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Guidelines

Guidance for Public Pools, Water Playgrounds and Amusement Parks during COVID 19

Objective

To provide health and safety guidelines for the administration and workers/staff of recreational facilities including public pools, water playgrounds and amusement parks, etc. for public to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission.

Rationale

The importance of engaging in any type of physical activity cannot be repudiated for both physical and mental health and public pools, water playgrounds and amusement parks open spaces can provide such opportunities to wide range of public. At present, the entire world is gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic. The doors of amusement parks, playgrounds public pools, water playgrounds and sports locations have been closed for the last many months to control spread of infection, with adverse effects on physical and mental well-being of people and economic consequence.

Taking cognizance of the current situation and keeping in view the flattening of epidemic curve in the country, the Government of Pakistan has decided to open these recreational sectors including parks, pools and playgrounds with provided SOPs. As exposure to nature or green space has well documented positive physical and mental health benefits, therefore, people are encouraged to use parks, trails, and open spaces safely while following provided guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Recreation agencies should also treat the Covid-19 pandemic with the prudence and seriousness that an impending natural disaster or infectious disease outbreak calls for.

General Instructions

Operators of public treated aquatic venues can determine, in collaboration with local health officials if and how to implement this guidance, making amendments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. This guidance is meant to supplement—not replace—any local, state, territorial, federal, or tribal laws, rules, or regulations with which operators must comply.

Spread

In general, being outdoors and in spaces with good ventilation reduces the risk of exposure to infectious respiratory droplets. Infected people with or without symptoms can spread the virus. The virus spreads less commonly when a person touches an object or surface that has the virus on it and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes.



There are several actions pool and water playground operators can take to help lower the risk of spreading the virus among persons at aquatic venues.

A) Promoting Behaviors that Prevent the Spread of the Virus that Causes COVID-19

- **Social (or Physical) Distancing**
 - Encourage social distancing—staff and patrons should stay at least 6 feet away from people they don't live with. This includes not gathering at the ends of swim lanes, behind starting blocks, or on stairs into the water or up to the diving board. There is no standard formula to determine how many people can maintain social distancing in and around the water.
- **Exceptions to social distancing should be made to**
 - Rescue a distressed swimmer, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or provide first aid; or
 - Evacuate the water or aquatic facility (such as at gyms) due to an emergency.
 - Stagger use of shared spaces (such as limiting the number of people in the water, bathrooms, locker rooms, and breakrooms). For example, have patrons sign up, online or by phone, for swim time slots.
 - Do not allow staff or patrons to gather while waiting for access. This means staying at least 6 feet away from people they do not live with, preferably outside or in a well-ventilated space.
 - Stagger start and end times of swim lessons and aquatics classes to allow for social distancing on the deck.
 - Assign separate entries and exits to encourage everyone to move in one direction, if possible.
 - Limit occupancy to 50% of enclosed spaces (such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and breakrooms) to make it easy for staff and patrons to stay at least 6 feet away from people they do not live with.
 - Discourage activities, such as eating and drinking (on dry land), that require removal of cloth masks unless at least 6 feet from people they do not live with.
 - Educate staff and patrons about arriving “swim” ready (for example, showering before going to the aquatic facility).
 - Ask parents or caregivers to consider if their children can stay at least 6 feet apart from people they do not live with before taking them to a public treated aquatic venue.
 - Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- **Cloth Masks (Not Goggles, etc.)**
 - Encourage use of cloth masks among staff and patrons. Cloth masks should be worn in addition to staying at least 6 feet apart from people you do not live with.
 - Advise staff and patrons wearing cloth masks not to wear them in the water.
 - A wet cloth mask can make it difficult to breathe and likely will not work correctly.
 - This means it is particularly important to maintain social distancing when in the water.
 - Encourage everyone to bring a second (or extra) cloth mask in case the first one gets wet.
 - Provide staff and patrons with information on how to properly wear, take off, and clean cloth masks. Remind staff and patrons not to touch their cloth masks when wearing them.
- **Masks should not be placed on**
 - Children younger than 2 years old or



- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
- **Adequate Supplies**
 - Support steps that prevent the spread of the virus by providing accessible sinks and enough supplies for people to wash or sanitize their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes. Supplies include cloth or disposable masks (if possible), soap and water, a way to dry hands (paper towels or air hand dryer), tissues, dispensers, no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans (preferably covered), and hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- **Lifeguards and Water Safety**
 - Ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor social distancing, use of cloth masks, or handwashing of others. Assign these monitoring duties to staff that is not actively lifeguarding

B) Guidance for Administrators and Staff

- No indoor dining / food courts / food corners will be allowed.
- As regards to swimming pools, one-time occupancy will be clearly written alongside pool for strict adherence.
- Regular chlorination of swimming pools will be ensured. e. Amusement parks likely to attract huge influx, hence social distancing protocols at entry / exit and on amusement gadgets will be strictly adhered to.

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Ms. Amina Ehsan Qazi and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.

References:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>
2. https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/bathing/srwe2full.pdf

For more information, please contact:

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