



No. SO (EP&C) 1-8/2020
**GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB
PRIMARY & SECONDARY HEALTHCARE
DEPARTMENT**

Dated Lahore the 12th August, 2020

To

1. All Commissioners in the Punjab
2. All Deputy Commissioners in the Punjab
3. All Chief Executive District Officers District Health Authorities, Punjab

Subject: **SOPs TO PREVENT COVID-19 SPREAD DURING MOHARRAM
MAJALIS AND ASHURA PROCESSIONS**

On the recommendations of Technical Working Group (TWG), Primary & Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) is pleased to issue following 'Standard Operating Procedures' (SOPs) to prevent COVID-19 spread during *Moharram Majalis* and *Ashura* processions in the province:

1. Basic Principle

COVID-19 is a highly transmissible disease which spreads through respiratory droplets produced during coughing, sneezing and talking by the infected persons who can be asymptomatic as well. The droplets may contaminate surrounding surfaces and hands. Touching eyes, mouth and nose with contaminated hands transmits the virus. Activities involving gathering of people during *Moharram* like *Majalis*, rallies, *Zuljinnah* & *Alam* processions etc., are prone to close contact, surface sharing and environmental contamination with COVID-19 infection. Thus, abiding by preventive measures and strict compliance of SOPs is very important during all events regarding *Moharram Majalis* & processions. COVID-19 prevention requires compliance with following key principles: -

a. Hand Hygiene

- (1) Participants of *Moharram* activities should practice frequent hand wash with soap and water for 40 seconds or rub with >60% alcohol-based sanitizer for 20 seconds. Hand hygiene should be ensured after touching communal used surfaces like *Alam*, water tank trolleys

(*Sabeel* Trolley) door handles/knobs, furniture, chair arms, tables, utensils, crockery, etc.

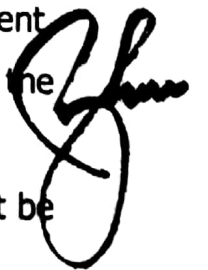
- (2) Avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily, if touched wash or sanitize hands immediately.
- (3) Maintain sufficient stock of hand sanitizer and provide to the participants whenever required.
- (4) Ensure functional wash basins with availability of soap, water and single use towels/tissue paper/waste bins throughout during processions.

b. **Respiratory Etiquettes**

- (1) Ensure wearing of face mask/face shield by management staff and all participants of *Moharram* processions.
- (2) Ensure using mask/face shield for speaker (*Zakir*) or install transparent shield in front of him/her during *Majalis*.
- (3) Ensure compliance to face cover in arm fold, tissue or handkerchief while sneezing or coughing.
- (4) Ensure availability of waste bins with lid in enough numbers at *Majalis* hall for appropriate disposal of used tissues, masks, etc.
- (5) Avoid touching and exchange face mask/covering.
- (6) Wash/sanitize hands if contaminated while coughing/sneezing or touching mask.
- (7) Maintain sufficient stock of face masks at event halls and provide to the participants if needed.

c. **Physical (Social) Distancing**

- (1) Limit the number of participants up to 50% of total capacity of the event venue.
- (2) Maintain inter-person spatial distance of 6 feet throughout the event
- (3) Distancing circles should be marked on floor to support the compliance.
- (4) Any unnecessary physical contact, handshakes and hugging must be avoided.



- (5) Prefer conducting *Majalis*/processions in open lawns and wider space; indoor closed building, narrow and congested places should be avoided.
- (6) *Majalis* duration should be reduced up to 1 hour while *Zuljinah* processions time may also be reduced as directed by the concerned District Administration accordingly.
- (7) Ensure line and distancing discipline at entry and exit of venues. Volunteers should be identified and held responsible to support the participants to comply with social distancing throughout *Majalis*/processions.
- (8) Procession/rally participants should not be gathered in groups or stay in narrow streets/place on their way and pass such areas briskly.
- (9) Restrict entry of following persons in *Majalis*/processions who are most prone to severe course of disease after infection:
 - (a) Children below 12 years of age.
 - (b) Old aged above 55.
 - (c) Person with chronic illnesses (Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, TB, Cancer etc.), patients getting treatment for any ailment, participants with fever/flu/cough.

d. **Cleanliness & Disinfection**

- (1) **Ensure frequent cleanliness** and disinfection of surrounding surfaces being used by multiple individuals. Priority areas include floor, furniture, equipment, doors (knobs & handles), rest rooms, wash basins, toilets etc.
- (2) **Carpeting or mat cover of floors is not permissible** in the event halls however plastic sheets may be used to cover it while ensuring it is washed detergent after every *Majalis*/procession to keep it disinfected.
- (3) Ensure cleanliness and **disinfection of halls after every session.**
- (4) Follow standard procedure i.e. clean the surface to make it dirt/dust free then wipe with 1% freshly prepared sodium hypochlorite solution.

