



**NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR SELF HELP LIMITED**

“Empowering Communities Since 1987”

National Commission for Self Help Limited

Interim Work Place Policy and Procedure Guidelines on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Interim Work Place National Commission for Self Help Limited

Policy and Procedure Guidelines on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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BACKGROUND

The National Commission for Self Help Limited (hereinafter referred to as NCSHL) Policy and Procedure Guidelines on the Novel Coronavirus (hereinafter referred to as COVID-19) provides clear procedures and guidelines developed to aid the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's efforts in controlling and preventing the spread COVID-19.

OVERVIEW

The work environment has significantly changed with the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has forced organisations and companies classified as “non-essential” to stay at home, practice good and proper hygiene and practice physical/social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus.

Transitioning into a work environment that represents the “new-normal” post-COVID-19 will require diligence, tenacity and collaboration from the Board of Directors, Members of Staff at NCSHL and all interested external parties connected to NCSHL.

AIM OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE GUIDELINES

This Policy and Procedure guideline document will allow employers and employees at NCSHL to:

- i. Minimise their exposure to COVID-19 on the job;
- ii. Resume work after a period of closure;
- iii. Manage employees working from home (where required);
- iv. Successfully transition into a safe and healthy work environment post-COVID-19.

WHO DOES THE POLICY AND PROCEDURE GUIDELINE APPLY TO?

This Policy and Procedure Guideline document applies to a specific group of persons who “visit” the NCSHL. The “visit” to any of the three (3) branches of the NCSHL may be on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

The following is a representation of the said persons to which this Policy and Procedure Guidelines applies to:

1. The Board of Directors;
2. Members of Staff
 - i. Field Officers; and
 - ii. In-office members of staff
3. Members of the Public
 - i. Applicants;
 - ii. Grant Recipients;
 - iii. Contract for Service personnel;
 - iv. Any other person who from time to time who visits NCSHL.

1. MEMBERS OF STAFF

For the NCSHL to effectively serve the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago and conduct the functions of the NCSHL post-COVID-19, the health and well-being of each member of staff must be a priority.

Employees must be deemed “fit for work” before resuming work after a period of closure. This assessment will be done by asking a series of questions to members of staff.

Members of staff must honestly answer these questions that will be asked by the Human Resource Department of NCSHL.

The questions will initially be circulated via email to all members of staff. All members of staff will further receive a follow up call from the Human Resource Department asking them the said questions and as far as possible requiring them to give “Yes” or “No” responses.

These responses will give the NCSHL:

- A general idea of the readiness of each member of staff to return to work; and
- It will continue to protect the medical history of every member of staff.

Questions:

- Do you have any underlying medical conditions?
- Do you live with or care for a vulnerable individual?
If the answer is YES to number 2, Are you against the idea of working from home?
- Did you meet any person tested positive for COVID-19 or showing flu-like symptoms within the last fourteen (14) days?
- Are there any childcare issues that may arise upon your return to work?
- Will you be using public transport on your commute to work?
If YES to question number v, Is travelling to work a concern for you?
- If a shift system is implemented, Is your preference morning or evening? (Please note morning hours will start at 7:00am)
- Do you have any additional concerns?
If the answer is YES to number 6, What are they?

1.1 Classification of Members of Staff

For the purposes of this policy and procedure, Members of Staff at NCSHL are classified as follows:

- Corporate Office/ Administration staff;
 - Field Officers;
 - Janitorial/ Maintenance;
 - Couriers/ Drivers.
 - Security;
- a. Corporate Office/ Administrative staff
- Members of Staff are encouraged to pay attention to handwashing posters.
 - Members of staff are encouraged to read all COVID-19 related posters erected throughout the organization.

- Members of staff are encouraged to adhere to the twenty (20) seconds wash time of hands and follow the proper technique highlighted under the **Section 4 of the NCSHL Policy and Procedure Guidelines for COVID-19**.
- Members of Staff should sanitize all areas of frequent contact at their workstation as often as possible.
- Members of staff should be seated six (6) feet apart (all angles considered) at workstations.
- If previous seating arrangements for in-house members of staff did not accommodate a six (6) feet physical distance, the relevant changes should be made around their workstation.
- Recommendations to ensure physical distancing is maintained include:
 - Relocating some member of staff;
 - Shifting the office furniture to reflect the six (6) feet physical distance;
 - Having staggered/flexible working hours for members of staff;
 - Developing an alternate working day system for members of staff.

b. *Field Officers*

- A face shield and/or a facemask must be worn by all Project / Field Officers for all visits to applicants and any other area visited while conducting work for NCSHL.
- Project Officers will be supplied will be supplied with care packages, which will include sanitization tools, tissues, cloth masks and a face shield.
- Project Officers/ Field Officers are encouraged to wash their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) regularly to prevent the spread of the virus.

c. *Janitorial / Maintenance*

- A face shield and/or a facemask must be worn while working. It will act as protection from other members of staff, members of the public.

