

Draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Health, Hygiene and Safety Protocols for reopening of Schools

Introduction:

The Government has already issued Standard Operating Procedure for distribution of Textbooks and other educational items vide G.O. (Ms) No.344 Revenue and Disaster Management (DMII) Department dated 10.07.2020 and for new admissions in all schools in Tamil Nadu vide G.O. (Ms) No.273 Revenue and Disaster Management (DM4) Department dated 13.08.2020 to be followed scrupulously by all schools in the State.

The Government now issue the following Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with regard to COVID-19 based on the Standard Operating Procedure issued by Government of India dated 5.10.2020 for Health and Safety protocols to be followed for reopening of schools, subject to the condition that schools outside the containment zones shall only be allowed to open and students/teachers/employees residing in containment zones shall not be allowed to visit schools. The schools shall be opened for classes 10 and 12 in the first phase from----- **(subject to decision taken by the Government)**. The schools shall function six days a week to cover the syllabus in the available time. Wherever the section of a class has more than 25 students, they have to be split into batches of not more than 25 students per batch. But, if there is additional space in the class room to accommodate more students following physical distancing norms, additional students can be accommodated by putting additional benches. In such cases, the two or more batches may attend classes simultaneously in separate class rooms to maintain physical distancing. Teachers can be arranged accordingly.

I General:

1. Online/distance learning will continue to be an alternate mode of teaching.
2. Where schools are conducting online classes, and some students prefer to attend online classes rather than physically

attend school, they may be permitted to do so.

3. Private school managements can re-open their schools after submitting a written consent to concerned regulatory authorities.

4. Students may attend schools/institutions only with the written consent of parents.

5. Students willing to study from home with the consent of the parents may be allowed to do so.

6. Attendance must not be enforced, and must depend entirely on parental consent.

7. Follow-up on the progress of the learning outcomes of all such students shall be planned appropriately.

8. All students and teachers/staff shall wear face masks compulsorily inside and outside the school premises.

9. All students shall be provided with Vitamin and Zinc tablets by Health Department.

10. Schools when allowed to open, shall mandatorily follow this Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) issued by the Government.

II Health, Hygiene and Safety protocols before opening of schools.

A Precautionary measures and sanitization:

1. Prior to reopening of schools , the school premises along with furniture, hand rails, doors, windows etc. shall be cleaned and disinfected properly with 1 % Sodium Hypochlorite solution and following the Government guidelines already issued for the same.

2. Provision of hand wash facilities with soap and running water which is the most preferred mode of disinfection for hands shall be made adequately. **In addition, hand sanitizers shall be provided in all classrooms which shall be provided by Health Department in all Government schools.**

3. Suitable hand wash with soap /sanitization provisions with alcohol based sanitizers shall be made at the entry and exit points of the schools or wherever required.
4. Availability of key supplies like thermal scanners, disinfectants, soaps, pulse oxymeters etc., and other essentials shall be ensured.
5. CEOs shall communicate the **Government guidelines** for sanitization of public places to all schools / local bodies/health department officials for strict compliance by all concerned.
6. The toilets shall be cleaned properly and maintained with tidiness. Wash areas, toilets, etc., where people are likely to come shall be disinfected properly and kept clean.
7. Instead of biometric attendance for teachers/staff, alternate arrangements for contactless attendance shall be made by the school administration as a temporary alternative during pandemic.
8. The school should display State helpline numbers and also numbers of local health authorities, mobile medical teams, etc. to teachers / students / employees to contact in case of any emergency.
9. The management of every school shall be responsible for the upkeep of their school premises neat and tidy according to these standards.

B Social Distancing norms

1. On all working days, proper social distancing norms shall be followed to avoid crowding in the entrance and inside the school premises.
2. The students shall not be allowed to linger outside in the schools.
3. Physical/social distancing norms should be followed, both, during arrival and departure time, to and from school. Minimum 6 feet physical distance should be maintained when queuing up for entry and inside the school.

4. Assemblies, Sports and events and cultural activities that can lead to overcrowding shall be avoided. Swimming pools (Wherever applicable) shall remain closed.
5. No period shall be allowed for Physical Education and Games. NSS and NCC activities shall not be allowed.
6. Staggering the timing of entry and exit for students of different classes may be followed.
7. Earmarking different lanes for coming and going is to be done to maintain physical distance.
8. At the time of entry and exit, all the gates shall be opened, in case school has more than one gate and earmarking classes for each gate to avoid crowding.
9. Proper boxes must be marked on the floor/ground to ensure social distancing in the queue wherever required.
10. Students/staff in containment zones and quarantine area shall be asked to come to school only after the quarantine period/containment period is over or the containment zone is declared normal. These students may be contacted over phone by the teachers to provide guidance or put on alternate/online mode of teaching.
11. Physical distancing of **at least 6 feet** to be followed while making seating arrangements in class rooms.
12. Physical distancing shall also be maintained in staff rooms, office areas (including reception areas) and in other places.
13. If weather permits, outdoor spaces shall be utilized for conducting teacher – student interactions, keeping in view the safety and security of the students and physical distancing protocols.
14. Posters/messages/stickers and signage shall be displayed at appropriate places in the school reminding students about maintaining physical/social distancing such as inside the classroom,

libraries, outside washrooms, hand washing stations, drinking water areas, school kitchen, halls, classrooms, buses/ cabs parking, entry and exits.

