



Guidelines on Safe Workplace Practices

Introduction

Mercy Hands is a humanitarian NGO that works in areas affected by man-made or natural disasters to save lives, sustain human rights, and restore healthy community; therefore, Mercy Hands' work is essential and becomes more important during the disaster. Despite of the nature of Mercy Hands work, the safety of its staff always comes first and it is the responsibility of Mercy Hands to provide its staff with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm.

Because of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic, life will not be the same. There will be a new “normal” at all aspects of life, including workplace practices. These guidelines set up the ground rules for the new normal at Mercy Hands' workplaces. They are the minimum standards to be applied at Mercy Hands' workplaces to reduce the risk of contracting COV ID-19 and to ensure smooth and uninterrupted conduct of business. The managers of the workplaces are welcomed to apply stricter standards.

These guidelines will be regularly updated by the Board of Directors. The up to date version can always be found on Mercy Hands website under Members Only page.

Risk Classification

Mercy Hands' workplaces are classified into low, intermediate, and high exposure risk for COVID-19 infection, based on the frequency of contact with the general public and known or suspected COVID-19 patients. A workplace with only infrequent and a few visitors is considered



low exposure risk, while a workplace with frequent (e.g. daily) but still small number visitors is considered intermediate exposure risk, and a workplace with frequent and high volume visitors is considered high exposure risk

Mercy Hands' Headquarters and most of its workplaces are considered Low Exposure Risk. The following table lists Mercy Hands' workplaces based on risk level:

Low Exposure Risk	Intermediate Exposure Risk	High Exposure Risk
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Office in Erbil (daily staff presence) 2. Amiriyat Al Falluja Office (EV Program – staff only and only a few days per month) 3. Amiriyat Al Falluja Office (CRI Program – staff only and only a few days per month) 4. CRI Warehouse in Amiriyat Al Falluja (daily presence, only staff) 5. Falluja Office (vacant) 6. 2 Falluja Centers (EMPACT program – vacant for now) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Headquarters 2. Falluja Centers (EMPACT program); 3. GIZ Center in Dora; 4. Telefar Office; 5. MC related workplace?? 	<p>None</p>



7. Samawa Office (daily staff presence)		
8. Warehouse in Al-Khidhir (daily staff presence)		
9. Basra Office (daily staff presence)		
10. Warehouse in Shat Al Arab (daily staff presence)		
11. CRI Office in Khanaqeen (daily staff presence)		
12. CRI Warehouse in Khanaqeen inside El Wind IDP Camp (daily staff presence)		
13. Samarra Office (daily staff presence)		
14. Tikrit Office (daily staff presence)		
15. CRI Warehouse in Al Alam (daily staff presence)		
16. Telekef Office		
17. Hamdaniya Office		
18. Hamam Al Alil Office		
19. Qayyarah Office		



20. Mosul Office		
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Preventing Spread of Infection

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

All managers of Mercy Hands' workplaces should:

- Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to the workplace and in other areas where they will be seen;
- Provide employees with tissues and waste bins lined with a plastic bag so that they can be emptied without contacting the contents;
- Instruct employees to clean their hands frequently, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol;
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace in multiple locations and in common areas to encourage hand hygiene;
- Continue routine environmental cleaning and consider additional measures as described later in this document;
- Brief the employees, contractors and customers that anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home. They should also stay home if they have had to take simple medications, such as paracetamol/acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin, which may mask symptoms of infection;
- The EHO checks the temperature of every person, employee and visitors, coming into the workplace; If the temperature is 37.5 C or more then the person will not be allowed to enter and the manager of the workplace must be informed immediately;
- Any employees who develops flu-like symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath, fever) should go home immediately and seek medical attention;



- No group (more than 3 persons) breakfast or lunch are allowed at all Mercy Hands' workplaces;
- Only disposable cups and utensils are allowed to be used at Mercy Hands' workplaces.

Routine Environmental Cleaning

The Manager of the Workplace will designate one of the staff to be the Environmental Health Officer (EHO). The EHO could be the guard, janitor, or any volunteer staff who is capable of taking extra duties and can show up to work first before others. The EHO will be in charge of keeping the workplace clean. The Logistics and Security department will strive to provide the EHO with ample disinfectants, disposable wipes, tissues, hand sanitizers, and masks.

Routine Environmental Cleaning Practice

- Before the first employee shows up, the EHO cleans with disinfectants all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and door handles;
- The EHO stands at the entrance of the office to hand every incoming person, employee or visitor, a mask – if they do not have one - and make them clean their hands with a hand sanitizer before the enter the office, in addition to checking their temperature;
- Every day at noon, the EHO cleans with disinfectants all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and door handles;
- Every room must be provided with tissues and disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees;

Guidance on Facemasks



All employees must wear mask when:

1. Carrying out field visits or when using public transport;
2. Working in closed spaces with other persons, or when it is not possible to maintain a safe distance from other people;
3. Employees at intermediate or high exposure risk must wear the mask at all times.

Face masks should only be considered as a complementary measure and not a replacement for established preventive practices, such as physical distancing, cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene and avoiding face touching.

The employees are responsible to bring their own mask, but Mercy Hands will provide masks to those who come to the workplace without a mask on. Both medical (e.g. N95, surgical mask) and non-medical cloth masks are allowed as long as they cover nose and mouth tightly. Employees are encouraged to shave their beard for efficient use of the mask.