- Protective gloves, eye and face protection (face shield and/or goggles) must be worn when mixing, spraying and wiping with liquid cleaning products in the event of spillage.
- The Procurement Department will be responsible for developing a Maintenance roster, which will highlight the office attendance and cleaning times of every janitorial/ maintenance staff staff at NCSHL.

d. Security

- Face shield and/or facemask must be worn once interacting with members of the board, members of staff or members of the public.
- The security workstation must be outfitted with sufficient hand-sanitizer to be used by security or anyone entering the building.
- If the security workstation is not presently outfitted with a fan, one should be provided, given that wearing face shield and /or a facemask can make the security guard's body temperature feel uncomfortable (overheating).

e. Couriers/Drivers

- Facemasks must be worn once occupants apart from the driver are in the vehicle. **Section 2(1) of The Public Health [Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)] (No.10) Regulation, 2020** provides public transport in a motor vehicle shall not carry in the motor vehicle more than half the number of passengers which the motor vehicle is licensed to carry.
- Couriers/Drivers will be supplied with care packages, which will include sanitization tools, tissues, cloth masks and a face shield.
- Drivers are to ensure that work vehicles are regularly cleaned and disinfected.

1.2 Other staff related Concerns

- Travel
- Wellness

a. Travel - (Work Related/ Personal (Recreation, Health etc.) Members of Staff at NCSHL are required to do the following should they travel regionally or internationally post-COVID-19.

- Keep updated on COVID-19 related news for updates on your desired destination and use good judgement before proceeding both locally, regionally and internationally.
- Notify your immediate Supervisor/ Human Resource Department of any regional/ international trips you plan to take and state the exact / all countries of contact.
- Be sure to practice good hygiene during your entire trip.

b. Wellness

- i. Physical Well Being
- ii. Mental Well Being

i. Physical Well Being

The NCSHL, along with every member of staff are charged with the responsibility of being proactive in maintaining personal health and good hygiene post-COVID-19.

The following is a list of guidelines that must be considered:

- Have a daily exercise routine as it is beneficial to the human body and makes you stronger and more ready to deal any stresses life may bring.
- If a staff member feels unwell or shows signs of illness, they are required to indicate the same to the Health and Safety Committee.
- If a member of staff is unwell, they will be isolated in a room or a designated area in the workplace. This will limit the number of people who have any further contact with the unwell member of staff.
- The local health authorities will be contacted and their advice on dealing with the unwell member of staff will be followed.

- The unwell member of staff will be provided with support through distance to reduce stigma and discrimination in the workplace.
- Every department must have employees designated to monitor physical distancing.
- Physical distancing monitors should be selected by the Head of every department. All members of staff must be briefed on the concept of physical distancing in the workplace and reminded that the concept will help to keep everyone at NCSHL safe.

ii. **Mental Well Being**

- Feelings of fear, worry, stress, and uncertainty of the unknown are expected in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COVID-19 has employees working from home, dealing with temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children, and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues. It is therefore important that we look after our mental health.
- Spend time in nature. Members of staff are encouraged to use their backyard or front garden given the limitations of COVID-19 at this time.
- Practice meditation as a means to calm your mind.
- Focus on things that are within your control – Busy yourself with constructive and beneficial activities.
- Practice gratitude.
- Live in the present moment.
- Visit the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential sharing and guidance on dealing with personal feelings or issues.
- The chart provided **under Section 4 of this Policy and Procedure Guideline** titled Health and Safety practices for all parties developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) must be considered as it offers some key guidelines for coping with stress.

 World Health Organization

Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak

 It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.
Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends. 

 Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.
If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency. 

 Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak. 

2. MEETINGS

- Post-COVID-19, when considering in-person meetings at NCSHL, specific precautionary measures must be considered to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These pre-cautionary measures will minimise the potential risk for all directors, members of staff and members of the public.

