



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Guideline on the submission of COVID-19 related health data from workplaces to the National Department of Health**

**(Guideline document prepared by the OHS workstream on Surveillance of Workers – Covid-19 response. Version 1, 19 August 2020)**

### Contents

<b>PREAMBLE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CATEGORIES OF DATA .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SUBMISSION PROCESS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>APPENDIX: TEMPLATES.....</b>	<b>5</b>

### PREAMBLE

Interventions at workplaces and work activities will assist in reduction of transmission of Covid-19 infections. These interventions can appropriately be directed by the data emerging from workplaces about the unfolding pandemic.

In terms of Regulation 4(10) of the Regulations made by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in terms of section 27 (2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002) on 29 April 2020 and amended on 28 May 2020 requires employers in the construction, manufacturing, business and financial sectors, with more than 500 employees to submit screening and testing data to the Director-General: Health. Furthermore, the Department of Employment and Labour’s Direction further requires all employers to “inform the Department of Health” of all workers who test positive. In addition, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy: Mine Health and Safety Act (29/1996) Guidelines for a Mandatory Code of Practice on the Mitigation and Management of Covid-19 Outbreak of 18 May 2020 requires employers to maintain, and provide as requested, monitoring and investigation data to the Department of Health.

The objectives of this Guideline of the National Department of Health is to effectively collect, collate and analyse workplace data on clinical (symptom) screening, vulnerable employees, Covid-19 infections and contacts to prevent further escalation of the pandemic and to provide clarity to the relevant stakeholders about the data and data reporting process as outlined in the above legislation, and to streamline the reporting tasks of employers.

## PURPOSE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

- Provide strategic insight through data analytics and visualization into all phases (i.e. symptom screening, testing, vulnerable employees, contact tracing within the workplace, clinical management and health outcomes) of the COVID-19 infection spectrum in the South African workforce.
- Early identification of sectors/companies and occupational groups at high risk of infection so as to inform appropriate interventions (e.g. policy, programs, resources).
- Understand the impact of the COVID-19 interventions in the workplace.
- Develop a framework for a COVID-19 surveillance model for monitoring workers in general (and health workers in particular), that includes both public and private sectors.
- Determine the human resource and economic impact of COVID-19 on the various sectors.
- Identification of key scientific questions requiring further investigation.

## CATEGORIES OF DATA

Under this Guideline, the following categories of data are to be collected by employers and submitted to the Department as per the procedures described.

- 1. Vulnerable Worker Data:** All employers are legally required to identify those employees who are considered to be vulnerable for the more severe outcomes of the COVID-19 infection. As this is a key component of the screening of workers, this data must be submitted to the Department by employers. The data required are listed in Table 1 in the Appendix Templates.
- 2. Daily Symptom Screening Data:** All employers are legally required to screen all employees entering their work premises on a daily basis. This screening must be based on the prescribed set of symptoms defined by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases to determine those persons likely to be presenting with a COVID-19 infection, and therefore should be referred for further assessment. This daily data must be submitted to the Department by employers. The data required are listed in Table 2 in the Appendix Templates.
- 3. COVID-19 Testing Data:** Based on their daily symptom screening, or on their employees' presentation to their health provider, employees are referred to health providers / health laboratories for testing for the presence of the COVID-19 virus. In terms of managing the pandemic in the workplace, the employer is expected to be notified of the results of the

tests. All employees who are subject to testing and the results of such testing must be submitted to the Department by employers. The data required are listed in Table 3 in the Appendix Templates.

- 4. High exposure risk Workplace Contact - tracing:** When an employee tests positive within the workplace, all those in contact must, as per the Department of Employment and Labour Direction, must be assessed for a high risk or low risk of exposure. A high risk of exposure is defined as being in close proximity (<1.5m) for a prolonged period of time (>15 minutes) without the use of personal protective equipment and/or a face mask. Those with such high risk of exposure are expected to be placed in quarantine. The total numbers of employees placed in quarantine as a result of the high exposure risk must be reported when a positive employee is reported. The data required is included in Table 3 in the Appendix Templates.
- 5. Post Infection Outcomes Data:** Recovery from the infection will vary based on vulnerability and other risk factors. Understanding the outcomes of the infection among employees provides critical information. All employers who indicate employees have tested positive must submit information about the outcome of the infection. The data required are listed in Table 4 in the Appendix Templates.

## SUBMISSION PROCESS

In collecting this information from their employees, employers are obliged to inform employees about the submission of this data to the Department.

All the above data must be submitted to [OHSworkplace@nioh.ac.za](mailto:OHSworkplace@nioh.ac.za) at the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), the statutory entity designated by the Department of Health for the collection, analyses and reporting of the data from workplaces This clause does not remove the legal obligations by employers to sector specific government Departments (Department of Employment and Labour, Department of Public Service and Administration and Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition etc).

It is recommended that all the data be submitted in electronic format. In instances where employers are already using electronic applications, they can submit data to the NIOH data lake either through CSV data files and/or secure API transfer. Companies are also welcome to contact the NIOH to obtain further information about already developed software packages.

