

**DIRECTORATE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION
GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM**

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE(SoP)
FOR
OPENING OF SCHOOLS IN MIZORAM
(March 2022)**

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all activities throughout the world and has hindered social and economic development greatly. Education is one of the worst hit sectors throughout India.

Schools in Mizoram **were closed due to lockdowns from 17th March, 2020. Since then, normal classes have been suspended for most classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** Most of the school buildings all over Mizoram have been utilized as quarantine facilities and Covid Care Centers (CCC).

The Government of Mizoram has issued instructions from time to time on measures to be followed by schools.

These instructions are apt to change, depending on the intensity or severity of COVID-19 cases in the country.

The Ministry of Home Affairs vide Order no. 40-3/2020-DM-I (A) dated 30th September, 2020, has issued guidelines for re-opening, following lockdown measures put in place for containment of COVID-19 in the country under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. Among the activities permitted outside the Containment Zones is the re-opening of schools and coaching institutions, after 15th October, 2020, in a graded manner, for which State/UT Governments may take a decision in consultation with the respective school/institution management, based on their assessment of the situation and subject to certain conditions.

Although the future is still uncertain at present, it is expected that schools will reopen, with or without the virus. Therefore, there is great need for a proper system to be followed by all the stakeholders to ensure safe schooling for all. This Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) is prepared to provide a proper form of guidance to be followed by the school authorities, parents/guardians and students. Many important and relevant points are taken from the SoP prepared by the Ministry of Education (Department of School Education & Literacy), vide F. No. 11-16/2020-Sch.4 Dt.5.10.2020.

The SoP is divided into two main parts, '**Before Opening**' and '**After Opening**' under which the **roles of the school authorities, the parents/guardians and the students** are mentioned. This SoP can by no means be exhaustive and therefore the SoP prepared by the Ministry of Education may be consulted in tandem.

The first SoP for the School Education, Mizoram was prepared and published on October 2020. There are some changes required to be incorporated with the passage of time and the changing COVID-19 situations. Hence, this SoP March 2022 has been issued with careful examination and directions of the officials from the Health & Family Welfare Department, Govt. of Mizoram.

This SoP will apply to all students within Mizoram (Nursery to Class XII).

BEFORE OPENING

A. For School Authorities

- 1) **Cleaning & disinfecting:** Many schools have been utilized as quarantine centers and Covid Care Centers (CCC) during this Covid – 19 pandemic. School compounds, buildings, classrooms, furniture should be first sanitized by manual cleaning and treating them with chemical disinfectants. School authority should organize personnel for such operation to make the school buildings, classrooms and premises fit and safe for utilization.
 - i) Removal of shrubs and other debris from the school compound.
 - ii) Sunning of desks, benches, furniture and other articles.
 - iii) Airing out and cleaning of office and classrooms.
 - iv) Sanitization and disinfecting of furniture/articles and premises using hypochlorite solution.
 - v) All water storage units/tanks to be cleaned thoroughly and replenished with clean potable water before school reopens.

- 2) **Arrangement for sanitization:**
 - i) Equipment / items for sanitization should be ensured well in advance to prevent Covid – 19 transmissions inside the school premises. Supplies of all such items should be in place and in stock. (Ref: Annexure)
 - ii) Soap-dispensers, supply of water for washing hands, safe drainage for used water or sanitizer dispenser (for hand sanitizer) should be arranged at the main entrance of the school compound.
 - iii) Adequate system for hand sanitization should be in place to avoid crowding and long queues.

- 3) **Consent of Parents/Guardians**
 - i) Consent of parents/guardians in writing should be produced by the students before they start attending schools.
 - ii) Students willing to study from home with the consent of the parents may be allowed to do so.