- Any person present in NCSHL’s in-person meetings may have been unknowingly exposed to COVID-19. This will pose a threat to all persons they came in contact with at NCSHL.
- **Section 3 (1) (b) The Public Health [2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)] (NO. 7) Regulations, 2020** presently limits the number of persons who can gather in a public place to not exceed five (5) unless the exemption criteria is satisfied. NCSHL is mindful of the fact that post-COVID-19 the number of persons who can gather will incrementally be increased until COVID-19 is a mere memory.
- NCSHL is committed to following all guidelines and regulations issued by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in controlling and preventing further spread of COVID-19.
- The list below is a representation of meetings conducted at NCSHL. Post-COVID-19 some changes are required as it pertains to the said meetings.
 - i. Board of Directors Meetings;
 - ii. Sub-Committee Meetings;
 - iii. Operational and Efficiency Meetings;
 - iv. Department Heads and Junior Staff;
 - v. Department head and member(s) of the public.

From all the meetings listed above, the Board of Directors Meetings and the Operational and Efficiency Meetings require a larger number of persons to be present at the same time.

The Board of Directors meetings are usually conducted with approximately twelve (12) persons every month. This therefore means that conducting an in-person board meeting at this present time, or immediately post-COVID-19 with no change made to the number of persons that can gather, will mean that NCSHL is in breach of the Regulations.

The NCSHL is dedicated to following all Regulations and guidelines specified by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.1 Board of Directors Meetings

a. Virtual Conference Call

- This could be facilitated by using the available online mediums of Zoom, Facebook Messenger Room, Skype, Hangouts, Microsoft Teams or any other secure Virtual Conference platform.
- When Virtual Conference Calls are considered as an alternative to in-person Board of Directors meetings, security and confidentiality must be addressed, based on the sensitivity and privacy of the information that the board has.
- To address security and confidentiality concerns, it is recommended that the IT Department explore and assess the available options for Virtual Conference calls and in turn recommend to the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman the safest platform once it has been selected.
- It is also recommended that this assessment be continuous in the event a previously selected virtual platform becomes compromised.
- The Board of Directors and any other person required to attend Virtual Conference meetings will be informed of all details and instructions pre, during and post the Virtual Conference Meeting.
- Professional attire must be worn for Virtual Conference Calls

b. Post-COVID-19 In-Person Board Meetings

NCSHL executive must consider that physical/social distancing will be a going concern before we return to “normal” as we once knew it.

- Presently, most board meetings are conducted in the boardroom located in Head Office of NCSHL. The Boardroom has been able to accommodate all members of the board of directors in the past however, when the concept of physical / social distancing is considered, a bigger space will be required.
- It is recommended, that a bigger conference room or space is rented to facilitate this process. This bigger conference room or space can be rented either monthly or bi-monthly. The Bi-monthly in-person meetings will give the directors an opportunity to conduct in-person meetings while keeping a

socially acceptable distance from each other. The in between meetings that are not in-person can be facilitated by Virtual Conference Calls.

2.2 Committee Meetings

These meetings are usually small in number and occur once every month unless there is an urgent matter to be addressed. These meetings can continue to be conducted at Head Office at NCSHL with physical / social distancing practices being followed.

2.3 Operational and Efficiency Meetings

Two options can be explored when it comes to these meetings.

- a. These meetings can continue at the Head Office at NCSHL with physical / social distancing practices being observed.
- b. Members of the Operations and Efficiency Meetings (Management and Supervisory team members) can attend the meetings using the selected Virtual Conference Call Platform while stationed in their individual office space.

General Meeting guidelines

- At all times NCSHL will follow the Regulation guidelines on the number of persons that can gather in public at all times.
- Ensure that all persons attending the meeting provide contact details: mobile telephone number, email and address where they are staying.
- All persons entering the building must wash their hands at the outside sink and sanitize before entering the building.
- Masks must be worn for all in-person meetings.
- All in-person meetings must be conducted with all persons practising physical/ social distancing (sitting six feet apart)
- If someone becomes ill during the in-person meeting with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise) the preparedness plan highlighted under members of staff must be followed.
- Prior to all in-person meetings an information briefing, on COVID-19 and an updated procedure guideline measures that NCSHL is taking to make the meeting safe for participants must be shared.
- There shall be no hugging or shaking of hands before, during or after all meetings.
- Regular hand-washing or use of an alcohol rub by all participants at the meeting.

