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Reflect Care Heal

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

### Respected Brothers and Sisters in Islam,

All praises belong to Allah (SWT), blessing and salutations upon our beloved Prophet Muhammed (SAW). We pray that as you read this document you are in the best of health and Allah Subhanahu wata'ala (SWT) continues to shower his protection and assistance to the Ummah at large.

***The following interim guidelines are based on the current scientific evidence and International best practice. We may need to update them as new information becomes available and/or when Government regulations are published.***

The Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA) is a voluntary association of Muslim Health Professionals. In addition to the various projects that it implements, the IMASA has for over 40 years been advising the Muslim community in matters related to the health, ethics and education of the South African Ummah. It is with the intention of serving the ummah for the pleasure of Allah and reducing the risk to the masjid and its congregants, we offer the following advice for Masjid committees and the musallees.

We make shukr to Allah (SWT) for easing the restrictions that facilitate the re-opening of our Masjids. The masaajid are the hubs of the community and play a central role in providing spiritual and emotional support to congregants and community members of all faiths.

President Cyril Ramaphosa in his speech indicated that the maximum size of congregation will be 50 depending on the size of the premises. In addition social distancing of two metres and compulsory face masking will apply. We await further regulations from the Government that will inform the actual implementation process. From an epidemic perspective, we need to note that in some areas, we may be able to take full advantage of this number, where there is a low prevalence of this disease, but in other areas we may need exercise further caution and have smaller congregations, where there is a higher disease prevalence.

***We are fully aware that despite the best recommendations, and the most stringent measures, there is unfortunately no guarantee that we will be able to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. The risk of the virus spreading is higher in closed environments. The situation may be even more detrimental if proper procedures are not adhered to.*** Masjid committees thus have an enormous responsibility on their shoulders to take the best measures possible within the limits of their capabilities to limit spread.

The environmental / structural condition of the mosque/jamaat khana/musalaah; social circumstances of the community; disease burden and trajectory of new cases as well as the ability of the local mosque to adhere to minimal criteria for infection prevention – are important consideration in influencing the masjids committees' decision with respect to the immediate re-opening of the masjid or taking a phased approach.

We make dua that Allah accept this humble effort of ours.

### **Leadership and Coordination**

1. In order to manage this complex situation that we find ourselves in, it is suggested that a masjid coordinating committee be established to oversee the preparation and implementation of the various tasks required.
2. The coordinating committee may include a representative from the trust board, the imaam, muezzin and if available a medical doctor/health professional that is a musallee of the masjid.
3. If a medical doctor/health professional is not available, then the local Islamic Medical Association can be contacted to provide guidance.
4. To assist with operational planning an engineer/architect will add value to planning if available.
5. Ideally, volunteers should be fully educated on the current measures needed to prevent infections and should preferably complete level 1 and 2 of basic first aid and be prepared to assist with medical emergencies at the masjid in a safe and responsible manner- Musallees can be recruited as volunteers who have necessary skills
6. This committee should conduct a risk assessment of the masjid based environmental / structural condition of the masjid/jamaat khana/musalaah; social circumstances of the community; disease burden and trajectory of new cases as well as the ability of the local mosque to adhere to minimal criteria for infection prevention and make a decision with respect to the immediate re-opening of the masjid or taking a phased approach

### **Pre-planning for the re-opening of Masjid**

#### **Creating a database of all regular musallees**

1. A masjid in the residential area should establish a database of regular musallees. The database will help with enrolment, support programs, identifying the vulnerable and those who require assistance. This database may also be a means to foster community cohesiveness outside of COVID activities such as providing important notices and community support.
2. The following information will be important for inclusion in the database:
  - a. Name and Surname
  - b. Residential address
  - c. Contact numbers including numbers for other household members
  - d. Age
  - e. Any chronic medical conditions such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Asthma, Cancers etc
  - f. Does the musallee have an elderly person under their care in the same house?