C Sensitization of students, parents, teachers, community members and hostel staff on COVID -19 related challenges and their role

1. Prior to reopening of schools, arrangements shall be made for sensitization of teachers, parents, staff, and members of School Management Committee through online/offline modes such as pamphlets , letters, public announcement systems in villages, urban wards etc. on COVID appropriate behavior such as:
 1. Required do's and don'ts including maintenance of hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces
 2. Maintaining physical distance (social distance)
 3. Hygienic practices necessary for the prevention of COVID-19
 4. Stigmas attached to COVID-19
 5. Thermal screening for fever detection
 6. Avoiding attending school if having symptoms and seeking medical care
2. Students and staff shall be advised not to visit areas falling within containment zone or houses of COVID affected persons.
3. Parents shall be sensitized about personal hygiene, personal health, and cleanliness of uniform and this information may be circulated well in advance through letters, emails, or any other social media.

4. Parents shall be sensitized that they must not send their wards to school if the child or any family member living in the same household suffers from fever/cough/breathlessness etc. Similarly, children with underlying medical conditions are to take appropriate precautions as advised by their respective medical practitioners.
5. Parents shall not send the children having COVID related symptoms to schools. But take appropriate test and treatment without any delay and follow usual precautions.

III Health, Hygiene and Safety protocols after opening of schools.

A Health Profiling and screening of students/staff

1. The first step on reopening of the schools will be health profiling and screening of students/staff. Information from students, teachers and other staff (Health Profiling) shall be collected in the form of a self-declaration regarding their health condition, etc. A health check up by a team of doctors shall also be arranged as per a schedule, to screen the students and teachers for diseases/ailments/co-morbid conditions, if any and needy cases may be referred to nearest Government Hospitals for necessary treatment and follow up.
2. The Health profiling and screening of students/staff shall commence immediately after opening the school and shall be completed within a week. Also, information regarding digital devices available may be obtained to arrange digital classes. **Students having co-morbidity conditions may be advised not to attend school and to attend classes through alternate/online mode.**
3. All employees who are at higher risk i.e, older employees, pregnant employees and employees who have underlying

medical conditions can be advised to take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any work requiring direct contact with the students.

4. With regard to Differently abled children, since all categories are considered to be vulnerable categories, they shall not be allowed to attend schools. These students may be put on online/other alternate mode of learning.
5. Every school shall designate a teacher to oversee the implementation of COVID related precautions by schools, teachers and staff. He / She shall counsel the students in case of any difficulty arising due to COVID situation.

B Precautionary measures and Sanitization on daily basis

1. The school premises along with furniture, hand rails, doors, windows etc especially the commonly touched surfaces like door knobs, latches etc shall be disinfected properly with 1 % Sodium Hypochlorite solution and following the Government guidelines already issued for the same. **This exercise should be done daily after the students leave the school in the evening. The expenses for this can be met by local bodies for Government schools.**
2. Students should not be involved in any of the cleaning activities for health and safety reasons.
3. All teaching learning material such as teaching aid, sports materials, swings, desks, chairs, computers, printers, laptops, tablets etc. focusing particularly on frequently touched surfaces/objects shall be disinfected properly.
4. All garbage should be disposed in dustbins and must not be allowed to pile up anywhere else in the school premises.
5. All dustbins must be cleaned and covered properly. Protocols must be in place for the final safe disposal of waste.

6. Mandatory hand washing for all students and staff at regular intervals as per the planned protocol following physical/social distancing norms shall be ensured. Hand washing time should be a minimum of 40 seconds.
7. Availability of safe and clean drinking water for students shall be ensured. Bringing of water bottles by students shall be encouraged.
8. Teachers and students shall only be allowed to enter the premises after washing their hands with soap /sanitizing. Suitable hand wash with soap /sanitization provisions with alcohol based sanitizers shall be made at the entry and exit points of the schools and wherever required. This shall be monitored by the designated staff.
9. CEOs shall communicate the **Government guidelines** for sanitization of public places to all schools / local bodies/health department officials for strict compliance by all concerned.
10. Wash areas, toilets, etc., where people are likely to come shall be disinfected properly. Social distancing norms shall apply to such areas strictly.
11. Air-conditioning should be avoided to the extent possible. Wherever, absolutely necessary, for air-conditioning / ventilation, the GOI guidelines shall be followed which emphasizes that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30°C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate. **Air circulation system should allow fresh/treated fresh air with fresh air level more than 50%.**
12. No outside vendor should be allowed to sell eatables inside the school premises or at the entry gate/point or exit.