- Participants at the meetings will be encouraged to cover their face with the bend of their elbow or a tissue if they cough or sneeze.
- Tissues and closed bins to dispose used tissues will be provided for all participants in a meeting
- Where possible the windows and doors should be left open to ensure the room is well ventilated.
- If after the meeting, if any of the participants display COVID-19 related symptoms and or are confirmed to have COVID -19 the NCSHL expects them to be responsible and inform the Health and Safety Committee of NCSHL.
- The information received must then be shared with participants of the meeting and the relevant step of isolation and testing should take effect with the Ministry of Health.

3. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Grant applicants and recipients comprise the majority of persons visiting NCSHL. The interactions with grant applicants and recipients is brief.

3.1 General guidelines for all NCSHL buildings

All members of the public entering NCSHL must carry out the following actions in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- All persons entering the building must wash their hands at the outside sink with soap and sanitize before entering the building.
- Face shields or facemasks must be worn at all times once inside NCSHL building.
- All in-person meetings must be conducted with all persons practising physical / social distancing (sitting six (6) feet apart).
- While seated and standing, maintaining a six feet (6ft) apart space.
- Floor markers will be placed at the administration desk along with four (4) floor marker spots on the pavement at all NCSHL buildings.
- If a member of the public is feeling unwell, they will be escorted to the outside waiting area or the designated isolation room for members of the public. The Health and Safety Committee will be informed and they will make any further decision i.e. ambulance and contacting the relevant authorities.

* Provisions for differently abled persons – visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically challenged will be deliberated and implemented.

3.2 Grant Distributions

- The Chief Executive Officer will pre-record his address to grant recipients or deliver live stream emotive addresses to grant recipients via monitor placed in enclosed waiting area. To be aired to recipients and grants distributed accordingly.
- Any **Public Health Regulation [2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)] Regulations**, in effect that limits the number of persons that can gather will be followed for Grant distributions.

3.3 Road Openings

These will be conducted by invitation only with physical/ social distancing adhered to and face shields/ masks must be worn.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES FOR ALL PARTIES

NCSHL will put every measure in place that will limit exposure to COVID-19 in the workspace. The process of resuming work after a period of closure should not be one where the NCSHL is operating at full capacity immediately.

The following should be considered as NCSHL resumes operations:

- i. Members of staff work on a shift system (Morning and evening);
- ii. Working from home should also be encouraged especially for members of staff who live with persons classified as vulnerable;
- iii. Members of staff work for a specific number of days per week.

- iv. All persons entering the NCSHL who are responsible for a child or children are encouraged to seek support from their relatives or caregivers to prevent unhealthy exposure to Covid-19 virus to their children.
- v. In extremely unusual circumstances, where alternative child-care cannot be sourced, consideration could be given for children to be present in the workplace for a short period. However, this decision will be made solely upon the permission of Supervisor in consultation with the Human Resource Manager or the Human Resource Manager.

The below mentioned general guidelines will help to eliminate or minimise the risk of any employee at the NCSHL being exposed to COVID-19.

4.1 Hand washing

- Everyone entering the building will be required to wash their hands with soap. If there is any refusal to do this, that individual will not be allowed in the NCSHL building.
- Members of staff and the public should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently using the proper technique highlighted in Fig. 2 below. Proper handwashing takes about as long as singing "Happy Birthday" twice, approximately twenty (20) seconds, using the images below.