- 4) **Physical Distancing:**
 - i) Separate entrance and exit in the school compound, if possible, should be arranged.
 - ii) Private pick up and drop off facility to be arranged, if possible.
 - iii) Staggering the timing of entry and exit for students of different classes.
 - iv) Marking different lanes for coming and going.
 - v) Making announcements through Public Announcement System to guide parents/guardians and students to maintain physical distancing.
 - vi) Marking circles on ground at different places like reception, water facility stations, hand washing stations, area outside washrooms, and other areas.
 - vii) Maintain at least 3(three) feet distance between students in the seating plan. It is advisable to mark the seating that students should occupy.
 - viii) Physical/social distancing shall also be maintained in the staff rooms, office area, and other places of public interaction.

- ix) Displaying posters/messages/stickers and signage 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.
- x) Prepare in advance flexible, staggered and reduced timings planned for different classes in such a way that physical /social distancing is maintained along with other guidelines.
- xi) Classes may be held in rooms having larger area such as computer room, library, laboratory etc. with physical distance of 3(three) feet between the students.
- xii) Proper crowd management in the school as well as in outside premises shall be ensured.

5) **Covid- care Teams**

- i) Task Team 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 set up.
- ii) Teachers, students and other stakeholders deemed fit for being the members of these COVID care teams may be identified as members of these teams.

6) **Hostels**

- i) Temporary partitions may be erected to separate boarders/hostellers wherever it is applicable. Beds to be placed adequately apart.
- ii) Thorough screening of every boarder may be done before they start staying at the hostel. RAgT shall be undergone by all the hostellers and only those with negative RAgT results shall be allowed to board. School authorities shall be responsible for arranging the RAgT.
- iii) Proper awareness in the form of signage and messaging by any means to be ensured at or near the hostel premises.
- iv) School staff to assess the health of students at all times.
- v) In case of limited admission into hostels due to constraint of space, preference may be given to boarders who do not have support at home or for those who are unable to avail online mode of teaching.
- vi) Schools to arrange a Counsellor to take care of any mental health issue of boarders.
- vii) Boarding/hostel should be out of bounds for all persons except essential staff with known health status.
- viii) Alternative space may be arranged so as to accommodate students while ensuring social distancing.
- ix) Proper hygiene to be maintained at kitchen and mess halls. Distancing to be maintained at mess halls.

- 7) **School Buses**
- i) Sanitization of school buses.
 - ii) Sanitizing equipment and supplies to be in stock and in place inside the school buses. Thermal scanner should be used for screening all who enter the school buses.
 - iii) Placing of markings using tape or other appropriate material to identify no- sitting seats to ensure social distancing.
 - iv) Appointment of monitors from teachers to carry out screening and ensuring safety norms inside the school buses.
 - v) Ensuring air flow and ventilation inside the school buses.
- 8) **Sick-Room:** A dedicated room for isolating suspected cases of Covid-19 should be arranged.
- 9) **Pulse Oximeter and Digital Thermometer to quickly monitor conditions of the staff and students should be available in the school.**
- 10) **Awareness on SoP :** School authorities, parents/guardians and the students should be well informed on the SoP to ensure effective practices on safety norms. The SoP should be ready well in time before it becomes operational.
- i) The school authorities at all levels should be provided with the SoP so that they have enough time to understand and prepare themselves for carrying out the SoP.
 - ii) Parents/guardians and the students should be well informed on the SoP so that they can correctly prepare themselves and follow the instructions.
- 11) **School SoPs based on guidelines from the state administration:**
Schools are encouraged to prepare their own SoPs to address their individual micro- planning. However, they should not dilute or go against the SoP prepared by the State Government/Ministry of Education.

B. For Parents/Guardians /Students**1) Ensuring School Supplies**

- i) Parents/guardians should ensure that school uniforms, text books, stationeries (pen, pencil, sharpener, instrument box, eraser etc.) are obtained and ready for their ward.
- ii) Students should avoid sharing of any items (stationeries, water bottle, tiffin etc.) with other students.

2) Face Masks

- i) Wearing of face mask is mandatory. Students should wear face mask from the moment they leave their homes.
- ii) Parents/guardians should ensure adequate supply of face masks.
- iii) It is recommended that each student should have spare face masks.

3) Awareness

- i) Parents/guardians should keep themselves aware of the latest practice and guidance on safety norms.
- ii) They should train their ward(s) and guide them in practicing and following the accepted safety measures.
- iii) Students should be well aware of the SoP for their own safety.

