



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## **GUIDELINES FOR TRADITIONAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS IN DEALING WITH COVID 19 AND LOCKDOWN**

### **Purpose**

To provide guidance to Traditional Health Practice on the management of the COVID 19 and the steps taken by Government to address the pandemic.

### **Role of THPs in dealing with COVID 19**

President Ramaphosa announced a national lockdown as one of the measures to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the speech on 24 March 2020. The following is the excerpt (emphasis added) from his speech which is relevant in this case: “All shops and businesses will be closed, except for pharmacies, laboratories, banks, essential financial and payment services, including the JSE, supermarkets, petrol stations and health care providers”.

National Health Act (61/2003), section 1 (emphasis added): “health care provider” means a person providing health services in terms of any law. In this connection, the Traditional Health Practitioners Act 2007 (Act No. 22 of 2007) being the empowering legislation for THPs.

All healthcare providers are required to adhere to the principles to ensure the safety of their patient by conforming to the safety directives and protocols issued by the Minister of Health, the National and Provincial Departments of Health or any other South African healthcare authority. Any non-compliance is regarded as unprofessional conduct and may furthermore liable to possible prosecution by National Authorities.

Permits for THPs to practice their trade are not necessary since the Regulations classify them as health care providers of essential services. Permits will be required as a general requirement when THPs need to move from one place to the other. Arrangements will be made with the local offices such as Health District and Sub-district Offices.

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The Department has identified the following roles to be played by the THPs in dealing with COVID-19.

- Triaging and referral of patients to the appropriate levels of care:
- Public health education and prevention of claims for cure of coronavirus infection without scientific evidence, fake news and myths to the communities and the clients. This is in order to contribute towards the reduction of the infections.
- Advise and provide guidance about Infection prevention and control measures,
- Contribute towards the dissemination of Public Health awareness messages.
- Educate community on the importance of personal hygiene.
- Provide necessary counselling to patients.
- Postpone all rituals, ceremonies such as graduations, initiations schools and events organized for pursuing the rights of passage and other similar activities that requires a number of participants and put in place alternative systems to mitigate the requirements.
- Work with the team from the department of health in the screening and messaging:

The important message is that there is currently no cure for the disease and as such people are urged to observe general health practices that will minimize the spread of the diseases, which also extend to the Traditional Health practice. Further, that measures have been articulated in the health messaging pamphlets that were produced by the department of health.

The following should be taken into consideration:

- assess the risk-benefit ratio
- only see patients in extreme need preferably at the place of practice.
- Patient presenting with symptoms of Corona virus infection should be referred in terms of the protocols issued.
- Personal protective equipment should be put on at all times during consultation (Gloves, mask, apron, etc.)
- If exposed to corona virus or a serious communicable disease, avoid close contact with other people. Take all necessary precautions to prevent transmission of the infection to patients and do not practise until appropriate medical advice is received.

The following measures need to be observed at the health practice premises/ during consultation:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water and / or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Correct cough etiquette and proper disposal of used materials e.g. tissue papers.

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- Social distancing. Keeps a distance of up to 1.5 to 2m when in contact with other people including patients. This should also be maintained by patients in the waiting area/room.
- Avoid touching the face.
- Put on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g. Mask and Gloves at all times when consulting.

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