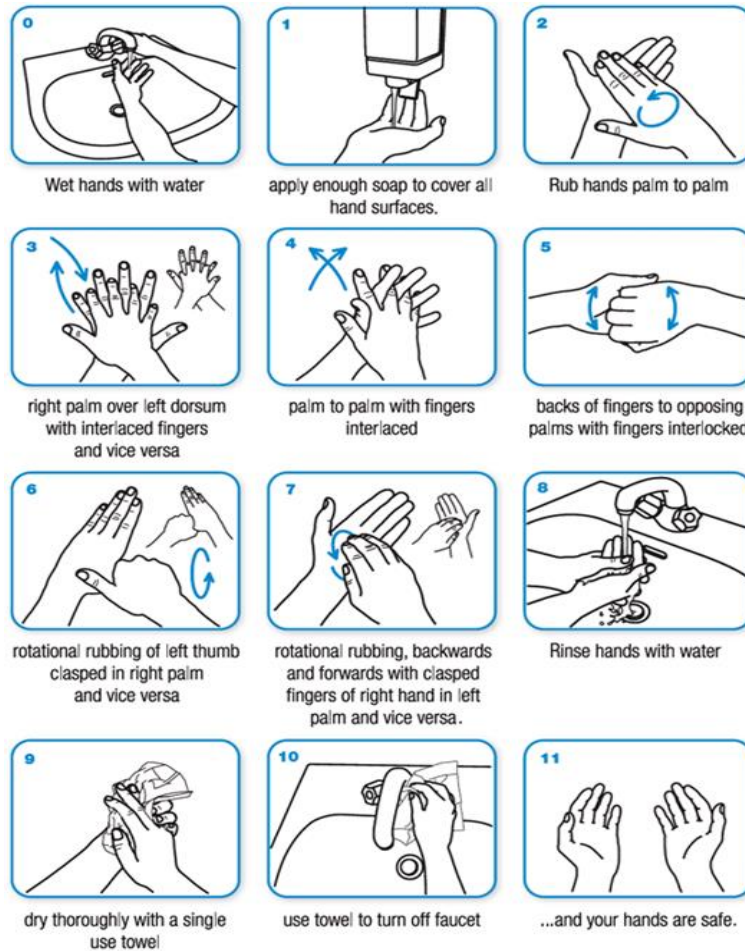


Fig. 2– Proper Handwashing Technique

4.2 Sanitizing

- It is recommended that all NCSHL buildings and all surfaces be sanitised before members of staff are required to return.
- All vehicles used at NCSHL must be completely sanitised
- Dispensers should be installed around the buildings in a visible location that is easily accessible to members of staff and the public to use.
- High contact areas such as door knobs/ handles, counter tops, sinks, stair rails, elevator buttons, water faucets, toilet handles/levers, keyboards, telephone etc. should be sanitized several times for the day.
- High traffic areas should be swept and mopped several times during the day (use foot traffic frequency as an indicator for sweeping & mopping to be carried out).

4.3 Sanitization Supplies

This should be pre-ordered to ensure that sufficient supplies and materials, including tissues, soaps, disposable towels and hand sanitizer are available for all persons entering any NCSHL buildings.

4.4 Good hygiene

- Members of staff and members of the public are encouraged to practice good and proper hygiene both in the workspace and outside of it.
- All are encouraged to cough or sneeze in the elbow of their hands or use a tissue or rag to do so.

4.5 Masks

- Put on mask after hands have been washed or sanitized.
- Ensure that mask is properly covering the mouth and nose, ensuring that there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Mask must be worn at all times at the NCSHL offices once communicating with other members of staff and the public.
- Persons are encouraged to avoid touching the mask using it; if you do touch the mask while using, clean your hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- If the mask becomes damp, replace the mask with a new one immediately.
- Do not re-use single use masks/surgical masks.
- Single use masks/ surgical masks are to be discarded after a maximum use of eight (8) hours.

How to properly remove a mask?

To remove mask, do so from behind, do not touch the front of the mask. Masks are to be discarded immediately in a closed bin. Hands must be immediately cleaned with an alcohol based hand sanitizer or with soap and water.

- Cloth masks are to be washed before every use.

4.6 Physical Distancing (Six (6) feet apart)

This must be practiced with all persons entering and operating at any of NCSHL buildings.

All persons inside the NCSHL building must remain 6 (six) feet away from each other.

4.7 Office ventilation

It is recommended that the vents are cleaned and air quality testing be performed prior to the return of members of staff in the building.

4.8 Staff Education

- Members of staff will be informed of the risks and prevention associated with the Covid-19 virus.
- This information will be communicated through readable signs and messages
- Members of staff will receive reminders of the changes around the NCSHL buildings and they will be encouraged to follow these guidelines.
- Members of staff are encouraged to provide feedback to help improve safety at the establishment.

4.9 Unwell members of Staff

Members of staff should be advised that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend work.

4.10 A retractable tent/ covering will be erected in preparation for the rainy season which will cover persons standing in line and the handwashing sinks exposed to the elements.

4.11 Signage

The following signs will be erected in front of NCSHL buildings

- While we are happy to serve you these are Mandatory for Entry;
- Face Mask must be worn;
- Hands must be washed at the hand washing sink;
- Occupy assigned seating only;
- Maintain physical/ social distancing;

4.12 Elevator Capacity

To accommodate social distancing the elevator capacity at the Head Office of the NCSHL will be reduced to two (2) persons.

4.13 Physical Separation

Physical Separation between customers and in house staff will be done by using dividers / plexiglass barriers. These dividers/plexiglass barriers will be supplied to all NCHL Offices.