It is essential that employees and visitors use face masks properly so that they are effective and safe.

- ❖ It should fit properly, completely covering the face from bridge of nose to chin.
- ❖ Clean hands properly before putting the face mask on or taking it off.
- ❖ Only touch the cord or elastic at the back of the face mask when removing it, not the front.
- ❖ If the face mask is disposable, be sure to do so safely in a proper container.
- ❖ If reusable, wash the face mask as soon as possible after use with detergent at 60°C.

The best way to reduce any risk of infection is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (closer than 2 meters) with any potentially infected person. Any employee who deals with members of the public from behind a screen should be protected from airborne particles.



What to do if an employee or a visitor becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace and there is reason to suspect they may have come into contact with COVID-19, the person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 meters away from other people. If possible, find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office. If possible open a window for ventilation. They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and should cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they do not have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. The affected person should remain isolated until the manager of the workplace decides what to do.

What to do if an employee or a visitor with suspected COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace

A risk assessment of each situation will be undertaken by the manager of the workplace. They will provide advice on how to manage staff and visitors, based on their assessment of the risk.

The manager of the workplace will also be in contact with the affected person directly to advise on isolation and identifying other contacts to whom they will give appropriate advice.



If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, the manager of the workplace should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality.

No further cleaning measures other than what is mentioned under Routine Environmental Cleaning.

Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their workplace manager and go see a doctor. The doctor and/ or the workplace manager assess their potential exposure and the measures to take.

When individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

Contacts are not considered cases and if they are feeling well, they are very unlikely to have spread the infection to others.

Those who have had close contact will be asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case.

Employees who have not had close contact with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions other than monitoring their health for symptoms and can continue to attend work.



Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to a flu-like illness and include dry cough, sore throat, fever, tiredness or shortness of breath. Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned including:

- ❖ all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids;
- ❖ all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones.

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (such as corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the result is available. If the individual tests negative, this can be put in the normal waste. Should the individual test positive, you will be instructed what to do with the waste by the health authorities.

Organizing Meetings or Events

Meetings and events can still be organized at Mercy Hands' workplaces but with the following conditions:

1. Depending on the nature of the meeting or event, keep the number of participants at a minimum necessary;



2. All participants should wear mask;
3. Smoking is not allowed;
4. No buffets or shareable foods or drinks; if food or drinks are provided then they should be individually pre-packaged and all utensils are disposable.
5. Social distancing must be maintained during breaks and at all times;
6. Provide dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub or alcohol based wet wipes around the venue;
7. If there is space, arrange seats so that participants are at least two meters apart;
8. Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated;
9. If anyone starts to feel unwell, follow the guidelines above.

AFTER the meeting

1. Retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after the event.
2. If someone at the meeting or event was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the manager of the workplace should let all participants know this. They should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days. If they start to feel unwell they should stay at home and contact the relevant public health authority.

Human Resources

In relation to COVID-19, Mercy Hands will maintain flexible human resources policies but working from home is not an option and there will be no change to regular working hours. All employees should respect Mercy Hands' working hours and the Board expects senior level managers to lead by example.



Flexible Human Resources Regulations:

- The employees will not be required to submit a doctor note or any medical evidence of sickness for the allowed two days per month sick leave;
- The employee will be allowed to be absent from work for more than two days per month and s/he will not be asked to provide a doctor or hospital note;
- The employee will be permitted to stay at home to care for a sick or dependent family member;
- The employee will be deducted a one-day salary for every day of absence beyond the two days per month sick leave, regardless of the reason for absence;

Update – May 2021

Considering the new changes regarding COVID vaccine availability, Mercy Hands' Board of Directors met and decided the following:

Directives:

- 1- Staff who are fully vaccinated (evidence required) will not be required to wear a mask when they are in the office.
- 2- Staff who are not fully vaccinated are required to wear a mask when they are in the office.



3- Whether vaccinated or not, staff who are in close contact with non-MH persons (e.g. in the field or in a room with beneficiaries, community leaders, officials, other NGOs' staff, etc.) must wear a mask.

Explanation

a- Vaccine works! And it will work just like the flu vaccine, meaning it will significantly reduce your risk of getting infected with COVID, and even if you get infected, the infection will be mild, i.e. not die from it or need to get hospitalized.

b- Even if you were infected with COVID, you should get vaccinated. You got infected by one strain of COVID, but the vaccine will protect you against all strains of COVID - but at different degrees (see point 1).

c- We recommend you take Pfizer or Moderna. They are proven to be good and safe for men and women, 16 years and older. Avoid the Chinese vaccine (not effective enough) and AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson vaccines (risk of blood clot, albeit minimal).

d- Those who are vaccinated are still encouraged to wear a mask for the following reasons: 1) The virus keeps changing so maybe there will be a strain that is a killer and the vaccine is not effective against it; 2) You can still contract the virus and then you will carry it to others, so wear a mask to protect others; and 3) Unless you hang a badge on your chest saying "vaccinated" people will not know you are vaccinated, so to avoid scaring them you are required to wear a mask and keep a social distance (2 meters) when you are with them (see Directive 3).