



COVID19 Policy and Procedures

Equality Myanmar

Version 1.5

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Covid19 Policy

Purpose

This policy was developed to guide Equality Myanmar’s management to fulfill its moral and legal obligations to its employees, partners, and beneficiaries during the covid19 pandemic while carrying out its organizational mission.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to reduce the risk of covid19 transmission through ethically sound and practically feasible measures while maintaining essential business continuity of activities.

The policy contains the following sections (listed below) and will remain in force for as long as the covid19 pandemic poses a relevant risk for EQMM’s work, as determined by the Management Committee (MCOM).

- **Statements from Management** – summarizes the principles of the policy
- **Basic Health Information** – summarizes health facts considered relevant by management
- **Contingency Plan** – outlines operational actions the organization takes to manage safety
- **Procedures** – describes the specific instructions or regulations staff are expected to follow

I. Statements from Management

Background

In January 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) declared covid19 virus a global emergency and characterized the virus a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. On 23 March Myanmar joined the list of infected countries. In response to the growing risk, EQMM’s management ordered all staff to work from home and postponed all activities.

During the eight weeks that followed, confirmed covid19 cases increased from zero to over 200. Most cases have been in Yangon. However, the appearance of the situation is that the authorities have been able to closely monitor and quickly contain infections. There is no evidence or reports of widespread unchecked outbreaks in Myanmar.

As of early June, some regulations have been relaxed in Yangon and in other parts of the country, as businesses and government offices re-open. EQMM’s managers recently conducted needs assessments in preparation for a re-opening of the EQMM office. This policy was informed by that process.

Decision Making

The EQMM Management Committee (Executive and Deputy Directors, Operations, Finance, Development, Program, Projects & Advocacy Managers) will take the overall decision-making authority with regards to covid19 related measures within the organization. This includes organizational

emergency response and instructions for all operational activities including project implementation, budgeting, staffing, and office running.

Duty of Care

MCOM has an overarching responsibility for the health and safety of our employees in all aspects related to their work for EQMM. We are committed to reducing risk of exposure and transmission of covid19 at the places of our work. But it is also the responsibility of every employee to observe prescribed safety regulations by the government of Myanmar and those of this policy.

Do No Harm

As a local NGO, EQMM is committed to being a responsible member of Myanmar's civil society. EQMM is accountable to its beneficiaries and partners and is committed to working in a way that values their safety and consent, their right to information and health, and the well-being of the wider community.

Information Resources

EQMM checks and follows updated information, precautions and instructions provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the government of Myanmar in terms of the response to the covid19 pandemic.

II. Basic Health Information

What is Covid19?

Covid19 is a type of coronavirus, which is a large family of viruses that cause illness. Symptoms of covid19 can range from very mild to severe, requiring hospitalization. It is understood to be a new disease, and therefore a lot is still unknown about it. Currently, no human population has immunity to it, and there is no cure or vaccine against the virus. Case studies from around the world have shown there is a notable occurrence of asymptomatic infections among populations, **which means that a person could be infected and capable of transmission without knowing it.**

Symptoms of Covid19

A person that presents the following symptoms may have the covid19 virus:

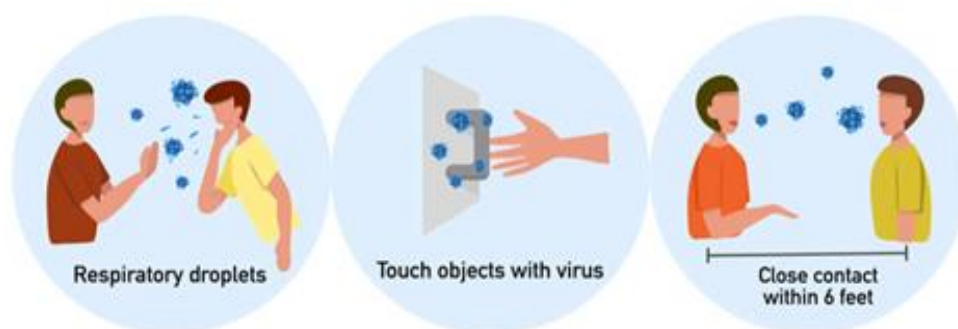
- Fever (38 C or higher)
- Coughing
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing
- Muscle pain, diarrhea and vomiting

How Covid19 spreads

The WHO states that the spread of COVID-19 between humans is being driven by droplet transmission. The virus is transmitted from a sick person to a healthy person through respiratory droplets when the sick person coughs or talks close to another person.