AFTER OPENING

A. For School Authorities

1) **Ensuring health and safety of students and teachers**

- i) Staff and students belonging to containment zones/**red zones** shall not attend school and other educational institutions until the containment zone is de-notified.
- ii) Attendance must not be enforced, and must depend entirely on parental consent.
- iii) Flexible attendance and sick leave policies may be developed to encourage students and staff to stay at home when sick. **To prevent possible misuse of this clause, students suffering from COVID-19 or those who are to be quarantined due to positive case in the family shall submit letter from the concerned VLTF/LLTF stating their condition.**
- iv) Periodical cleaning of high-touch areas (door knobs, hand railings, switches, computer peripherals etc.) using hypochlorite solution or other disinfectants for at least thrice a day should be ensured.
- v) All garbage should be disposed in dustbins and must not be allowed to pile up anywhere else in the school premises.
- vi) All dustbins must be cleaned and covered properly. Protocols must be in place for the final safe disposal of waste.
- vii) Availability of soap and clean water at all hand washing facility may be ensured. This can be monitored by the identified or designated staff/students.
- viii) **Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be placed at prominent places like reception and entrance of the school.**
- ix) Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of washrooms during the school hours may be ensured.
- x) Ban on spitting shall be strictly enforced.
- xi) Availability of safe and clean drinking water for students may be ensured. **Disposable cups for Drinking water may be provided or each student may bring his/her own cup from home for drinking water.** Bringing of water bottles by students may be encouraged.
- xii) Cleanliness and hygiene should be maintained during midday meal preparation, serving, eating, and after eating the place and utensils, etc., should be properly cleaned.
- xiii) Sanitization may be done before school and after the students leave classroom and school premises.
- xiv) A minimum physical distance of 3(three) feet should be maintained for seating. Staggering of school timings/days/shifts may be essential for ensuring this.
- xv) Physical/social distancing norms should be followed, both, during arrival and departure time, to and from school. Minimum 3(three) feet physical distance should be maintained when queuing up for entry and inside the school.
- xvi) **Whenever and wherever possible, arrangement should be made for conducting classes outdoors.**
- xvii) Screening of all including staff members before entering the school without fail for fever/cough and breathlessness.

- xviii) Different break times may be provided for different classes.
- xix) Windows and doors of the classrooms and other rooms to be kept open for ventilation.
- xx) Specific focus on avoiding over-crowding in washrooms should be encouraged.
- xxi) Teachers must talk and sensitize students about COVID-19 and related myths, social stigma, and fears.
- xxii) Teachers should wear face mask during conducting classes.
- xxiii) Schools should not undertake school events where physical/social distancing is not possible. Functions and celebrations at schools should be avoided.
- xxiv) School assembly may be conducted in their respective classrooms under the guidance of the class teacher.
- xxv) Parents-Teachers meeting, if required, shall be taken up via virtual means.
- xxvi) No outside vendors should be allowed to sell any eatables/drinks inside the school premises or at the entry gate/point.
- xxvii) A list may be maintained by the schools to identify students/teaching staff/non teaching staff who have congenital illness/chronic illness/co-morbidity so that proper medical attention can be given to these people in suspected case of COVID-19.**

2) **Joint Inspection**

Joint Inspection Teams comprising of Health Officials and Officials from the School Education to be formed in order to inspect all aspects of actual implementation of the SoP.

3) **Protocol to be followed in case of detection of a suspected case of COVID-19**

- i) Place the ill student or staff in a room or area where they are isolated from others.
- ii) Immediately inform the nearest medical facility (hospital/clinic) or call the State or district helpline.
- iii) Provide a mask/face cover till such time as he/she is examined by a doctor.
- iv) Disinfection of the premises to be taken up if the person is found positive.
- v) For a suspect or a case detected in hostel, the student/staff shall not be sent back to his/her home. He/she should be isolated and State/district health officials shall be informed for suitable follow-up actions.
- vi) A risk assessment will be undertaken by the designated public health authority (district Rapid Response Team/treating physician) and accordingly further action be initiated regarding management of case, his/her contacts and need for disinfection.
- vii) All protocols as advised by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare should be followed.

