

10 Feb 2023

Dear Heads of Home / Centre Supervisors

## **MSF Advisory to Residential and Community-based Facilities During Stepping Down of Covid-19 Measures**

On 9 February 2023, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce announced the stepping down to DORSCON Green as Singapore takes a further step towards living with COVID-19. Mask-wearing on public transport and indoor healthcare and residential care settings will no longer be required under the temporary COVID-19 regulations. While the national posture on legal requirement for mask-wearing in indoor settings will be eased, we still need to take precautionary measures for the healthcare sector and residential care homes as these are settings where vulnerable individuals may need to access services, and where the risk of infection could be compounded by prolonged close contact with others who might be infected.

2. Even as we step down to DORSCON Green, we should not expect to return to pre-COVID days. As such, MOH will retain the practice of mask-wearing for visitors, staff, and patients/residents in healthcare and residential care settings, when there is interaction with patients/residents and in indoor patient/resident-facing areas. These measures will take effect from **13 February 2023**.

### **Safe Management of Visitors, Staff, Residents and Clients**

3. **Mask-Wearing**: Mask-wearing will continue to be a requirement for **MSF Category 1A Institutional Elderly Homes**. Staff, visitors, vendors and volunteers in these Homes are required to wear masks in indoor resident-facing<sup>1</sup> areas. Masks will be optional for outdoor settings. Notwithstanding the mask-on requirement in indoor settings, workers will be allowed to remove their masks at the workplace: (i) when they are not interacting physically with others and (ii) when they are not in resident-facing areas.

4. All Facilities should ensure that staff, residents/clients, visitors, and vendors strictly follow all guidelines. We seek your understanding and cooperation to comply with the measures to limit the risk of transmission and protect the health and well-being of our staff, residents, and clients. Please refer to **Table 1** for the full set of guidelines.

5. MSF will continue to conduct checks to ensure all Facilities have put in place adequate infection control measures and precautionary measures as laid out in the MSF advisories issued.

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions to mask-wearing in resident-facing areas include 1) Eating, drinking, or consuming medication, 2) Engaging in strenuous physical exercises, 3) Engaging in public speaking and performance and/or during photo-taking or filming, and 4) Wearing equipment that prevents mask-wearing and is required in the course of work. Non-resident-facing areas refer to areas such as backroom and staff rest areas within the Home.

**Table 1: Summary of Precautionary Measures**

<b>1</b>	<b>Recommended Precautionary Measures for ALL Facilities for visitors, staff, residents, and enrolled clients allowed in Homes/Centres.</b>
	<p><b>GENERAL ADVICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ All staff, clients, visitors, volunteers, and vendors should be reminded to stay home if they feel unwell with ARI symptoms and undergo appropriate ART self-test.</li> <li>☑ Visitors - Homes/Centres are to encourage visitors showing ARI symptoms to refrain from visiting as part of social responsibility.</li> <li>☑ Staff - Homes/Centres are to encourage staff showing ARI symptoms to work from home and if that is not possible, to re-deploy said staff to work that does not require them to have close contact with residents/clients.</li> <li>☑ As a good practice, residents/enrolled clients should wear a mask, if tolerated, when they are unwell or develop any flu-like symptoms.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Precautionary Measures required for Category 1A Institutional Elderly Homes.</b>
<b>a.</b>	<p><b>MANAGEMENT OF VISITORS</b></p> <p>In-person visitations are subject to these Safe Management Measures (SMMs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ <b>Mask-wearing:</b> Visitors are required to don masks so long as they are within indoor resident-facing areas.</li> <li>☑ Homes are allowed the flexibility to manage the number of visitors and visit duration.</li> <li>☑ To protect unvaccinated residents, Homes have the flexibility to place further restrictions on the number of visitors and visit duration to these residents.</li> </ul>
<b>b.</b>	<p><b>MANAGEMENT OF VENDORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ Homes may continue maintenance work, including work that requires access into living quarters or contact with residents. When vendors must physically enter the wards/living areas, they should be screened by Homes to be physically well and adhere to prevailing SMMs and good practices (e.g., enforce hand hygiene).</li> <li>☑ <b>Mask-wearing:</b> In addition to the restrictions above, when vendors need to access any indoor resident-facing areas within the Home, they are required to don masks.</li> </ul>
<b>c.</b>	<p><b>MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☑ All volunteer activities are subject to prevailing SMMs.</li> <li>☑ Facilities are encouraged to only select fully-vaccinated volunteers for in-person volunteering activities. Volunteers showing ARI symptoms should refrain from visiting as part of social responsibility.</li> <li>☑ <b>Mask-wearing:</b> In addition to the above, volunteers are required to wear a mask at all times in all indoor resident-facing areas and be reminded to practice hand hygiene before entering and leaving the facility, and before and after every activity.</li> </ul>