Covid19 can be spread by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then touching eyes, nose or mouth. COVID 19 may spread from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

It is not certain how long the virus that causes covid19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Some studies suggest that coronaviruses like covid19 may remain on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days.



III. Contingency Plan

The contingency plan outlines the set of operational actions to be taken by management and staff in order to manage the safety and security of staff in response to the risks of covid19.

Remote Working / Working from Home

During periods of lockdown or periods deemed high risk by MCOM, staff should work from home and minimize physical contact with people outside their home as much as possible. In case of essential activities, and if the situation is considered as sufficiently safe, visits to the office can be made.

Managers will provide monthly work plans for employees working at home. All employees are required to complete and submit time sheets to their supervisor and the human resource officer on a weekly basis. The timesheets will indicate the days and hours worked from home and main tasks accomplished.

During work from home, employees are expected to attend to their work and be responsive to emails and phone calls as normal. Supervisors must remain in daily contact with staff on work days. Staff are expected to attend regular staff meetings as normal.

EQMM will provide extra top-up for internet for employees during work from home periods. The top-up amount will be determined based on needs of the employee's work plan and issued on a monthly basis.

Travel Policy

Travel is defined as traveling to another state or region.

As a minimum standard the following criteria need to be met prior to planning travel for activities:

- No recent local transmission in origin or destination
- EQMM can comply with all relevant local regulations in destination
- Participants confirm they are willing to participate and can abide by local regulations
- Staff consent to traveling to the destination

During lockdown and periods deemed high risk by MCOM, there will be no travel by employees for the purpose of conducting activities.

Related to personal travel, employees are expected take into consideration the risks and local regulations, and exercise good judgment in their decisions. If an employee wishes to undertake personal travel, they are required report destination and dates of travel to the Operations Manager.

Employees with a recent travel history in an area associated with an outbreak of coronavirus will be required to work from home during a period of at least 14 calendar days. Employees who complete a mandatory quarantine, either in a facility or hotel, will still be required to work from home for a period of at least 14 calendar days. During this time they may not be assigned to any in-person activities or to attend the office.

When conditions improve, MCOM will issue a policy update with travel procedures, as appropriate to the situation.

Leave Policies

During work from home periods, staff can take leave according to the normal procedure.

Finance

MCOM takes responsibility to assure payments are made. Cash flows from our donors to our bank accounts can continue, and salary payments, advance requests, and expense reimbursements, can continue during a work from home period. Signing authorities are to be arranged in such a way that in all circumstances salaries can be paid. MCOM will withdraw a contingency sum to deposit in an account that can be managed remotely during the work from home period. Employees are advised to use e-banking services only to adhere to social distancing. Use of personal bank accounts instead of a project accounts will be allowed in cases where there is no online banking alternative.

Implementation

In the case the Myanmar government declares a lockdown, ongoing in-field activities will be immediately halted, and staff and beneficiaries will be instructed to return home immediately. All planned in-field activities are to be considered suspended.

In case the pandemic period in Myanmar runs for a long time, MCOM will discuss with donors whether contracts needs to be amended or postponed.

However, EQMM aims to continue the operations and activities as much as possible, even under full or partial work from home arrangements. The activities that can continue will take into account the current laws and safety prescriptions of the Myanmar government. Adaptations will be made with reasonable assurances for safety and security, and only with feedback and consent of beneficiaries and partners. EQMM understands it is legally and morally responsible for ensuring that activities comply with local and national health regulations, and it is expected to act responsibly in relation to the safety of beneficiaries and anyone else affected by its activities. Without exception EQMM will prioritize complying with the relevant laws and regulations, and the safety of all concerned stakeholders.

Lastly, staff have the right to remove themselves from a situation and immediately inform their supervisor if the situation poses an imminent and serious danger for life or health.

