



Guidance on Safe Release of Learners from Learning Institutions

End of Academic Term _2022

Introduction:

Since the onset of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) on 20th September 2022, a cumulative total of 131 confirmed cases have been identified with 44 deaths and 43 recoveries in nine (9) districts categorized as very high risk (Category 1). A cumulative total of twenty three (23) children have so far been confirmed to have EVD with nine (9) deaths. Out of the affected children, a total of eleven children [5 in Kampala, 1 in Mubende, 1 in Wakiso] were school going at the time of onset of Ebola symptoms in five schools across the affected districts.

The Ministry of Health in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Sports developed and disseminated *Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for EVD Prevention and Control in Educational Institutions*. However, there was a need to provide further guidance on how to safely release learners for the end of academic period whilst minimizing the risk of Ebola transmission and without curtailing ongoing national Ebola control efforts.

School communities can potentially cause widespread community disease transmission once prevention and surveillance measures are not carefully planned for, especially at release of learners for the end of academic period. This was seen during in 2021, when learners were released to go home freely despite reported ongoing school case clusters which resulted in significant and countrywide community transmission of COVID-19 with learners acting as key drivers in disease propagation to households and communities with disastrous consequences. This led to the presidential countrywide lockdown to try and curb disease transmission.

These guidelines were developed after a careful assessment of the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic response concerning learners leaving school at the end of academic periods during an ongoing epidemic in the country. Considerations for learners in schools from districts across the country with different levels of Ebola disease transmission risk and those under lockdown were made. Widespread consultations and input was sought and obtained from technical teams and decision makers from the two line ministries, development partners and district/city authorities and learners themselves.



Purpose of the Guidelines: These guidelines enumerate clearly the steps to be undertaken in ensuring students (learners) in all education institutions are safely released to go for the official school holidays in the context of the ongoing EVD outbreak in Uganda.

Target Audience: Ministry of Education and Sports as well as Ministry of Health leadership and stakeholders. The guidance shall be used by District education, health departments, school administration, school boards, proprietors and students in all learning institutions in the country.

Key Reference

School Academic Calendar 2022: As per the official MoES school calendar, the end of the 2022 School Academic year ranges from 9th November to 9th December 2022 with the official end of their term on 5th December 2022. However across different institutions, the majority of the non-candidate classes will close by 30th November 2022.

Learner Categories and corresponding end of Term dates:

- PLE (P7) candidates completing on **9th November 2022**
- UCE candidates' completion is **18th November 2022**
- UACE completion is **9th December 2022**
- Technical Schools, Community Polytechnics and Farm schools **7th December 2022**

SECTION 1:

1.1 Guidance to District/Division/City and Municipal Education Officers:

All District Education Officers/District Inspectors of Schools are hereby instructed to adhere henceforth and establish the following steps in order to ensure a smooth end-of-academic-year release:

- Immediately communicate this official guidance to all school head teachers, school boards and proprietors including private schools.
- Present and discuss this guidance in relation to their specific district needs and plans in the district task force meetings.
- Ensure all school head teachers have captured all learner contacts and N.O.K. with reliable telephone numbers and addresses of their parents or guardians. This will ease tracking of these learners by the surveillance teams in the event a need arises. Note: learners' details should be filed at school for future use.



- Ensure all schools have copies of the EVD SOPs for education institutions and are compliant in enforcing the measures. All schools should be conducting daily fever/other symptom screening prior to the closure of the school term.
- DIS to include Ebola school monitoring and registration as one of their routine activities during the school inspection visits.
- Communicate to all head teachers to conduct rapid assessment/screening and report any symptomatic learners or school staff to the established EVD alert desk prior to departure at end of term /school closure. All symptomatic learners should be reported to the Ebola response team and shall undergo verification and testing for EVD before departure for school holidays
- All DEOs/DIS to promptly communicate any breach of these guidelines by any school authority or learner to the District task force or relevant health or security authorities for action.

