with hand sanitiser and cleaning equipment for their work vehicle, with cleaning taking place before and after each shift? Are workers informed of the need for interior touch points to be cleaned / wiped at the start and end of each shift?			
<b>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</b>			
Have you identified, selected and sourced suitable PPE and protective clothing based on the hazard and risk to your workers, and arranged enough supplies of it?			
Has appropriate PPE been provided to the employee and shown how to wear it correctly?			
Has an SOP been developed to ensure the proper disposal of PPE?			
<b>Hygiene and Cleanliness</b>			
Has the workplace, including all equipment, workstations, benches, doors and frequently touched surfaces, been thoroughly cleaned? If disinfection is required, has this been carried out in addition to cleaning?			
Has the Ministry put in place a workplace/vehicle disinfection plan/roster?			
<b>Thermal Scans and Swabbing</b>			
Does your Ministry have a thermal scan SOP for employees and visitors?			
Has your ministry developed a swabbing arrangement for highly mobile or at risk employees?			
<b>Employees with underlying conditions</b>			

Have you communicated with your employees that alternative work arrangements are available for employees who have underlying conditions and are at a higher risk of COVID-19			
<b>Employees who are positive</b>			
Do you have an SOP in place to manage employees who present with COVID-19 like symptoms?			
Have employees been reminded of the requirement to maintain confidentiality of personal information, specifically in regards to COVID-19 status?			
<b>Workplace Violence and Aggression</b>			
Have these risks been identified and strategies to manage and de-escalate been included in your Action Plan?			
<b>Training and Communication</b>			
Has your Ministry developed a Training or Awareness Session on COVID-19 protocols?			
Are all your employees aware of the consequences of non-adherence to COVID-19 safety measures?			
Is there a regular awareness communication developed to encourage employees to get vaccinated?			