IV. Procedures

Exposure to covid19 is a public health risk that affects all people. The covid19 pandemic also has implications for all workplaces as it can present a health risk to staff and other persons at a place of work. The reopening of the economy goes hand-in-hand with the provision of public health measures

to reduce the risk of spread of covid19 as well as the existing occupational safety and health measures. Managing the risk of spread in the workplace is important in relation to the health of staff but it is also important as part of general efforts to control the spread of covid19 and to protect the most vulnerable. The following procedures describes the measures required to be put in place by Equality Myanmar and adhered to by all employees to reduce the risk of spread of covid19 in our places of work.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

EQMM will provide the following personal protective equipment (PPE) items to all employees:

- Face mask
- Face shield
- Disinfectant gels
- Tissue
- Cleaning supplies
- Latex gloves
- “Office only” shoes

Office Hours

- In order to minimize physical contact, the office will open twice per week, with limited opening hours, and employees will attend in rotations.
- Operations is responsible for maintaining the rotation list and disinfecting the office before general opening on each day.
- On days that employees are assigned to attend the office, they are expected to arrive between **8:30-9:30 am** and depart between **3:30-4:30 pm**.
- Total expected working time for employees on days that they work in the office is 7 hours instead of 8 hours. When not working in the office, EQMM business hours remain as 9:00 am to 6:30 pm, and employees are expected to attend to an 8-hour work day.

Traveling to and from the office

- Employees are recommended to wear face shield and face mask while traveling to and from the office.
- Employees should avoid crowded buses and trains. Employees with their own vehicle are encouraged to use it.

Entering/Exiting the office

- Employees must be wearing a mask when they enter the office.
- Immediately upon entering, employees must change into a separate pair of “office-only” shoes while in the office. “Office only” shoes must be clean and not worn outside the office. EQMM will provide a rack to store your outside shoes.
- An EQMM staff will check your temperature with a touch-less thermometer, before you may enter the rest of the office.
- EQMM will provide hand sanitizer at the entrance. Please use it when you enter, and keep your distance (of 6 feet) from others if there is a queue.
- Employees are recommended to use stairs instead of elevators. However, if you need to use the elevator, avoid sharing the elevator with others, and avoid touching the buttons with your hands.

Attendance

- Employees must record their work hours at the office in their weekly timesheet and submit this to their supervisor and HR Officer as usual. Employees should not touch the finger print scanner when arriving or leaving the office.

General rules inside the office

- Employees must wear a face mask and “office only” shoes while inside the office. The face masks may only be removed if the employee is seated behind a barrier. If an employee’s mask becomes damp, the employee must change it.
- Employees must maintain at least 6 feet of distance between them. Avoid unnecessary gatherings.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use at least a 60% alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- At a minimum employees must wash or sanitize their hands:
 - Before leaving home
 - On arrival to place of work
 - After using any toilet facility
 - Prior to entering a vehicle
 - Before preparing any food including snacks
 - When leaving the workplace
 - Before and after contact with beneficiaries / visitors
 - After touching nose, mouth, eyes
 - After touching high-contact areas
- When in the office, employees will clean their work areas, at a minimum, at the start and end of each day, or more often as required.
- Employees are expected to cover their nose and mouth with their hand or sleeve if they sneeze or cough. Tissues must be securely disposed of in waste bin.
- **Remind colleagues if they show unwanted behavior.**

Meals and breaks

- All staff should bring food with them (or order food) and eat separately. It is not permitted to share food.
- Employees are recommended to bring their own cups, plates and cutlery (don’t share), and take them back home every day.
- EQMM will provide partitions at the meal table. Employees must maintain 6 feet of distance between if they eat together in the kitchen area.
- Where possible, lunch / snack times should be staggered and employees should avoid sitting together.
- Hands must be thoroughly washed before and after eating meals or using the kitchens.

Meetings

- Meeting participants should maintain a distance of 6 feet and/or make use of barriers where possible.
- Meeting participants should avoid sharing items and handling frequently touched items if not absolutely necessary.

