

30 June 2022

Dear Vice Chancellor**Re: COVID-19, Monkey Pox and GBV Updates for the PSET Sector**

Following the announcement by the Health Minister, Dr Joe Phaahla, that sections 16A, 16B and 16C of the COVID-19 Regulations Relating to the Surveillance and the Control of Notifiable Medical Conditions – and which relate to the use of face masks, social gatherings, and checks at South African borders – have been repealed.

As of mid-June, the critical indicators showed:

- Reported cases declined
- Hospitalisations declined
- The effective reproductive rate of the virus declined to under 0.7%
- The positivity rate declined, though the number of tests done is also low
- Reported deaths declined.

The national policy update makes way for an eased approach to wearing face masks and other related social behaviours. However, as the Health Minister cautioned, COVID-19 remains a danger to public health. It is likely that the virus is becoming endemic, but the pattern that the pandemic's trajectory takes is hard to predict with certainty. Even if the COVID-19 disease reaches an endemic status, it does not mean that it poses no risk.

HIGHER HEALTH has been supporting the COVID-19 response across the Post School Education and Training System (PSET) since the beginning of the pandemic within South Africa. As early as Lockdown Level 5, HIGHER HEALTH began building comprehensive programmes, systems, and controls through the establishment of guidelines, protocols, and capacity building, at all levels, through the firmly grounded, growing body of science and latest epidemiological data. These Protocols, Guidelines and Trainings have helped our sector towards a smooth phased approach of re-opening, to prevent

Improving wellbeing. Inspiring success.

Directors: W de Villiers (Chairperson), A Bawa, M Mabizela, T Mayekiso, SJ Mlotshwa, N Phaswana-Mafuya, A Singh, D Tromp, B Madalane, R Ahluwalia (CEO)

infections, build systems for screening, testing, quarantining, and linkage to medical care, and address mental health problems, GBV and substance abuse exacerbated by this pandemic.

Following the recent change in regulations to allow the opening of all sectors and travel and the ending of restrictions for mask-wearing and gatherings, HIGHER HEALTH once again deems it important to update and consult with the PSET Sector with these latest developments on COVID-19, future probabilities in the COVID pandemic as well as the implications for, and impact on, institutional COVID-19 response plans.

HIGHER HEALTH would also like to provide updates on the recently confirmed case of monkey pox in South Africa. The engagement will cover monkey pox as a disease, its etiology, cause, spread, current variant in circulation, symptoms, as well as our state of readiness as the PSET sector.

HIGHER HEALTH has also developed a set of instruments, guidelines, and protocols, with our PSET Gender Based Violence Technical Working Group and under the guidance of the PSET Gender Based Violence Technical Task Team, that will help turn the sectoral GBV Policy Framework (launched by Minister Blade Nzimande in July 2020) into practical implementation across our campuses. These instruments support institutions and management to put the necessary infrastructure towards a comprehensive response on cases of sexual and gender misconduct, rape, and sexual assaults. Given this development, we feel it is important that we consult with our institutions on a way forward towards these implementing guidelines and protocols as well as capacity workshops based on needs assessment towards the implementation of our PSET GBV response.

Thus, I hereby invite all PSET senior management, academia, student affairs, gender and transformation offices, operational units, campus health, occupational and employee support services, residence directors and staff, campus security, frontline staff, student leadership, peer educators, peer mentors, student formulations and others to a consultation and capacity building webinar on COVID-19, Monkey Pox and GBV.

The details are as follows:

Date: 6 July 2022, Wednesday

Time: 11:00 – 12:30

Link to register: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GPo-bkaEQUmLHNL4X55KtQ

Improving wellbeing. Inspiring success.

Directors: W de Villiers (Chairperson), A Bawa, M Mabizela, T Mayekiso, H Ntlatleng, N Phaswana-Mafuya, A Singh, D Tromp, SZ Zungu, R Ahluwalia (CEO)



After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar. If you are unable to attend the webinar please do still register for the webinar should you wish to receive a recording of the webinar

We look forward to your participation and engagement.



Kind regards,

Dr (Prof) Ramneek Ahluwalia

MBBS MBA (UCT) PhD (Public Health)

Chief Executive Officer

Improving wellbeing. Inspiring success.

Directors: W de Villiers (Chairperson), A Bawa, M Mabizela, T Mayekiso, H Ntlatleng, N Phaswana-Mafuya, A Singh, D Tromp, SZ Zungu, R Ahluwalia (CEO)