#### **High Risk or Vulnerable Persons.**

1. The following categories of persons are at high risk for severe illness from COVID 19 and caution is advised in attending congregational activities (musallees are advised to consult with their doctors before resuming their prayers in congregation) :
  - a. Persons older than sixty years.
  - b. Persons with any chronic condition such as severe Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Airway Disease, serious heart conditions, severe kidney disease requiring dialysis, uncontrolled diabetes, obesity and those with any underlying immune deficiency such as HIV,organ transplant recipients, cancer sufferers or prolonged corticosteroid use

## **Preparing for Congregational Prayers in the Masjid**

1. The maximum number of individuals, as stipulated by the regulation, **is for a single premises** irrespective of the number of entrances or number of stories in the building.
2. In order to improve logistics each masjid should identify jamaat khana's or musallas in their locality to facilitate the ease of the performance of salaah. However, the numbers allocated to Jamaat Khana's and Musallas will be based on physical space as well as adjustments required for social distancing.
3. Wherever feasible, outside spaces or non-carpeted areas should be selected, since it eases the task of cleaning. The masjid committee is advised to plan staggered salaah times - after all musallees from previous jamaat have left the premises.
4. If available separate parking areas be demarcated for each separate salaah time.
5. The masjid committee may determine the most appropriate mechanism for allowing the maximum number of fifty congregants- Options include:
  - a. A pre-booking service
  - b. WhatsApp allocation based on pre-registration
  - c. Random, alphabetical or address based allocation on a daily basis
  - d. A first come, first serve basis (although not ideal).
6. Clear communication should be provided to prospective musallees and it is important that crowding outside the door or in the car park is avoided. The imam needs to emphasise this repeatedly.
7. Educational and informative material must be published and circulated as soon as possible to all musallees to gain their confidence prior to the proposed opening of the masjids.
8. Adequate signage and safe distance markings to be placed in visible form on the floors prior to reopening of masjids)

The measures provided below will be applicable to Masjids, Jamaat Khanas and Musallas.

### **Administrative Measures**

#### **Actions to Create a Safer Environment**

##### **Opening and Closing of Masjid**

1. It is advised that the masjid opens 10-15 minutes before the jamaat to allow staggered entry and screening at the entrance.
2. It is advised that the masjid closes 5-10 minutes after each salaah to facilitate exit of congregants.

##### **Entrance of Masjid**

1. Ideally a banner or a poster be displayed at the entrance of the masjid alerting congregants of the symptoms of corona virus.
2. The area outside the entrance should be demarcated in two metre intervals to facilitate physical distancing prior to entry to the masjid.
3. One entrance and a separate exit should be used (especially if multiple jamaats at staggered times) for all musallees and staff – All other entrances are to be locked. (Fire and emergency exits should remain functional but not used)
4. The front entrance should ideally remain open without the need for those entering to touch the door.

### **Screening at entrance:**

1. A register must be kept with the names, cell numbers, and symptom check and temperature log for each salaah. This will facilitate contact tracing (Table at end of document).
2. Ensure that the musallee has a face mask- if the musallee does not have one and the masjid has a spare one, they should provide it to the musallee provided that the mask is disposable. If a face mask is not available, then entry will not be permitted. Masks to be worn at all times and posters on the correct use of a mask to be displayed.
3. Any musallee with one or more symptoms and/or a fever must be requested to consult their doctor and perform salaah at home for 14 days or until he has a negative COVID 19 test
4. Screening must be done for each salaah or if the same persons are visiting the masjid for each salaah then it could be done on a daily basis. It will be the responsibility of the musallee to notify the Imaam or responsible person if there has been any change during subsequent visits for other salaah.
5. The musallee should preferably be provided a numbered area to perform their salaah (This will facilitate contact tracing in the event that another musallee tests positive).

### **Storage of Shoes:**

1. Shoes are to be placed in a disposable plastic bag or a personal shoe bag before placing them on the rack or on the floor if no shoe racks are available.
2. Shoe bags to have name tags or identity labels

### **Entrance into the Masjid/prayer area**

1. Every one **without exception** entering the masjid will have either 2 squirts of the sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol sprayed onto their hands with no rinsing after they have taken off their shoes and stored them.
  - a. If affordable the ideal will be an automatic dispenser placed at entrance of the prayer area.
  - b. Alternative will be one or two people (with required personal protection- mask and gloves) to be stationed at the entrance of the masjid for this purpose.
  - c. All musallees will be required to rub the sanitizer/soap on all areas of their hands including their wrists, paying particular attention to the nails for at least 20 seconds and leave the sanitizer/soap on their hands without rinsing of their hands.