Visitors

- Visitors are defined as anyone who is not currently employed by EQMM, including former EQMM staff.
- Visitors are allowed to come to the EQMM office for work-related purposes.
- Visitors must respect EQMM's covid19 policy and procedures. A sign will be posted on the entrance door instructing visitors on procedures.
- Employees who are receiving visitors must help visitors follow the procedures. Where possible, employees should notify visitors about EQMM's policy and procedures before they come to the office.
- Visitors are expected to:
 - wear a mask while inside, unless when sitting behind a barrier
 - change their shoes at the entrance (slippers will be provided for visitors)
 - wait in lobby area until received by an employee
 - only enter office spaces as strictly necessary for their business
 - practice reasonable physical distancing and other good hygiene practices

Attending critical work outside the office

- For employees attending critical work outside the office, they must follow physical distancing rules, use PPE where advised, carry alcohol hand sanitizer and follow proper hygiene rules.
- Avoid handling name badges, business cards, cellphones, pens, documents and other frequently touched items.
- Where handling materials outside the office is required, such as cash, wearing gloves are recommended.

In case of possible exposure

- If an employee had possible exposure to someone, within the last 14 days, who is confirmed to have, or is being evaluated for, covid19, they should inform the Operations Manager and they should not come to the office for at least 21 calendar days.