C Social behaviour for pandemic prevention

1. The Head Master/ Principal shall ensure that a clean face mask is used by all teachers/students/ personnel.
2. Wearing of face cover shall be compulsory in all areas of the school premises by everyone. Touching the mask should be kept to minimum.
3. Children should be educated not to exchange masks with others.
4. Touching the face or any part of the face should be avoided.
5. Touching any surfaces of furniture/fixtures/railings/lifts/handles and other surfaces should be kept to the minimum.
6. Spitting should be strictly prohibited except in wash areas where the same should be washed away in running water immediately.
7. Respiratory etiquettes should be strictly followed. This involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/ sneezing with a tissue paper/ handkerchief/ flexed elbow and disposing off used tissue papers properly.
8. Teachers shall monitor that all the above are followed by the students.
9. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest shall be done.
10. Any student/teacher/staff displaying symptoms shall be immediately isolated and sent for testing. If tested positive, they shall be isolated for treatment. In such cases, persons who were in close contact shall be advised to be on home quarantine for self monitoring the health.

D Thermal screening in schools

1. Thermal screening of all students/staff/teachers shall be done when they arrive at the school.
2. Sufficient numbers of Thermal Scanners depending on the strength of the students, sufficient numbers of AAA cells for replacement and a clean cloth is to be kept ready for thermal screening. This shall be monitored by the designated staff.
3. The Principal/ Head Master shall check whether the Thermal Scanners are functional, every day.
4. Thermal screening could be done before the person enters the school. Subject to the infrastructure available, it is desirable that persons wait in a queue following physical distancing norms, in some shaded area like a covered structure or corridor, etc,. Proper marking should be done in the floor for social distancing.
5. The person handling the thermal scanner should wash hands and dry them before touching the no-touch thermal scanner. That person should familiarize himself with the usage instructions.
6. Before using the thermal scanner, the person handling it should look at the infrared sensor lens at the end of the unit. If dirty, it should be cleaned so that the thermal scanner works properly. To clean the lens, wipe gently with a damp swab. Do not use solvents, and do not touch the lens with the fingers.
7. To prevent transmission of disease, avoid direct contact of the thermal scanner with a person's skin.
8. Every day, after use, the device handle should be wiped clean and dry, before storing it safely for the next use.
9. The thermal scanner should be checked for functioning, an hour before the first use, each day. In case, the cells are having

no power left, they should be replaced. Always spare cells should be available with the person operating the thermal scanner.

10. The average normal body temperature is generally accepted as 98.6°F (37°C). Some studies have shown that the "normal" body temperature can have a wide range, from 97°F (36.1°C) to 99°F (37.2°C). The persons who show temperature above 37.2°C may be restricted from entering the school premises and shall be referred to a nearby Health centre/Government Hospital.

11. While doing thermal screening, the students/staff shall also be screened for other symptoms such as cough, cold and breathlessness.

12. A Pulse Oxymeter shall also be made available in the schools to screen the Oxygen(O₂) level of the students/staff with above symptoms.

E Safety norms in classrooms and other places

1. A proper crowd management inside and outside the school premises shall be ensured.
1. Teachers shall ensure students sit at marked/allocated seats maintaining physical/social distancing and wearing face covers /masks in the classes, laboratories, libraries, playground or any other part of school premise.
2. Practical work should be done in small groups maintaining physical distance.
3. Sharing of any material (Textbooks, Notebooks, Pen, Pencil, Eraser, Tiffin Box, Water Bottles, etc.) by students with each other shall be discouraged.
4. Different break times shall be provided for different classes.
5. No sharing of food among students should be allowed.
6. Students who do not take mid-day meals may be encouraged to

bring and eat home cooked food.

7. Windows and doors of the classrooms and other rooms to be kept open for ventilation.
8. Number of people in the elevators and passages shall be restricted. Use of stairs with one person on alternate steps may be encouraged.
9. Specific focus to avoid over-crowding in washrooms should be encouraged.
10. Students shall be encouraged to wash their hands before and after lunch/snacks, each time they use the washroom and any other outdoor activities. Hand sanitizers with 70% alcohol can be an alternative.

F Conduct of training in High Tech labs/other laboratories

1. For practical activities in laboratories, maximum capacity per session based on redesigned spaces shall be planned and scheduled accordingly duly following physical distancing norms.
2. The equipments shall be disinfected properly, particularly the frequently touched surfaces before and after each use.
3. It shall be ensured that a floor area of 4 m² per person is available for working on equipment/work station.
4. All staff/students shall sanitize their hands before and after using training equipment. For such purpose hand sanitizers should be provided at workstations/Hi tech labs etc.