1.2 Specific Guidance to Head teachers/School Boards and Proprietors

- All school head teachers to communicate these guidelines to all learners, teaching and non-teaching staff
- All school head teachers cooperate with the Ebola district task force or the response team when school visits are made or needed.
- All schools to capture and file all learners and staff bio data including N.O.K and reliable addresses and telephone contacts of parents or guardians prior to departure/end of school term. This is important for tracking and surveillance when need arises
- All schools with boarding sections to make special arrangements to cater for any learner that may require prolonged stay as per categories highlighted below
- Efforts should be made to contact all parents and communicate this guidance on safe release of learners for end of school term and obtain a mutual understanding on the steps to be undertaken with health authorities
- Parents to ensure they observe the established SOPs and Public Health and Social measures to prevent EVD spread PHSM when picking learners from school at the end of term.
- All schools to ensure any parent /guardian picking learners follows the established PHSM like hand washing and temperature/symptom screening during the picking up of learners from schools.



- The school should ensure availability of hand washing and temperature screening at school critical points and all parents and visitors should be screened and reported to the Ebola response team in case they are symptomatic.
- All school heads promptly communicate any breach of these guidelines to the District task Force/DEO or health authorities for action.

SECTION 2: GUIDANCE FOR LEARNERS STUDYING IN MUBENDE AND KASSANDA

2.1 Guidance for Students in Schools in districts under lock down (Mubende and Kassanda)

2.1.1 Day schools

- Learners who are day scholars and whose homes are in either Mubende or Kasanda with no symptoms studying in the two districts shall be released to go back home as per official MoES end of term dates.
- Any day scholar who is identified to have EVD related symptoms at the end of term shall promptly be isolated temporarily and the district health authorities/alert desk contacted to verify and manage the suspect accordingly before releasing them to depart for home.
- The same procedures shall apply for teaching and non-teaching staff that fall in this category.

2.1.2 Mixed Day and Boarding Schools:

- Students in the day section (day scholars) are allowed to go home as per normal calendar mentioned above and with reference to guidance provided above.
- Learners in boarding sections shall follow the guidelines for boarding schools below:

2.1.3 Boarding Schools /Sections:

- Students with no EVD symptoms in boarding schools or sections located in their home districts of either Mubende or Kassanda districts are allowed to go back home within their respective districts as per normal official calendar above.
- Any learner in the boarding section who has EVD related symptoms shall first be evacuated and isolated in a facility/tested for EVD by the field surveillance team before being declared free to go home.



- Any learner in the boarding section who is a contact of a confirmed or suspected EVD case shall be quarantined within his/her school or designated facility and followed up daily for 21 days after exposure by the field surveillance team and verified as safe before being declared free to go home.

Arrangements shall be made between the school and district task force on modalities and isolation support for the learners under school quarantine and how to transport this category of learners back to their homes. [Note: *A contact is any person who has been in direct contact with a person with signs and symptoms or confirmed to have Ebola Virus Disease*]

- The same procedures shall apply for teaching and non-teaching staff that fall in this category in the schools

2.1.4 Boarding Students moving between Mubende and Kassanda Districts

- Students in boarding sections (who are not contacts of any EVD case and with no symptoms) studying in either of the two districts mentioned and who require travel to Mubende from Kassanda or vice versa will be issued with permits to travel to their respective home districts after screening and verification by designated surveillance teams.
- Arrangements should be made between the school and parents/guardians of this category of learners (especially minors requiring picking up) to enable their safe pickup at designated points as guided by the district task force/health authorities.
- The same procedures shall apply for teaching and non-teaching staff that fall in this category in these schools.

2.2: Students Studying in Mubende and Kasanda but whose home address is outside the two districts

Students studying in Mubende and Kasanda districts but whose home address is outside the two districts (mainly those in boarding sections/schools) shall follow the following steps before being released to go home;

- The students shall be screened daily for fever and EVD related symptoms till the end of term closure dates.
- At the day of term closure, all the learners or staff who have no Ebola related symptoms and are not contacts of a confirmed or suspected case shall be allowed home as per official agreed dates.
- Any learner or staff who shows Ebola related signs or symptoms shall immediately be isolated and evacuated by the district field surveillance teams for verification and clearance before being released to go home.