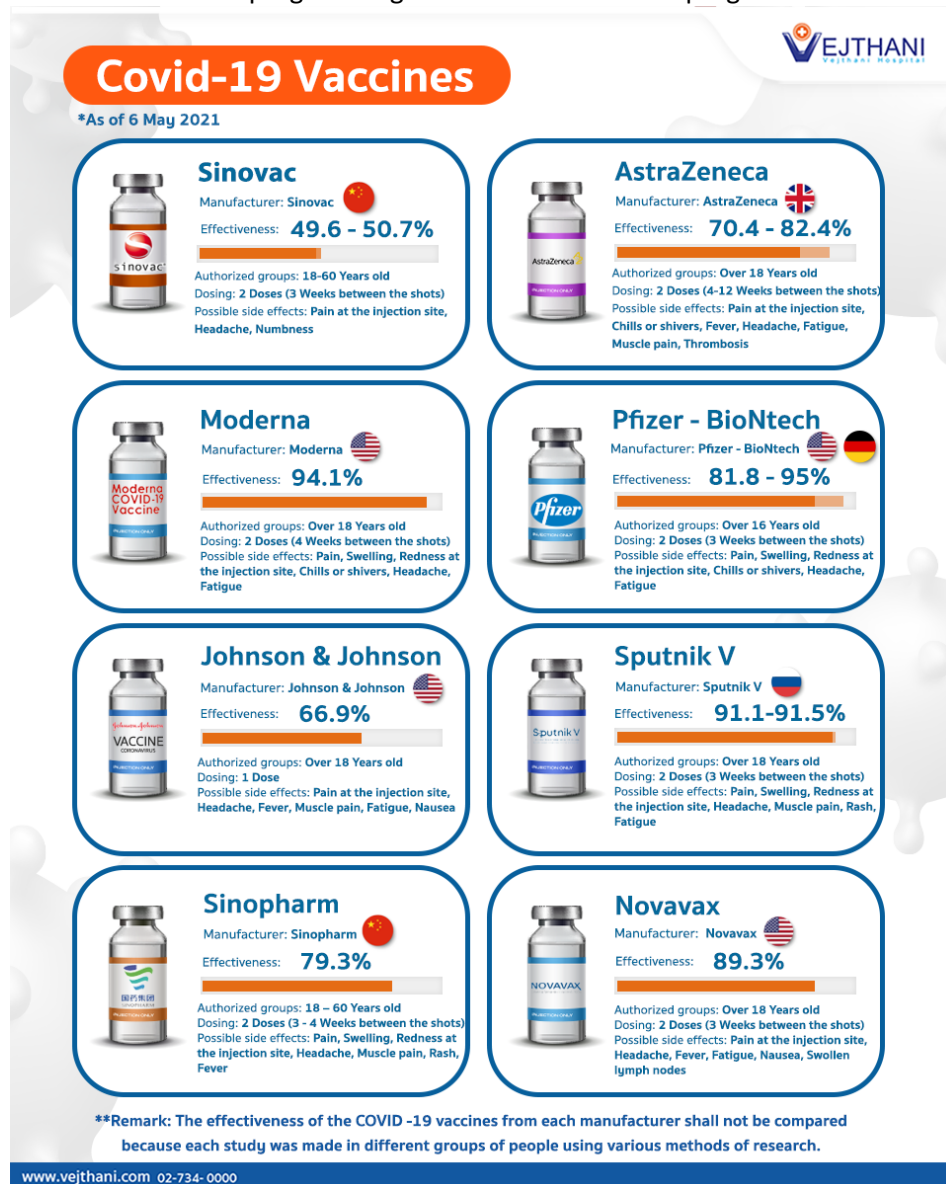
In case of sickness

- Employees should not attend the office if they, or a member of their household, are sick.
- If an employee feels sick and displays symptoms of covid19 while in the office, the Operations Manager or the Development Manager will contact the nearest fever clinic and the affected individual will be referred to that clinic. The sick employee will wait in a designated isolation room. The HR Officer will also contact the employee's next of kin.
- If an employee who has been attending the office tests positive for covid19, the office will be closed and the relevant authorities will be informed in order to trace any contact that the employee had with other potentially infected individuals.
- Operations Manager will inform any staff that may have interacted with them that they recently came in contact with someone who has tested positive for covid19. These employees must also self-quarantine for 21 days.
- Employees with confirmed cases of covid19 should recover at home or wherever their care provider/local government instructs them to recover until they have doctor's clearance to return to work. This quarantine period is mandatory.
- EQMM provides health insurance for all employees, and it should be utilized to the fullest for treatment.

- Employees should refer to the Human Resource Policy on sick leave during the covid19 pandemic.
- **MCOM reserves the right to adjust the Human Resource Policy as the organization's needs change.**

Covid Vaccine

- Employees should seek for Covid vaccination either through their local network or with NGO vaccination program or government vaccination program



Following local community protocol

- Employees must follow their local community protocol such as out pass permission card (Before going out to apply at ward administration), wearing Mask, must arrive back home before curfew time

Standards all in-person activities

For the safety and integrity of EQMM's programming, implementers of activities must ensure the following standards are met.

Safety & Consent

- Local health regulations and travel advisories do not prohibit any essential part of the activity.
- Partners have been consulted about covid19 safety and have freely expressed their willingness to cooperate with EQMM's covid19 safety guidelines.
- Beneficiaries or persons who can speak on behalf of the beneficiaries have freely expressed their willingness to participate.

Staff Travel

- Staff wear face masks during travel. Staff are encouraged to wear face shields as well.
- Staff carry hand gel and wash hands regularly during travel.
- Staff should be mindful not to touch surfaces unnecessarily, and maintain distance at public areas.
- When budget allows, private car should be taken instead of the bus, particularly during times of elevated risk.

Procurements

- For participants' accommodations, no more than 1 person per hotel room where budget is available. For staff, it is a requirement that there is only 1 person per hotel room.
- Venue space is sufficiently large to allow for physical distancing, of six feet per person (about the length of a broom stick) during the activity.
- A logistical note is prepared for partners and, where possible, for beneficiaries that include information about covid19 safety and rules to be followed during the activity.
- EQMM procures enough face masks or face shields and hand gel to be distributed for and used by all persons involved in the activity. There should be enough face masks for all persons involved in the activity to change their mask once per day. All used face masks should be disposed of properly and not re-used. Face shields must be disinfected before re-use.

Conducting the Activity

- At the beginning of each activity employees must remind the participants about the covid19 safety and rules to be followed during the activity. The covid19 poster from MOHS should be utilized. The rules for the activity include the following:
 - **1. All persons must wear a face mask during the entire activity, except for meal times.** During facilitation, the facilitator may remove their mask, provided they stand at least 6 feet apart from others.
 - If a person feels tired of wearing a mask during the activity, they need to excuse themselves from the training area, to either go outside or to their hotel room,

before removing their mask. Staff should inform participants of the nearest exit / door to the outside.

- **2. All persons must pass a temperature check before being admitted to the activity.**
- **3. All persons must maintain a distance and avoid physical contact. This includes during meal times.**
 - For small group activities, participants should remain spread out.
- **4. If anyone feels ill or has symptoms of coughing or fever, they should rest in their room or seek medical attention. However, they will not be permitted to attend the activity.**
- For in-training activities and administrative requirements, physical contact should be reduced as much as possible. In cases where writing on flipcharts or signing documents is required, participants should avoid sharing pens, and any shared items should be sanitized by wiping with hand gel.