- (5) Staff deployed for cleanliness and disinfection should wear facemask and gloves.
- (6) Ensure adequate machine assisted **ventilation of halls** and other communal use closed rooms by installing exhaust/pedestal fans.
- (7) *Majalis*/processions in air-conditioned closed buildings are not admissible.
- (8) Don't share consoling devices like chain, sharps, *Zanjeers* (for *zanjeer zani*) etc. and personal use items like cellphone, camera, etc.
- (9) Communal towel use is not permissible.
- (10) Avoid indoor or outdoor activities requiring frequent surface sharing, close contact and posing risk for violation of desired social distance.
- (11) Depute trained volunteers to oversee and ensure compliance of physical distancing during the prayers, *Majalis*, processions and other communal activities.
- (12) Alternative practice rather ritual touching to *Zuljinnah*, *Alam*, *Palki* or other items exhibited during *Majalis*/processions/rallies should be advised to the participants.
- (13) Communal container for *Niaz*/ritual meal/serving should be replaced with pre-packed pouches/boxes/suitable containers. Participants should be advised to take the distributed eatery to home and avoid feasting at venue.
- (14) Ensure continual cleanliness and disinfection of communal use wash basin and toilets. Full time cleaner should be present at the facility to keep it clean and disinfected.
- (15) Ensure cleanliness and disinfection of communal use vehicle, if any, after every trip.
- (16) Ensure adequate arrangements for collection and disposal of solid waste.

2. **Health Status and Awareness**

Health status and awareness regarding COVID-19 prevention requires high importance for self-protection and also taking care of fellows.

a. Health Status

- (1) COVID-19 Lab Test is mandatory for the Speaker (*Zakir*). The authentic Lab Test Report with less than 5 days from start of *Muharram Majalis* must be handy and only lab test negative Speakers/*Zakirs* will be allowed to address *Majalis*/procession. District Health Authorities will be responsible for arranging free testing.
- (2) Fever with cough and sore throat are considered symptoms of COVID-19. If anybody is identified/reported with these symptoms, he/she is advised to be isolated from the rest of participants immediately. Health desk should assess his/her condition and call 1033 for guidance.
- (3) Ensure checking of temperature by thermal scanners at entrances.
- (4) Entrants who suffer from fever and cough should be immediately separated and referred for medical checkup.
- (5) Ensure close liaison with nearest health facility/venue duty Doctor and ambulance (Rescue 1122)

b. Covid-19 Awareness Activities

- (1) The SOPs for the COVID-19 must be shared/announced by the *Majalis*/procession administration or by speaker/*Zakir* in the first 5 minutes of every *Majlis*/procession to highlight the importance of adhering to preventive practices. The important points to be shared may include:
 - (a) No mask no entry in *Majalis*/procession.
 - (b) Ensure distance of 6 feet.
 - (c) Frequent hand wash/use of hand sanitizer.
 - (d) Persons with symptoms should voluntarily isolate and report themselves.
 - (e) Elderly people and persons with any chronic health conditions should avoid attending *Majalis* and processions in person.



- (2) Ensure display of awareness messages about COVID-19 prevention using steamers, standees at entrance of venue and other suitable places.
- (3) Key messages for display are:
 - (a) **No mask no entry in *Majalis/Processions*.**
 - (b) **Keep on wearing face mask/covering** throughout *Majalis/procession*.
 - (c) Observe discipline to maintain social distance of 6 feet throughout meeting/rally.
 - (d) **Don't handshake or hug.**
 - (e) Keep hand sanitizer with you and ensure hand wash/sanitization after touching any communal use surface.
 - (f) Don't exchange your console device, cell phone and other personal use items.
- (4) Deploy volunteers in each event to support participants for compliance of COVID-19 SOPs, help elderly and children to observe precautions.


CAPTAIN (R) MUHAMMAD USMAN
Secretary

No.& Date Even

A copy is forwarded for information and further necessary action to:

1. Minister for SHC&ME and P&SHC Departments Punjab.
2. Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab.
3. Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Punjab.
4. Secretary, SHC&ME Department, Government of Punjab.
5. Special Secretaries, SHC&ME and P&SHC Departments
6. Additional Secretaries (Tech), SHC&ME and P&SHC Departments.
7. Director General Health Services, Punjab, Lahore.
8. All Divisional Directors Health Services in Punjab.
9. Master File.