

MEMO

FROM : Director General Health Services
TO : DHM's, PHN's and All Healthcare Workers
REF : H/ORG/21
NAME : Dr Nyane Letsie
SIGNED : 
DATE : 3rd April 2020

Re: HIV Program- Services Delivery COVID 19 lock down guidance.

The World Health Organization declared a novel Corona Virus (COVID 19) pandemic on the 11th March 2020. As of the 1st April 2020, Globally **823,626** confirmed cases of COVID 19 had been documented with **40 598 deaths** resulting from this pandemic. Within the African continent 4073 confirmed cases of COVID 19 have been documented with 91 deaths. Lesotho has not reported a case of CODVID 19 to date.

The Government of Lesotho has taken steps to prevent COVID 19 transmission in our communities by declaring a state of emergency with respect to this pandemic, which threatens the lives of people in Lesotho. As a result a nation-wide lock-down took effect on the 30th March 2020.

Health care workers are requested to maintain and continue uninterrupted essential HIV services at all health facilities during the COVID 19 lock-down period.

In order to minimize transmission of CODVID 19 in our communities, **effective today 3rd April 2020**, only the following HIV services will be postponed till further notice;

1. All community based HIV service demand creation and health education activities requiring gathering of people.
2. All community based HIV testing or outreach activities.
3. All voluntary male medical circumcisions.

***Please note that all facility based HIV testing should continue to be provided routinely.** Lists of index testing contacts elicited during this period should be archived and appropriately followed up either telephonically during this period then physically after the lock-down period.

All HIV positive patients on ART should be provided their routine HIV prevention, treatment and care services with the following considerations to be implemented in order to limit provider encounters and transmission of COVID 19;

1. Ensure all HIV positive patients on ART eligible to receive 3 - 6 month multi-month dispensing (MMD) are provided with 3-6months ART drugs.
2. All patients receiving TB prevention therapy (TPT) should receive 3 months TPT-MMD.
3. All unwell ART patients to send a well buddy/relative to collect their ART drugs from the health facility.
4. All Health facilities should promote and facilitate community ART group (CAGs) ART distribution.
5. All ART patients presenting with flu like symptoms (headache, fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough) should be triaged immediately, provided with a face mask, observe hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and appropriate physical distancing. These patients should be prioritized and consulted as soon as possible
6. When weather permits health facilities should minimize congestion at ART service delivery points by creating reception area's outside the facility for stable-well patients awaiting consultation. Patients should be requested to observe appropriate physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
7. All Healthcare workers providing ART services should use the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) gloves and face masks routinely. * Additional PPE, gowns and eye goggles should be used when managing ART patients suspected/confirmed of COVID 19 infection. **Please note that gloves and face masks are the most important PPE.**
8. The following ART designated staff should be present during health service delivery times at all facilities to provide uninterrupted HIV services;
 - 1 individual at triage station.
 - 1 clinician to consult the ART patients (nurse or doctor)
 - 1 pharmacy personal to dispense ART treatment (pharmacist or pharmacy technician)
 - 1 counsellor to provide HIV counselling service (professional or lay)
 - 1 data clerk/records assistant to collect and consolidate HIV data.

9. Where feasible ensure that all ART patients are provided with their health facility and ART clinic focal person phone numbers, so as to allow patients to communicate urgent health related matters concerning their care or health condition.
10. All healthcare workers and ART patients should practice frequent hand hygiene before and after patient care, especially when coming into contact with secretions.

Healthcare workers are also requested to report and inform DHMT's immediately if;

- ART, TPT, or PPE commodity stock outs develop in their facilities.
- A COVID 19 case is suspected/confirmed

Your dedication to patient care, vigilance in COVID 19 surveillance and infection control procedures will prevent and reduce transmission in our communities.

Adherence to strict hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing are critical to ending this COVID 19 pandemic.

Your usual support is greatly appreciated.