Meal Times

- All persons maintain physical distance during mealtimes.
 - To achieve this, staff are encouraged to utilize alternative arrangements. This could include the following options, where possible and appropriate:
 - Arrange for lunch boxes instead of buffet.
 - Procure large spaces or additional rooms for participants to have their meals.
- Sharing food or utensils is not allowed.

Contingencies

- If anyone pressures staff to allow a violation of the guidelines, either before or during the activity, staff should inform their supervisor immediately and seek further instructions.
- If a participant does not follow the safety guidelines they should be reminded.
 - If the participant repeatedly fails to follow the guidelines and/or appears unwilling to cooperate, the staff should inform their supervisor immediately and seek further instructions.
- If any person involved in the activity falls seriously ill, staff should isolate the participant, inform hotel staff, and inform their supervisor.
- If a local transmission of covid19 is discovered during the activity period, the activity should immediately stop, and participants' return travel should be facilitated as quickly and safely as possible.

V. Appendix

Resources

Additional information can be found via the MoHS call center by dialing “2019”

Number 0 is for medical consultation if you have any concern or question with regard to COVID-19 and the time limitation is maximum 6 minutes. All call center operators are free of charge. Note that all operators talk/response in Myanmar language for the moment.

1. dial 1 for Symptoms of COVID-19
2. dial 2 for possible mode of transmission
3. dial 3 for prevention measures
4. dial 4 for instructions and laws on quarantine
5. dial 5 for latest information of COVID-19 confirmed cases
6. dial 0 for direct consultation with medical doctors (maximum 6 minutes)

Internet sources:

- WHO guidelines on workplace readiness: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6
- WHO guidelines on personal hygiene: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- Ministry of Health and Sports Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MinistryOfHealthAndSportsMyanmar>
- Ministry of Health and Sports Covid19 Dashboard: <http://mohs.gov.mm/Main/content/publication/2019-ncov>

History of Amendments to this Policy

No.	Version	Amendment	Date
1	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ‘Travel Policy’ updated to include criteria setting minimum standard for planning activities that require traveling. (pg 6).• ‘Internal Meetings’ changed to just ‘Meetings’. Procedures are lightly revised to be more flexible, allowing meetings but with distancing and good hygiene to be practiced. (pg 9)• ‘Meetings with Partners’ changed to ‘Visitors’. Procedures now allow for external persons to come to the EQMM office, provided that they are there for a work-related reason and that they follow office policy on covid19. (pg 9)	7 July 2020

2	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Travel Policy' updated to explicitly mention that EQMM and participants can comply with all relevant local regulations, as a criteria for planning an activity that requires travel. (pg 5) • 'Implementation' updated to explicitly mention that EQMM understands its legal and moral responsibility to comply with local and national health regulations, and, without exception, will prioritize the correctness of procedures and the safety of its beneficiaries. (pg 6) • 'Office hours' revised to 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. (pg 6) • 'Rotation of staff' is merged into 'Office hours' (pg 6) • 'Entering/Exiting the Office' revised to relax restrictions against using the elevator but instead to advise to use it safely by avoiding crowds and not touching the buttons with hands. (pg 7) • 'Meals & Breaks' revised to say employees are 'recommended' but not required to bring their own cutlery. (pg 8) 	17 August 2020
3	1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Travel Policy' revised criteria phrasing as 'No recent local transmission in origin or destination' instead of 'No lockdown in origin or destination' (pg 5) • 'Travel Policy' revised criteria by removing the text: "Transport is considered safe by a reasonable standard, as determined by MCOM" because it is too subjective. (pg 5) • 'Travel Policy' clarifies that employees will still be required to work from home during the 14 calendar days after completing a mandatory quarantine. (pg 5) • 'Traveling to and from the office' removed the following text: "EQMM will provide travel reimbursement for use of taxis while traveling to and from the office." Because this is no longer provided (pg 7) • 'Standards for in-person activities' added (pg 9-10) 	September 1, 2020
4	1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Covid Vaccination • Update follow local community protocol 	October 15, 2021