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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

3RD STREET, SINKOR

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

***SMT APPROVED***

***PROGRAM INTERVENTION FOR THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS IN LIBERIA***

***INTRODUCTION***

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has formulated these guidelines to ensure smooth operation of academic activities in the post Ebola era in Liberia. The guidelines are intended to build a sustainable Ebola prevention system in the education sector. As such, all schools operating in Liberia are required to abide by the guidelines. County and District Education Officers are mandated to ensure full compliance with the guidelines.

***PRIORITY 1****:* ***Community Ebola Awareness and Health Promotion Teacher Workforce***

1. Train County Education Officers (CEOs) to train District Education Officers (DEOs) who, through a cascading approach, will train school principals, teachers and representatives of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) to participate and lead community based social mobilization and behavior change communication.

**PRIORITY 2**: ***Create a Healthy and Friendly School Environment***

1. ***Clean and Disinfect School Environments***: Administrators of both public and private schools are to ensure that school campuses are in clean and good sanitary conditions (eg. Campuses are brushed, buildings, particularly toilets and urinals cleaned and sprayed with disinfectant to prevent the spread of infection. Protective gears should be acquired and worn for cleaning and disinfection.
2. ***Installation of Hand Washing Facilities on School Campuses***: Hand washing facilities and thermometer should be acquired and installed on every school campus. Each School Administrator is to ensure that an appropriate place/facility is identified on his/her campus where temperature and health screening and hand washing equipment/materials are installed. At least two (2) staff of each school should be identified and tasked with the responsibilities of daily managing and administering hand washing facilities. These activities should be based on WASH standards and guidelines to screen and ensure adequacy of facilities. All students, staff, and visitors to campuses including food vendors will be screened. Temperatures of students, staff, and all guests to the campuses must be checked on a daily basis on entry and individuals with elevated temperature placed in isolation until referral for further screening by a trained health staff at the nearest health facility according to national standards. Close relatives (parents, guardians & spouses) of suspected individuals should immediately be notified about their child and referred to the nearest health facility.
3. ***Water Hygiene and Sanitation***

**Hygiene Practices**: There should be safe, sufficient, clean and adequate drinking water and hygiene promotion water supply on school campuses. School Administrators should also ensure that spoons and cups for use by students are **kept safe**, **cleaned** and **daily sanitized** at schools.

1. ***Training of Principals and Staff to Manage Screening and Hand Washing Facilities*:** Principalsand staff to manage and administer screening and hand washing facilities are to be trained three weeks prior to re-opening of schools.County and District Education Officers as well as the Secretariats and Representatives of Private and Faith based School Systems will be seriously supported to adhere to MoE guidelines on sanitation and hygiene standards.
2. ***Contact Addresses of Parents, Guardians & Spouses*:** School Administrators are required to establish and maintain contact addresses (eg. **Name, location, phone numbers, email,** if any) of parents and guardians of students and spouses of staff.
3. **Sick Students and Staff on School Campus**: County and Education Officers, Secretariats and Operators of Private and Faith based Schools are to ensure that School Administrators in consultation with the County Health Teams develop clear plans to handle and/or transfer sick students and staff to a nearby Health Center ensuring the proper infection prevention and control standards are in place
4. ***Community Engagement***: The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Secretariats and Operators of Private and Faith based School Systems will organize community social engagement interventions in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW). These activities will include door to door social mobilization, behavioral change education and town hall meetings to inform and educate parents, guardians and community leaders about the **Ministry’s** **Post** **Ebola School Environment Interventions.**
5. ***De-worming of Students and Staff***: The Ministry of Education, supported by the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare, will conduct a nationwide de-worming exercise during school registration period to improve the health standards of school age children.

***PRIORITY 3: Development and Rollout of Administrative Guidelines for Opening of Schools***

1. Develop and review administrative guidelines taking into account emerging issues affecting operation of school in Liberia
2. Rollout guidelines in both public and private schools when signaled by the MoHSW.

***PRIORITY 4****:* ***Mitigate Psychological Impact of Ebola***

1. ***School Based Guidance and Counseling Services***: The Ministry of Education will ensure that school-based guidance and counseling services commence again and fully made functional in all public, community and private schools in the country.
2. ***Psychosocial Training***: Teacher-counselors will be trained in order to develop skills needed to mitigate psychological and emotional impact of Ebola.

**PRIORITY 5**: **Monitoring and Supervision of School Based Activities**

1. **Program Monitoring, Supervision and Reporting by Local Education Administration**: County and District Education Officers will be capacitated to carry out regular and timely supervision of school activities before and after re-opening of schools. Such officers will submit monthly reports on school activities on health related situation in their schools. County and District Education Officers will establish and maintain ***hot lines*** in their respective offices for coordination and prompt exchange of information regarding potential outbreaks.
2. ***Program Monitoring, Supervision and Reporting by Central Administration***: The Ministry of Education in consultation with the MoHSW and Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) will ensure prompt monitoring, supervision and reporting of the Ministry’s Post-Ebola School Intervention Program. The Ministry will create and maintain **Program Intervention Desk** (**PID**) within the Bureau of Student Personnel Services to receive, review, analyze, and consolidate reports from the counties. The consolidated reports will promptly be communicated to the Senior Management Team of the Ministry of Education for action.

**Standards and Conditions for the Opening of School**

1. The health advice is schools can reopen, but some basic protection should be in place.
2. For re-opening of schools, the MoE intends to aim for January, 2015 subject to certain essential changes. Initial suggestions included:

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| * Camouflage in every school * Hand-washing facilities in every school * Tents for isolation in every school | * Small First Aid kit in each school * Instructional materials * School nurse (or over next 2 months, teacher with additional health training) |

Additional suggestions were:

* monitoring temperature and following up if a child misses school for 2 days (screening)

**Standards and Levels of School Opening Priorities**

**Level: Basic Hygiene and Sanitation**

1. Hand washing stations
2. Barrels for water)
3. (soap)
4. Hand pumps for sustainable water supply
5. Latrines
6. Thermometer for temperature monitoring
7. School Health (Health kits and school health “nurses”)
8. Fumigation of schools
9. Minor renovation of public schools
10. Isolation tents for children and staff who fall ill at schools
11. School feeding
12. Instructional materials
13. Book Bags/ copy books/pens
14. School uniforms
15. Subsidy to private schools in keeping with MOE guidelines

**Level II: School Improvements**

1. Additional classrooms/ annexes to accommodate the anticipated over flow of students

2. School buses for students (discussion with the National Transport Authority as temporary measure)

**Level III: School Infrastructural Development**

1. Furniture for schools
2. Libraries and Laboratories
3. Training for psycho-social counselors
4. Training of teachers
5. Teachers housing
6. Transportation for school administrators

**Conclusion:** The closure of schools due to Ebola has affected all families. This widespread impact of the epidemic indicates the need to take all the precautionary measures to ensure that the school becomes a health promoting environment.