



**THE PRESIDENCY
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- The Attorney General
- All Cabinet Secretaries
- All County Governments
- All Chairpersons' of Constitutional Commissions
- All Principal Secretaries/Accounting Officers
- Clerk of the Senate
- Clerk of the National Assembly
- Chief Registrar of the Judiciary
- All Clerks of County Assemblies
- All Chief Executive Officers of State Corporations

GUIDELINES FOR RETURN TO WORK FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS AFTER QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION UPON EXPOSURE AND/OR INFECTION WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The emergence of the COVID -19 pandemic in the country has greatly impacted on the social economic aspects of life of all Kenyans including Public Servants. In response to the challenges arising from the pandemic, the Government has put in place measures to mitigate the spread of the disease including requirements for Quarantine and or isolation of persons upon exposure or infection with COVID-19. It has been observed that a number of public officers affected have also been placed on quarantine or isolation.

Consequently, it has become necessary to provide a Protocol for return to work for Public Officers following COVID-19 related Quarantine and/or Isolation. The Guidelines shall apply to all Public Officers in Ministries/Departments, County Governments and other Government Agencies.

1. Definition of Terms

The definition of terms as used in this Protocol are as follows:

- COVID-19** - Coronavirus disease 2019 is an acute respiratory infection whose symptoms include mild common cold-like illness and severe viral pneumonia leading to acute respiratory distress syndrome that is potentially fatal.
- Quarantine** - the restriction of activities of/or the separation of persons who are not ill but who may have been exposed to COVID-19. The objective is to monitor their symptoms and ensure early detection of cases.

- iii. **Isolation** - the separation of ill or persons infected with COVID-19 from others to prevent the spread of infection or contamination.

2. Application, Notification and Progress Updates

2.1 Application

These Guidelines shall apply to Public Officers returning to work following COVID-19 related Quarantine or Isolation. The Protocol shall be applied in conjunction with Guidelines issued to the Service by the Head of Public Service, Ministry of Health and other prevailing Government Policies, Statutes and Regulations released to the Service.

2.2 Notification

- i. A Public Officer who has been placed in Quarantine or Isolation shall notify his/her immediate Supervisor of the occurrence, including the facility of Quarantine or Isolation within twenty-four (24) hours.
- ii. This provision shall also apply to Officers who are required to Self-Quarantine as per the Guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health.
- iii. The Supervisor shall notify the Human Resource Unit which shall prepare a report for submission to the Authorized Officer.

2.3 Progress updates

- i. The Supervisor shall arrange to check in regularly with the employee during the Quarantine or Isolation period.
- ii. To the extent practicable, the Public Officer shall also provide regular updates to the Supervisor.
- iii. While making enquiries on the status of the Public Officers, applicable confidentiality requirements governing such situations shall be observed.

3. Return to Work Requirements

At the end of the Quarantine or Isolation period, a Public Officer shall be required to satisfy the following conditions before returning to work:

- i. Obtain the requisite Clearance from the Quarantine or Isolation facility certified by the designated persons indicating that the Public Officer is free and safe from the COVID-19. The officer will present these documents to his/her Supervisor at the point of returning to work;
- ii. Stay away from the duty station for a period of seven (7) days after the date of medical certification; and
- iii. Comply with the Government guidelines on prevention of COVID – 19 including wearing of masks, social distancing, maintaining of clean surfaces and wearing of other personal protective equipment.

- iv. Officers on Self-Quarantine will be required to report to their duty station after the expiry of the fourteen (14) day requirement.

No Public Officer will be allowed to return to work without fulfilling the above requirements.

4. Return to Work Support

- i. Officers returning to work from COVID – 19 Quarantine and/or Isolation may experience, fear, loss of sense of belonging, physical and mental stress. They therefore require support from both colleagues and the employer for effective adjustment at the work place.
- ii. Ministries/Departments/County Governments and Agencies are expected to set up pre-work resumption counseling programs that will instill positive behavior for the affected Officers and create a conducive working environment.
- iii. Public Officers shall have access to adequate Mental Health and Psychosocial Support being offered by the Government through the Ministry of Health in line with the Human Resource for Health (HRH) Protocol which include:
 - a. Online stress audit tests;
 - b. Virtual Psychological First Aid (PFA), psycho-education and group counseling; and
 - c. Individual tele-guidance/counseling provided by designated counselors and Public Service Mental Health Champions in Ministries, Departments, County Governments and Agencies, whose contacts shall be provided by the Head of the Counselling Unit of the Ministry of Public Service and Gender.
- iv. The employer shall also continue implementing employee welfare and wellness programs at the work place as outlined in the Human Resource Policies and Procedures Manual for the Public Service (May 2016).
- v. In addition, Ministries/Departments/County Governments and Agencies are required to adhere to the health and safety standards and requirements specified in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA), 2007 and other guidelines issued by the Government from time to time.
- vi. Co-workers should also be counselled to enable them fully support the returning Officers.

5. Work Plans and Arrangements

- i. An officer returning from Quarantine and/or Isolation shall within the first week of returning to work, discuss and agree with his/her Supervisor any changes in the work plan and work arrangement and make any necessary adjustments.
- ii. The Supervisor shall undertake to notify the relevant office of any such changes immediately they are agreed upon.
- iii. The revised work plan shall be the basis for work performance review for the Officer.

- iv. Taking cognizance of exigencies of duties, the returning Officer may be considered for shorter working schedules.
- v. Authorized Officers shall ensure that necessary arrangements are put in place to cover the work schedules for Officers in Quarantine and/or Isolation.

6. Stigma and Discrimination

Officers returning to work from COVID – 19 Quarantine and/or Isolation shall not be discriminated or stigmatized. It is an offence to discriminate any person on grounds of actual, perceived or suspected COVID – 19 status in the work place.

7. Administrative and Implementation and Processes

- i. The period a Public Officer spends in Quarantine or Isolation due to COVID-19, shall be treated as Sick Leave and shall be subject to the provisions of the **Human Resource Policies and Procedures Manual for the Public Service (May, 2016)**
- ii. Authorized Officers are required to implement the Guidelines and submit monthly reports to this Office on Public Officers returning to work after Quarantine and/or Isolation related to COVID – 19.

Please bring the contents of this Circular to the attention of all officers under your purview and ensure compliance with the same.



JOSEPH K. KINYUA, EGH
HEAD OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Copy to: **Prof. Margaret Kobia, PhD, MGH**
Cabinet Secretary
Ministry of Public Service and Gender
NAIROBI