G SOP to be followed in case a student/teacher/employee develops symptoms(fever, cough difficulty in breathing)

1. All headmasters/teachers shall keep the emergency health contact number ready for any emergency help.

2. Place the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others. Inform parents/guardians as the case may be. Immediately inform the nearest medical facility(hospital/clinic) and arrange for COVID test immediately.
3. Patient shall remain isolated while wearing a mask/face cover till such time they are examined by a doctor/health worker.
4. A risk assessment shall be undertaken by the designated public health authority and accordingly further action be initiated regarding management of case, his/her contacts and need for disinfection.
5. Disinfection of the premises to be taken up if the person is found positive.
6. For a suspect or a case detected in school/hostel, the student/staff shall not be sent back to his/her home as it may lead to spread of the disease. He / She should be isolated and State/district health officials shall be informed for suitable follow- up.
7. Persons who were in close contact with the positively tested student or person shall remain in home quarantine for self monitoring.

H Other instructions

1. All employees/teachers/students in the school premises must compulsorily wear their Identity card at all times.
2. Employees/ teachers/students should be strictly instructed not to create any gathering inside the school premises.
3. All employees who are at higher risk i.e., older employees, pregnant employees and employees who have underlying medical conditions should take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any work requiring direct contact with the students.

4. All employees/ students shall be made aware of COVID prevention practices.
5. The Head Master/Principal shall be held responsible for adherence of guidelines in school and should carry out compliance checks frequently.
6. Availability of sufficient covered dustbins and trash cans and provision for proper disposal of used personal protective items and general waste in accordance with Government guidelines should be ensured. Housekeeping employees shall be informed & trained about norms for waste management & disposal.
7. Entry of unnecessary visitors shall be strictly prohibited.
8. If transportation facility is being managed by the school, proper physical distancing, sanitization of buses/other transport vehicles(with 1% sodium hypochlorite) shall be ensured as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Private school buses and vans issued in **G.O.Ms.No.279, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM II) Department dated 06.06.2020.**
9. It shall be ensured that regular counseling is done for students and teachers reporting mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.
10. Teachers, school counselors and school health workers should work in unison to ensure emotional safety of the students.
11. Task Teams such as, Emergency Care Support/Response Team, General Support Team for all stakeholders, Commodity Support Team, Hygiene Inspection Team, etc. with earmarked responsibilities may be formed in schools.
12. Teachers, students and other stakeholders deemed fit for being the members of these task forces may be identified to work collaboratively to take strategic and immediate actions.

13. **Ensure availability in school or at contactable distance a full-time trained health care attendant/nurse/doctor and counsellor to take care of physical and mental health of the students.**
14. **Regular health check-up of students and teachers may be organized by schools.**
15. **Health Department to arrange for Medical Teams to conduct Health Camps in schools initially for health screening of students/staff before opening and regular check up after opening.**
16. **Health Department to keep mobile medical teams ready at block levels for quick response to the need in the schools**
17. **Contact numbers of the mobile medical teams shall be kept readily available in the schools**
18. **Health Department shall bring awareness among school students/staff on various preventive measures to be taken with regard to COVID 19 pandemic by issuing pamphlets, etc**
19. Students shall be encouraged to come to schools by bicycles or parents shall be encouraged to drop/pick up them from schools.

IV Standard Operating Procedure for all private school hostels

1. Temporary partitions may be erected to separate inmates/boarders as far as possible.
2. Physical/social distancing must be maintained all the times in hostels. Signage and messaging at prominent places will be important.
3. Alternative space may be arranged to accommodate students to enable physical/social distancing.
4. Screening of every boarder needs to be done before they start staying at the hostel. Only asymptomatic boarders

should be allowed to join.

5. Since students may be coming from different locations by using public transports such as buses, trains, etc., it is important that they should minimize their contact and interaction with others on arrival at hostel. Their health status should be monitored periodically.
6. Arrangement for a regular visit of Counselor teacher or a Counselor needs to be ensured to take care of any mental or emotional health issue of the students.
7. Hostel should be out of bound for all persons except essential staff with known health status.
8. Appropriate authorities may inspect kitchen and mess at least once a week to ensure maintenance of hygiene.
9. Capacity building of hostel staff should be done on physical/social distancing norms, health, and hygiene, clean and nutritious food, etc., for the hostellers.
10. In addition to the above, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for hostels maintained by Private Managements issued by the Government in **G.O.Ms.No.279, Revenue and Disaster Management (DM II) Department dated 06.06.2020** shall be followed by all hostels. The hostels run by various departments of Government shall also follow the guidelines issued by the respective departments.