



**H - WCED Guideline:
Managing safety of educators with
comorbidities.**

Branch: Institution Development and Coordination	H - WCED Guideline: Managing safety of educators with comorbidities.	
H - WCED Guideline	Issued: 17 July 2020	To be reviewed as and when necessary.

Approved by the Head of Department:



BK Schreuder
Date: 17 July 2020

H - WCED GUIDELINE: MANAGING SAFETY OF EDUCATORS WITH COMORBIDITIES:

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide guidelines to principals and School Management Teams to manage vulnerable educators during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2. It also identifies the risk factors for severe Covid-19 which are serious underlying medical conditions that, if present, place an individual at a high risk of experiencing severe illness or death, should the individual be infected with Covid-19.

2. Directives and agreements

- 2.1. In terms of the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), Collective Agreement 1 of 2020, 30 May 2020, the concession process is to be followed for employees with a comorbidity (Covid-19). This collective agreement aims to provide a concession for educators employed in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act 76 of 1998), and who are affected due to risk factors for severe Covid-19.
- 2.2. Please note that the directions issued by the Minister of Public Service and Administration in Circular 11 of 2020, dated 20 March 2020, are applicable for those employed in terms of the Public Service Act (PSA), 1994 (Proclamation 103 of 1994), as amended.

3. Concession for educators with comorbidities

- 3.1. Educators with any condition that may place him or her at a higher risk of complications and those age 60 and above with a comorbidity, may apply for a concession to work from home, should they become infected with Covid-19.
- 3.2. "Work from home" means that the educator has eLearning and eAdministration capabilities, including data and equipment, and the necessary learning resources.
- 3.3. Educators who are not able to work from home should report to school; however, additional risk control measures must be considered to mitigate the risk of transmission at the workplace.
- 3.4. Concessions granted will only be applicable for the duration of Alert Levels 3 and 2 of the national state of disaster as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

4. Responsibilities of the principal

- 4.1. To identify risk factors for severe Covid-19, including comorbidities:
 - 4.1.1. It is important that schools identify educators who qualify to apply for concessions.
 - 4.1.2. In a letter (Reference: Covid-19/2020523), dated 23 May 2020, the Head of Department in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) requested that educators with comorbidities to submit an application for a concession to their principals accompanied with medical evidence from their medical practitioner, as well as a plan as to how they would propose they might continue to work. The individual Risk Assessment Form, part of ELRC, Collective Agreement 1 of 2020, will be required for those that have not completed this process. The WCED will consider the applications that were already submitted.
 - 4.1.3. Educators with comorbidities and those who are 60 years and above with a comorbidity will remain at home on full pay subject to the completion of the individual Risk Assessment Form and other requirements being met.
 - 4.1.4. Those educators with comorbidities and those who are 60 years and above who wish to report to school may do so in agreement with the principal and after appropriate safety measures have been put in place.
 - 4.1.5. The principal and the educator need to agree on how the underlying medical condition or comorbidity can be accommodated. If there is no agreement to this effect, the grievance procedure in Chapter G of the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) document will be activated.

5. Classification for concession

- 5.1. The following medical conditions and comorbidities as verified by the Department of Health are High-Risk Vulnerability conditions. Medical evidence must be provided to assist in classifying the educator's vulnerability:

HIGH RISK VULNERABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age >60 with one or more diseases/conditions as listed.• 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, and/or
- 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 drugs.
- People with severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe and unstable asthma, severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and/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) or homozygous sickle cell).
- People on immunosuppressive therapies sufficient to increase the risk of infection significantly.
- People who are moderately or intermittently immune-compromised.
- Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.
- Chronic lung problems (moderate to severe asthma, previous complicated Tuberculosis (TB), etc.). Pulmonary TB – untreated or in early treatment and those who have not completed the intensive phase or first two months of treatment in line with the National Department of Health Standard Treatment Guidelines. Asthma which requires treatment with high doses inhaled corticosteroids plus a second controller (and/or systemic corticosteroids) to prevent it from becoming “uncontrolled” or which remains “uncontrolled” despite this therapy.
- Confirmed clinical diagnosis of congestive cardiac failure or other serious cardiovascular diseases.
- Severe hypertension: systolic BP ≥ 180 mmHg and/or diastolic BP ≥ 110 mmHg.
- Moderate hypertension: systolic BP 160 – 179 mmHg and/or diastolic BP 100 – 109 mmHg.
- Confirmed cerebrovascular disease, including stroke, and transient ischemic attack.
- Severe obesity (BMI > 40).
- Underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as type II Diabetes Mellitus (HbA1c $\geq 7.5\%$ within last 6 months); Chronic Kidney Disease with an eGFR < 45 ; or liver disease.
- More than 28 weeks pregnant.

- 5.2. Should an educator have a condition not listed above, which, in the opinion of the doctor renders this educator vulnerable, a motivation from the treating doctor is necessary.

6. Completion of an individual Risk Assessment Form

- 6.1. Every educator who has indicated that they have an underlying medical condition or comorbidity must complete the individual Risk Assessment Form. (Please see Annexure A).
- 6.2. The individual Risk Assessment Form for Vulnerable Employees due to Covid-19 must be completed for every educator appointed in terms of the PSA, 1994, (Proclamation 103 of 1994), as amended, and those who indicated that they have an underlying medical condition or comorbidity that puts them at risk of being infected with Covid-19.
- 6.3. The educator and manager need to agree on how the underlying medical condition or comorbidity will be accommodated.
- 6.4. A medical report is required by his/her treating doctor when completing the individual Risk Assessment Form. The following must be included in the report:
- The name and the qualification of the medical practitioner issuing the certificate;
 - His or her contact number and physical address;
 - A proper practice or registration number; and
 - Covid-19 evidence of comorbidity would need to be stated. It would need to include a description of the medical condition/comorbidity, how long the medical practitioner has been treating the educator for the medical condition/comorbidity, what treatment the educator has been receiving and the risk posed to the educator.
- 6.5. The above is reflected in the ELRC, Collective Agreement 1 of 2020, 30 May 2020.

7. Application process

- 7.1. The attached individual Risk Assessment Form for vulnerable employees has to be completed by both the educator and manager and submitted with medical evidence as follows:
- All educators and support staff at educational institutions to submit to their Circuit Manager;
 - All district officials to submit to their District Director; and
 - All Head Office officials to submit to the Chief Director: People Management Practices.

- 7.2. A dedicated Task Team appointed at Head Office will provide guidance on the appropriateness of medical evidence where there is uncertainty and if not in line with the comorbidity classifications provided. The Task Team will also provide guidance on the appropriateness of accommodating the reported medical condition or comorbidity, where there is uncertainty.
- 7.3. All declined applications and applications of conditions not appearing on the table above may be submitted to the Health Risk Manager for secondary screening to confirm that the interests of both the employee and employer are accommodated.
- 7.4. The educator shall be allowed to remain and/or work from home with full pay whilst waiting for the outcome by the Department, Health Risk Manager or a health professional.
- 7.5. All information relating to the process as well as medical evidence submitted must be treated with the utmost sense of confidentiality to respect the educator's privacy and to prevent discrimination or stigmatisation.

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