In the event that an employer does not currently use electronic systems, their data can be submitted by using a pre-packaged CSV data file. The excel spreadsheets for collection of screening data, vulnerability data, testing and outcome data can be obtained from the NIOH website ([www.nioh.ac.za](http://www.nioh.ac.za)).

The following steps are required for submission of data:

1. The business obtains a registration portal link from the NIOH, by emailing [OHsworkplace@nioh.ac.za](mailto:OHsworkplace@nioh.ac.za).
2. The business registers electronically by supplying the following details:

<b>Business name</b>
<b>Business industry</b>
<b>Business address</b>
<b>Business province</b>
<b>Business district</b>
<b>Total number of employees</b>
<b>Total number of female employees</b>
<b>Total number of male employees</b>
<b>Business contact name</b>
<b>Contact email</b>
<b>Contact number</b>
<b>Date of registration</b>

3. The business details will be verified and registration will be confirmed.
4. The system administrator generates a unique ID for the business that the business will use to login to the system to submit data.

## PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

All data submitted under this Guideline strictly adheres to the Protection of Personal Information Act (4/2013) and follows the Guidance note on the processing of personal information in the management and containment of COVID-19 pandemic in terms of POPIA by the Information Regulator (South Africa, Department of Justice).

<https://www.justice.gov.za/infoereg/docs/InfoRegSA-GuidanceNote-PPI-Covid19-20200403.pdf>.

NIOH will be accountable for processing personal information of subjects in a responsible, legal and reasonable manner in order to detect, contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

All employees must be made aware by the employer that their information is being submitted to NIOH.

Although NIOH will receive identifiable data, once received each employee will immediately be assigned a unique identifier, which will permit linkages across the different data categories. Once this is done, all identification data is immediately delinked from submitted data.

### **The data will be kept as per the following guidelines**

- Personal data: for six weeks
- Anonymised data: to be kept as long as required for research and development purposes in line with the data sharing agreements
- Processed data and reports to be kept as long as required by legislation governing the collection of this data

The Department will observe the highest standards of data storage, management and security, as stipulated in the Regulations of the Disaster Management Act, the Protection of Personal Information Act and other international standards. Technical and organisational measures will be in place to prevent the loss or damage to or unauthorized access of personal information. All personal information will be confidential and will only be disclosed if required to do so by law.

## APPENDIX: TEMPLATES

Workplaces will have choice of the methods of submitting the data. The following spreadsheets can be downloaded from the NIOH website, and once completed, emailed to NIOH

**Table 1. Vulnerability assessment Data template**

**Vulnerability Data**

EmployeeID

BusinessID

Province

District

Sex

Age

Job Category

Comorbidity List

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Asthma  
 Chronic Lung Disease  
 Diabetes, Hypertension,  
 Serious heart conditions  
 Chronic kidney disease  
 Chronic liver disease  
 Immunocompromised  
 Tuberculosis previous  
 Tuberculosis current  
 HIV

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Risk Factors

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Age=>60 years,  
 Smoking current,  
 Pregnancy => 28 weeks  
 Obesity

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**Table 2. Daily Symptom screening data template**

**SCREENING DATA**

BusinessID

Consent

Employee ID

Screening Date

Employee Age

Employee Gender

Job Category

Province

District

Symptoms Status

Fever

Chills

Dry Cough

Sore Throat

Shortness of Breath

Tiredness

Lack of smell or taste

Conjunctivitis (Red Eyes)

Diarrhoea

Runny nose or congestion

Muscle pains

Nausea or vomiting

Dizziness

Headache

Screening Outcome-

No action required  
 Referred for self-isolation  
 Referred for testing  
 Referred to the doctor

**Table 3. Employee COVID-19 Positive test data template**

**TESTING DATA**

EmployeeID	
BusinessID	
Province	
District	
Sex	
Age	
Job Category	
Test Date	
Test Type	PCR Antigen Antibody
Symptoms Positive	
Number High Risk	
Contact	
Test Result	
Test Result Action	Sick Leave Self-Isolation at home Isolation at quarantine site Hospitalization
Exposure Information	Work contacts Community contacts Family contacts Large events contacts Travel history from a designated hotspot Public transport
Reporting Actioned	Reported to NMC Reported to Provincial CDC/District office Reported to Department of Employment and Labour Reported to COIDA Reported to DMRE

**Table 4. Positive Employee Post Infection Clinical Outcome template**

**CLINICAL OUTCOMES**

EmployeeID	
BusinessID	
Province	
District	
Sex	
Age	
Job Category	
Hospitalisation	
Date Admission	
Outcome (discharge, death) Date	
Return to Work Date	
Return To Work Fitness	Fit for Job Description Fit with Accommodation Fit with restrictions Temporarily unfit for Job Description Unfit for review Permanently Unfit
Compensation Claim	
% Disablement	
COVID Claim Reference No	