



**Western Cape  
Government**

Department of the Premier

**Corporate Services Centre**  
Chief Directorate People Management Practices

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**Reference:** 3/3/1/1/4 – Response to the COVID-19 outbreak

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## **DIRECTOR-GENERAL CIRCULAR NO. 17 OF 2020**

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE (Ms JS Isaacs)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SAFETY (Mr G Morris)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPORT (Mr BC Walters)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM (Mr SW Fourie)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (Mr PS van Zyl)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (Ms JJ Sampson-Swartz)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Mr GW Paulse)

HEAD OFFICIAL: PROVINCIAL TREASURY (Mr DTJ Savage)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Dr RP Macdonald)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS (Ms JT Gooch)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION (Mr B Schreuder)

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: HEALTH (Dr E Engelbrecht)

ALL BRANCH HEADS: DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER

## **WCG PEOPLE MANAGEMENT POLICY RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

In response to the Minister of Health's announcement of confirmed cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19 virus) in the Western Cape, this circular aims to clarify the relevant People Management policy provisions that apply in the management of an outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in the Western Cape.

In responding to this pandemic, it is important that the response of the WCG as employer takes into account and balances the interest of employees, both individually and collectively; the need to deliver of services and operational requirements; the obligations of the employer in terms of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of his employees; and general public interest. There is also a co-responsibility on employees to themselves, their co-workers, family and broader community as the country responds to this outbreak.

Departments are hereby informed that absence from work due to possible (or confirmed) COVID-19 virus related cases should be managed in terms of the Determination and Directive on Leave of Absence in the Public Service (2018), (henceforth referred to as "the DPSA Directive"). The normal provisions for sick leave as provided for in the DPSA Directive applies, e.g. an employee who is sick for 3 or more days is required to submit a medical certificate, signed by a registered medical practitioner, etc.

Should there be a reasonable concern that an employee may contract the virus in the workplace (e.g. if there is reason to believe that a fellow employee has been infected or has been in contact with an infected person), then special leave in terms of par 17.3 of the Special Leave Policy or where possible, a work from home arrangement (in terms of the provisions as contained in the WCG Work Arrangements Guideline) may be offered to the employee as **an employer directed isolation initiative**, bearing in mind that Departments have different operational requirements and circumstances. All employees who has been in contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 virus should be encouraged to consult a medical practitioner.

If, as a precautionary measure, an **employee voluntarily** places him/herself under quarantine or self-isolation, annual leave or unpaid leave should be granted.

An employee who displays symptoms of the disease at work should be encouraged to have themselves tested by a medical practitioner. When an employee tests positive for the COVID-19 virus and is placed **under quarantine or isolated as result of a medical certificate**, the employee should be granted at least 10 consecutive days' sick leave for this purpose. The employee must submit a certificate by a registered medical practitioner indicating that –

- the employee has tested positive; and
- the period for which the employee is to be placed under quarantine.

It has come to my attention that there may be some confusion as to which sick leave provisions apply in the case of quarantine. While Clause 14 of the WCG Special Leave Policy 2012 makes specific provision for quarantine, this provision has been superseded by the subsequent provisions in Clause 14.8.3 of the DPSA Directive that "*Sick leave may also be granted in respect of periods where an employee must be quarantined or isolated for at least 10 consecutive days*". Departments are therefore advised that instances of absence from work due to placement under quarantine by a medical practitioner will be managed in terms of the DPSA Directive.

Due to the nature of the illness, an employee who has contracted the COVID-19 virus and booked off for a period in terms of a medical certificate, should be cleared to return to work by a registered medical practitioner.

In the event where an employee has exhausted his/her normal sick leave allocation during the prescribed sick leave cycle (i.e. 36 working days' sick leave, with full pay, over a 3-year period or cycle) and who, according to the treating medical practitioner, requires to be absent from work due to the COVID-19 virus, the employee may apply for temporary incapacity leave. The relevant terms and provisions of the Policy

and Procedures on Incapacity Leave for Ill-health Retirement (PILIR) as determined by the MPSA will be applicable.

Employees should be encouraged to obtain credible travel advice before travelling to affected areas. An employee who returned from travelling abroad will be subjected to an employer directed isolation initiative and must be tested by a medical practitioner before returning to work. Should the employee however display any COVID -19 symptoms, the employee should apply for sick leave. If the employee intend traveling to affected areas abroad for personal reasons the employee must inform the supervisor prior to travel.

### Suspension of operations or services


Where services are suspended by a Head of Department in terms of a Department's Business Continuity Plan (BCP), employees who are instructed by the HoD or delegatee not to report for duty employees must, as far as possible, be afforded an opportunity to apply to work from home (in terms of the provisions of the WCG Work Arrangements Guide) or granted special leave in terms of paragraph 17.3 of the WCG Special Leave Policy by utilising the normal leave form. Employees must however remain available to be called to report for duty. Managers are required to keep a record of staff arrangements.

### Employee Health and Wellness

Cognisance should be taken of the potential psycho-social impact of the outbreak on our employees and their families, such as anxiety and other stress factors. Managers should encourage employees to access the WCG Employee Wellness programme for support and advice.

Relevant Call Centre:	CSC	WCGH (Health)	WCED (Education)
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	0800 611 155	0800 611 093	0800 111 011
<b>Email address:</b>	wcgsc@mhg.co.za	wcgh@mhg.co.za	wced@mhg.co.za

The COVID-19 outbreak poses a serious threat to the wellbeing of our people and to the ability of government to continue to provide services to its citizens. Any abuse of the sick leave or other policies in response to this outbreak will be treated as serious misconduct. Lastly I urge that all staff to be wary of spread fake news, especially via social media. The official channels provided are your best source of accurate information including what the symptoms are and the best hygiene practices to follow.

  
**MR. HARRY MALILA**  
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**  
DATE: 13/03/2020