4) Contingency and emergency Incidences:

- i) If there is an incidence of sudden surge in positivity of COVID-19 cases in any locality, the school authorities of the area, in consultation with officials of the Health & Family Welfare Department of the area, will consult the LLTF/VLTF. They will report such cases first to the Incident Commander of that area and also to their respective DEO/SDEO and they in turn will report the matter to the Deputy Commissioner of the District. The DC in consultation with medical experts may recommend closure of schools or reduction in number of attendance of students or any other measures which warrant such kind of control and preventive measures as deemed fit.**
- ii) A monitoring team will be formed at the DEO's level to monitor such cases in the District.**

B. For Parents/Guardians:

- i) As far as possible, parents/guardians should arrange for private means of transport for their ward.
- ii) They should refrain from entering the school compound to minimize chances of transmission. Their movement should be limited to the dropping zones and pick-up points.
- iii) They should be alert on the health status of all members of their respective families. They should not send their ward to school if any signs and symptoms of COVID – 19 are seen in their family.
- iv) Parents/guardians should ensure that their ward(s)' face masks are washed and cleaned after every school day and that disposable masks be replaced daily.
- v) Ensure that their ward maintains personal hygiene such as bathing, brushing teeth properly at least twice a day and trimming of nails.
- vi) Give healthy food, fresh fruits, and clean water in their lunch box or send a tiffin box for mid-day meal and advise their ward not to share their tiffin and water bottle with others.

C. For Students

- i) Physical/social distancing norms should be followed, both, during arrival and departure time, to and from school. Minimum 3(three) feet physical distance should be maintained when queuing up for entry and inside the school.
- ii) Students should, at all times, follow the instructions on wearing of face masks, maintaining physical distancing and hand sanitizing.
- iii) Students should not share any material (textbooks, notebooks, pen, pencil, eraser, tiffin box, water bottles, etc.) with each other.
- iv) Students to sanitize hands before and after lunch/snacks, each time they use the washroom and any other outdoor activities.
- v) On reaching home, students shall sanitize themselves, their uniforms and other effects before entering their home.

Mid-Day Meal (MDM)

Preparation, distribution, and serving of Mid-Day Meal

- i) Only essential staff may be allowed access to kitchens/stores. Cleanliness and proper hygiene of kitchens to be maintained strictly.
- ii) Kitchen/stores to have efficient drainage systems and proper waste disposal systems. Potential sources of contamination like toilet facilities, rubbish, waste water, open drains and animals to be kept away from the kitchens.
- iii) Proper ventilation systems, mechanical and/or natural to be constructed if absent. Ventilation should be in such a way that air does not flow from contaminated areas to clean areas.
- iv) Objects and utensils having high risk of cross contamination like cloths, brushes, mops and brooms to be thoroughly cleaned, washed, sprayed and dried before and after use. As such, such object should not be used in other parts of the kitchen or school.
- v) Sun drying of utensils in a clean and tidy place to be done.
- vi) All kitchen utensils should be cleaned and sun dried adequately before and after use. They should be washed preferably using hot water (above 60 degrees Celsius).
- vii) No leftovers and refuse should be open. They should be sufficiently fitted with cover or lids to prevent insects, dirt and other contaminants from entering the containers.
- viii) Proper and adequate waste disposal systems and facilities should be provided and the design and construction of the same may be done in a manner that the risk of contaminating food or potable water supply system is eliminated.
- ix) Periodic disposal of waste/refuse may be made compulsory.
- x) Eco-friendly measures of waste disposal are encouraged.
- xi) Food grains, oils, condiments and other food items should all be carefully inspected to ensure quality and ensuring that their shelf life is met. All food items which were stored in schools during the closure to be strictly inspected as stated above.
- xii) Food items, especially food ingredients should be subject to First Expire, First Out (FEFO) or First in, First Out (FIFO) stock retention system as applicable.
- xiii) All food items, especially perishable items like fruits and vegetables should be procured fresh and storing for long duration should be avoided.
- xiv) Food grains, pulses, vegetables, and fruits should all be washed thoroughly with clean potable water before use. Vegetables should be washed adequately and preferably with a combination of salt and turmeric (haldi)/50 ppm of chlorine (or equivalent solution).
- xv) Food items with outer seals/covers should be thoroughly washed with soap solution and sun dried before transferring them into jars.
- xvi) No food item or raw material should be accepted if it is known to contain vermin, pesticides, undesirable micro-organisms, drugs, toxic items or extraneous substances or if it is known to be handled by COVID-19 positive/suspected persons.