6. Please check the MOH website ([www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg)) regularly for further updates and Health Advisories. All of us have a part to play to keep our facilities clean and safe for our residents, clients, and staff. We encourage Heads of Home, Centre Supervisors and Social Service Agencies serving vulnerable groups to share this information with your staff.

7. Please contact your respective MSF Division contacts if you require any assistance or clarifications on precautionary measures to be put in place. Alternatively, you may contact MSF at 6355 5000 (Monday to Friday: 8:30am to 6pm; Saturday: 8:30am to 1pm) or at [www.msf.gov.sg/Pages/Contact-Us](http://www.msf.gov.sg/Pages/Contact-Us).

## Annex A: Classification of Services

Category	Nature of Service	Facility/ Programme/ Service
1	Facilities providing care and social services to vulnerable groups	<p><b>Category 1A: Residential facilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Singapore Boys' Home</li> <li>b. Singapore Girls' Home</li> <li>c. Children and Young Persons Homes</li> <li>d. Welfare Homes*</li> <li>e. Sheltered Homes*</li> <li>f. Children's Disability Homes</li> <li>g. Adult Disability Homes*</li> <li>h. Crisis Shelters</li> <li>i. Transitional Shelters*</li> <li>j. Senior Group Homes*</li> <li>k. Disability Hostels*</li> </ul> <p>*Facilities serving elderly residents</p> <p><b>Category 1B: Disability centres and programmes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Day Activity Centres</li> <li>b. Therapy Hub</li> <li>c. Sheltered Workshop</li> <li>d. Community Based Integration Support</li> </ul>
2	Facilities providing social services to vulnerable groups, involving sustained contact e.g. case interview, counselling session  [As a guide: services involving physical contact, or within 2 metres with a contact time of ≥ 30 minutes]	<p><b>Social services and programmes, including but not limited to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Social Service Offices</li> <li>b. Family Violence Specialist Centres</li> <li>c. Family Service Centres</li> <li>d. Child Protection Specialist Centres</li> <li>e. Integrated Services for Individual and Family Protection Specialist Centre</li> <li>f. Mandatory Counselling Centres</li> <li>g. Divorce Support Specialist Agencies</li> <li>h. Strengthening Families Programme Family Service Centres (FAM@FSC)</li> <li>i. Youth!GO Agencies</li> <li>j. Integrated Service Providers</li> </ul>
3	Facilities providing frontline services to the public	<p><b>Social services and programmes, including, but not limited to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Parenting Support Programme</li> <li>b. Early Risk Marriage Programme</li> <li>c. Marriage Preparation Programme</li> </ul>
<p><b>Note 1:</b> Regular volunteers should be regarded and managed like staff in relation to this Advisory.</p> <p><b>Note 2:</b> For Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children, Pilot for Private Intervention Providers, Special Student Care Centres and Student Care Centres, please refer to separate Advisories issued.</p> <p><b>Note 3:</b> Social service agencies not listed are advised to refer to the guide above to determine the application of the Advisory based on the nature of the service.</p>		