### **Environmental Measures**

1. The Wudhu area and the toilets will be closed- All musallees to make wudhu at home
2. One tap and one toilet will be available for emergency use by musallees already in the masjid

## **Prayer Area**

1. Demarcated prayer areas that will comply with physical distancing (as defined by regulations) between each musallee should be marked.
2. A Vinyl/Plastic/Paper covering is to be placed over carpets.
3. The musallee will place his own prayer mat or plastic mat over the designated area.
4. All masjid tasbeehs will be removed- musallee will need to carry their own tasbeeh – no sharing.
5. Ideally every musallee should carry their own digital or soft copy of the Quraan. If a musallee requires to use a masjid Quraan, they should use clean gloves. Gloves should be discarded immediately after returning the Quraan to the shelf.
6. Sufficient windows or sliding doors in main masjid area are to be kept open to facilitate cross ventilation and air flow. During winter the windows should be kept open during the intervening periods between salah times. Musallees should be aware of the need for appropriate clothing.
7. Vinyl in the masjid and mats must be wiped before and after each salaah with diluted Dish Washing Liquid or any soapy solution
8. Alternatively a plastic mat could be used to read salaah , with multiple mats which are rotated through the salaahs after being cleaned or aired
9. Cleaning of doors, windows, handles and all touch points with recommended detergents twice daily.

## **Salaah in the Masjid**

1. It is advised that Sunnah salaah be performed at home before coming to the masjid where possible and perform Sunnah salaah after the fardh salaah at home if feasible.
2. The time between adhaan and salaah be shortened for all salaah.

## **Exiting the Masjid**

1. A staggered approach for exiting the masjid maintaining physical distancing- Ten musallees at a time (Last in first out) every one-two minutes.
2. Prior to exiting the masjid and after wearing shoes, the musallee will have either 2 squirts of the sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol sprayed onto their hands. This should be done before a musallee touches their keys or cell phone.
3. Musallees should refrain from socializing outside the masjid to prevent crowding.

## **Masjid's response to a Musallee who becomes a Corona virus case**

1. Where possible, each masjid should have a medical coordinating team.
2. A musallee who tests positive is encouraged to notify the imaam, who will then alert the medical team.
3. An alternative non-contaminated area of the masjid may need to be demarcated for future salaah whilst the masjid main area is deep cleaned and disinfected.
4. The medical team will review the list of musallees in possible contact with the person being symptomatic or having a positive test. If no doctor is available the local IMA or health authorities should be contacted for assistance

5. The position in terms of performance of salaah of each musallee in relation to the positive case will be analysed.
6. A WhatsApp/SMS message will be sent to all the possible contacts informing them about a potential exposure.
7. The musallees that will be deemed as close contacts will be requested to self-isolate if possible or referred to a self-isolation facility. During this period, a dedicated individual from the masjid will keep in touch with the musallee.
  - a. If the musallee develops symptoms, he will be referred for a test.
  - b. After seven days of self-isolation without any symptoms, the musallee will be referred for a test. If the results are negative, the musallee can return to the masjid.
  - c. A person who tests positive should follow health guidelines before being allowed to return to the masjid. This usually includes a minimum of 14 days of self-isolation

### **Stigma around Covid-19**

A musallee is categorised as having recovered from covid-19, 14 days after being tested positive and is symptom free. The musallee should not be ostracised and prevented from reading salaah in congregation. The NICD does not require further testing after 14 days and there is no requirement for the musallee to present test results advising of a state of clearance.

### **Management of Masaajid Employees**

All employees should have a risk assessment and a plan for return to work. This is applicable to all essential services as well as businesses that are opening in level 3. The requirements extends to employees at Masaajids. A risk assessment of the employees must be conducted. Muezzins and cleaners should be provided with masks, gloves, visors etc. Guidelines for employees are available from the Department of Labour.

### **Additional considerations:**

In the spirit of Islamic brotherhood and social responsibility - A small sub-group should be tasked with coordination of social assistance for musallees in need, care for elderly persons, musallees with chronic diseases, and to assist with mental well-being of musallees that are suffering from loneliness or isolation. They should provide social and moral support that may include assisting with errands as well as potential financial assistance of necessary

### **Conclusion**

These guidelines provided in conformance with the current scientific evidence and International best practice. While every effort may be made to mitigate the spread of this very contagious virus, there is unfortunately no guarantee that we will be able to prevent the spread of Corona virus and musallees may still pick up the virus. Allah Ta'ala knows best who gets the virus and who does not. All we can do is to prevent the spread as best as we can under the present circumstances. We pray that Allah SWT keep us healthy, safe and protect us all (Ameen).







**Shukrun**

**ISLAMIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**MASAAJID WORKING COMMITTEE FOR IMASA**