- Any learner or staff in this category who is in contact with a confirmed Ebola case shall NOT be allowed to go home and shall be placed under institutional quarantine (or within the school) for 21 days from exposure. They will be followed daily by the school nurse or a health worker from the nearest health facility. The learners shall undergo verification and be allowed to go home after 21 days.
- The school administration working with the district/division task force shall plan on how to support the affected learners for the period mentioned and modalities of transportation back home.
- If any learner in this category is confirmed to have Ebola, they will be evacuated promptly and managed in a designated Ebola treatment unit (ETU) and only allowed to go home after discharge. All school contacts of such a case shall be line listed, isolated and followed up for 21 days before being released to go home.
- Parents of all affected children in this category shall be promptly informed and engaged to plan on the steps to be undertaken for the learner.
- Transport arrangements and pick up points for learners in this category who will travel from the two districts of Mubende and Kasanda shall be agreed upon between the school administration, DEO and District task force and communicated to parents in time.
- Upkeep arrangements for any learner in this category who may be required to stay longer after term closure shall be agreed upon between the school, DEO and District task force with guidance from the MoES and MoH.
- These measures apply to school staff (teaching and non-teaching) whose home address is outside the two districts.

2.3 Students studying in schools in other districts but whose home address is in Mubende or Kassanda district.

- All learners and staff in this category MUST be screened for EVD symptoms daily prior to departure from their respective schools or districts.
- All learners whose home address is in Mubende and Kassanda but studying in schools outside the districts of Mubende and Kassanda shall not be allowed to go back to the two districts until the lockdown measures on transport are lifted or clearance given by the EVD NTF and MoES guidance.
- Parents of these learners need to be informed to plan on how to continue remotely supporting this category of learners and NOT to move outside Mubende and Kassanda to pick these learners from schools unless additional guidance is provided to this effect.
- Parents and school administration should endeavor to continue supporting these learners until clearance of travel to Mubende and Kassanda districts is provided or lockdown is lifted.
- Special arrangements should be put in place to transport students e.g. minors who require to be transported home to the two districts when travel clearance is given. This should be done



in close collaboration with parents/guardians and school administration with agreement on pick-up points.

- Any learner whose home address is in Mubende or Kassanda but studying in other districts other than the two mentioned and who have EVD symptoms shall not be allowed to travel to Mubende or Kasanda. These learners shall be isolated as per standard procedures, verified and tested for EVD before clearance to travel is given.
- All learners whose home address is in Mubende or Kasanda but studying in other districts and is a contact of a known or suspected EVD case shall be isolated as per standard guidelines for 21 days and NOT allowed to travel to the districts in question until clearance is given by the concerned authorities.
- The same procedures shall apply for teaching and non-teaching staff that fall in this category.

SECTION 3; GUIDANCE FOR LEARNERS STUDYING IN DISTRICTS OTHER THAN MUBENDE AND KASANDA WHOSE HOME ADDRESS IS OUTSIDE THE TWO DISTRICTS

3.1. All learners (*whether day scholars or in boarding sections*) **studying in other districts** whose home address is outside **Mubende and Kassanda** are allowed to return home normally or as per agreed upon time frame or MoES guidelines.

3.2. The following measures shall be emphasized as mandatory at the time of release of these learners and teaching staff who fall in this category and most especially those in high risk districts aside from Kasanda and Mubende .

- All learners and staff **MUST be screened** for EVD symptoms prior to departure from the school
- Any learner with **EVD related symptoms MUST be reported to health authorities** in the district of education and promptly verified, isolated and tested for EVD as deemed necessary before clearance to travel.
- Any learner who is a **contact** with a known or suspected case of Ebola **MUST be isolated as per standard guidelines for 21 days** and then cleared to proceed home. Parents of this category of learner shall be promptly informed of the measures taken by the school authorities
- Any learner who is a confirmed EVD case and admitted in ETU will undergo the standard treatment for EVD and be discharged to go home as per standard Ebola case management protocols.

NOTE: All schools should inform parents (*in their end of term messages and reports*) to ensure they continue with daily monitoring of all learners. Encourage learners and parents to ensure



self-reporting and peer reporting for any Ebola related symptoms during holidays to their respective district health authorities /**Toll free lines** or **Free SMS to 6767** as provided below. Ebola Disease facts and IEC leaflets including child friendly booklets should be provided to learners and parents at the end of term to enhance awareness and early reporting of suspected cases

TOLL FREE LINES: 0800200043, 0800200046 or 0800299000

HOTLINES: 0762640374, 0762640379, 0708062203, 0702869375, 0708052008, 0762659215,