

Home Quarantine SOP for travellers from High Risk to Low-Risk Areas

1. Background

As per existing SOPs, all travellers from High Risk Areas to Low Risk Areas need to be facility quarantined for one week, and need to test negative before being allowed to travel. Given the limited quarantine facilities in the High Risk Areas, there are many people who have been waiting for a long time to be facility quarantined. This is causing a lot of inconvenience to these travellers. With the acceptance of the gradual spreading of the virus in the community as part of the Phase II strategy in managing the COVID outbreak, it is imperative that the existing protocol be reviewed and relaxed for people travelling from High Risk Area to Low Risk Areas. Therefore, Home Quarantine (HQ) is being proposed in place of facility quarantine for travellers from High Risk Areas to Low Risk Areas that have homes in these areas. Additionally, doing away with facility quarantine will also free up space in case facility quarantine is required for isolation purposes, and also for facilitating returnees and for in-coming people who are not residents of these places

2. Objectives

- a) To facilitate travel of people from High Risk Areas to Low-Risk Areas in a safe and efficient manner.
- b) To free up facility quarantine space in case additional isolation space is required
- c) To free up facility quarantine space for travellers and in-coming people who are not residents of these places.

3. Registration for Home Quarantine (HQ)

- a) Initially, travellers who have already registered with the Regional/Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog Taskforces will be given preference when implementing HQ. This list will be shared with the Regional/Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog Monitoring Teams.
- b) After the announcement for HQ is made, all travellers who have not registered for home quarantine will be required to register using the ePass system. They should call the Helpdesk if they require assistance with registration.
- c) Traveller should mention their destination, and whether their travel would be by private car, or public transport (walk) and their destination. Those requiring public transport shall be facilitated as per the availability of public transport buses.
- d) This new list of travellers will be shared with the Regional/Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog Monitoring teams.

4. Monitoring of HQ

- a) The Monitoring Teams should be set up by the Regional/Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog Taskforce, which should include Desuups from that area.
- b) Monitoring will mostly be through phone calls, and some voucher allowance should be provided to the monitoring team for making the phone calls.
- c) If there is any breach by the HQ individual, the Monitoring Team shall report this to the respective Task Force and appropriate action should be taken.

5. Gewog SOPs

- a) If there are a large number of travellers who have registered, the Gewog Monitoring Team (GMT) shall prioritize travellers to be home quarantined.
- b) The GMT team shall clearly brief the HQIs on the home quarantine protocols.
- c) In case the HQI lives alone, the person shall ensure adequate stock of essential items and medicine refills to last for 8 days.
- d) The HQI will be allowed to come out of their house to do their household chores like looking after cattle, and agricultural work. However, the person should not mix with people from other housed holds within the village.
- e) The Monitoring Team will monitor the HQI through regular phone calls.
- f) For any medical emergency support, call 112. For other support please call the local helpline.

6. Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Thromde SOPs

- a) The same Gewog SOPs will apply to persons residing in Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Thromde with one exception. In these places, the HQ individual will not be allowed to come out of his/her house during the entire quarantine period. In case if there are other family/household members besides the travellers, the traveller should be encouraged to stay in a separate room.
- b) The monitoring in Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Thromde will be done by respective monitoring team through regular phone calls

7. Testing

- a) All travellers shall be tested one day (day-zero) before entering Home Quarantine. Travellers who test positive may be isolated or may home quarantine, based on assessment made by the Health Team.
- b) For testing, all travellers should be come to the Gewog BHU, the Gewog Center, Flu Clinics, or any other identified location. The Monitoring Team shall communicate this location to the HQI.
- c) On day 7 of their quarantine period, 10% of the people who tested negative during the day-zero test should be randomly selected and shall be contacted and asked to come for testing. If these people test positive, they will be required to extend their home quarantine for 7 more days. Thereafter, they will be allowed to travel without testing.
- d) Travellers who test positive during the day-zero testing will be allowed to travel on the 7th day without having to do any testing, unless disallowed by the Health Team.
- e) Travellers who have recovered from COVID, will need to register and be home quarantined for one week. However, they will not have to be tested when entering or leaving home quarantine. If they are symptomatic when the quarantine period is over, they should be tested.
- f) In case of emergencies, the Dzongkhag Task Force may grant approval for people who have recovered from COVID to travel without quarantining for 7 days.

8. Travel Approval

- a) The respective HelpDesks will share the daily Home Quarantine registrations report/excel file with respective Monitoring Teams to arrange for the HQI to do the day-zero COVID test
- b) The HQI should upload the test result, whether positive or negative, to their ePass registration. The ePass system will consider the testing date as day-zero of Home Quarantine.
- c) After the completion of 7 day Home Quarantine duration, the ePass system will automatically approve Inter-Dzongkhag travel, with clear mark indicating 'Home Quarantine Completed', unless there is a specific notification from the respective Monitoring Teams not to approve Inter-Dzongkhag Travel.
- d) This specific notification from the respective Monitoring Teams should also indicate the new date on which ePass may be approved.

9. Transportation and Escort

- a) The Regional/Dzongkhag/Dungkhag/Gewog Taskforce shall arrange transportation in coordination with the Logistics team from Thimphu for HQIs who do not have private vehicles. Travel by bus will be free of cost for these HQIs.
- b) Due to logistical issues in coordinating public transportation, some HQI may need to be quarantined a few days more. This should be communicated to the person beforehand and the testing time should also be adjusted accordingly.
- c) The Escort Team consisting of Desuups shall escort the HQIs travelling in bus, who have successfully completed the

quarantine period to the LR destination while those who have their own transportation shall be escorted till the switching station. Bus drivers shall follow existing protocols.

d) The RBP shall brief the Escort Team on the safety protocols.

10. Travellers from Thimphu and Paro

Travellers from Thimphu and Paro shall follow the existing SOP and quarantine for one week at their destination. All travellers will be tested before starting travel.

11. Emergencies

In case of emergencies like death, medical and other emergencies, the Dzongkhag Task Force will facilitate as per existing norms.

12. Breach

- a) Home quarantine shall be cancelled for any breach of the above SOP.
- b) After cancellation of HQ, an additional 7 days of HQ will be required for travel.

Approved by the NC19TF

21 March, 2022