- xvii) Kitchen activities may be performed maintaining appropriate distance wherever and whenever possible. Defined separations for specific processes or activities should be in place like raw material procurement area, cleaning of procured food items area, cooking area and cooked food area.
- xviii) The serving and dining areas should be well sanitized before and after use.
- xix) **In schools where permissible, Mid-day Meals should be served outdoors.**
- xx) Staggered timing of distribution of MDM to avoid crowding. Distribution of the same may also be done in a staggered way to ensure distancing.
- xxi) In case staggering distribution is not possible, students may be served in their respective classes.
- xxii) Clear markings should be present wherever MDM is distributed/served.
- xxiii) Students are to wear protective masks/face cloth at all times in the dining areas except while drinking or eating.
- xxiv) School personnel to ensure that food is being served immediately after being cooked. At least 65 degrees Celsius of food temperature should be maintained.
- xxv) Schools to ensure potable water in school premises and especially near MDM distribution. Adequate storage for the same to be ensured.
- xxvi) Potable and non-potable water should be clearly distinguished.
- xxvii) Hand washing with soap for at least 40 seconds before and after eating MDM should be vigorously promoted.
- xxviii) Hand washing areas should be set up in such a way to avoid crowding and ensure social distancing. Use of soap bars in lieu of soap dispensers of any kind should be avoided.
- xxix) Teachers should be stationed to monitor all activities so as to ensure conformity to the SoP.
- xxx) **Deleted.**

Cook–Cum-Helpers (CCH)

- i) All district/block administration related to MDM are responsible in ensuring that all CCHs are COVID negative before resumption of duties.
- ii) Thermal scanning of all CCH to be carried out at school entrances on a daily basis.
- iii) All CCH are to give self-declaration with regard to the wellness of self and family members before starting their work in school.
- iv) All CCH to sanitize/wash their hands for a minimum of 40 seconds upon entering school premises following the prescribed methods.
- v) Wearing face masks and face cloth is mandatory at all times while on duty.
- vi) Nail polish and/or artificial nails are prohibited.
- vii) Personal wearables like rings, jewelry, bangles, watches, etc. should not be worn during cooking, serving and distribution of meals.
- viii) Spitting and nose blowing by any person is strictly prohibited especially while handling food.
- ix) The CCHs should be provided adequate and suitable clean protective apron and head gear. CCHs should also don hair covers while handling food. It should also be ensured that all protective clothing is kept clean at all times.
- x) CCHs should strictly adhere to regular and proper hand washing especially after coughing, visiting toilet, sneezing, using telephone, etc. and before handling food.
- xi) CCHs should also be cautious to avoid hand habits like scratching nose, eyes and face, running finger through hair, rubbing eyes, ears and mouth, scratching beard and other arts of the body, etc. that could potentially be hazardous when handling food products. When unavoidable, hands should be thoroughly washed.

Annexure

Checklist for supplies, equipment & resources:

1. No-touch/ forehead/thermal scanner/**digital** thermometers
2. **Pulse Oximeter**
3. Hand sanitizer (minimum 70% alcohol)
4. Soap
5. Water supply
6. Disposable gloves
7. Surgical masks/ masks
8. Face shield
9. Training videos
10. Tape/rope (for walkways etc.)
11. Signage
12. No-touch trash cans
13. Cones
14. Isolation/safe zone

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