

Government implements a series of measures to reduce the health risks faced by foreign domestic helpers staying in boarding facilities of employment agencies

The Government announced today (August 6) that a series of measures will be implemented promptly to reduce the health risks faced by foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) staying in boarding facilities of employment agencies (EAs) and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the community.

Free COVID-19 testing and distribution of masks

A Government spokesman said, "As the epidemic in Hong Kong has remained severe, to strengthen anti-epidemic efforts, the Government has decided to arrange virus testing for different high risk groups to safeguard public health. The Government will expand the testing scope to cover FDHs staying in boarding facilities of EAs. A free, one-off COVID-19 testing service provided by a testing agency (Prenetics Limited) will be arranged for relevant FDHs."

The testing agency will provide one-stop service covering specimen collection and testing. It will shortly deploy staff to licensed EAs providing FDH placement services to deliver specimen bottles for collecting deep throat saliva samples from FDHs staying in the EAs' boarding facilities. The specimens will then be collected by the testing agency after one to two days for testing. Cases with positive results will be relayed to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health for follow-up. The testing agency will work closely with the Labour Department (LD) and determine the testing priority based on the number of persons staying in an EA boarding facility, manpower resources available, etc.

In addition, to strengthen protection of the relevant FDHs, the Government will, from August 8 to 10, 2020, distribute masks to FDHs staying in EAs' boarding facilities via licensed EAs providing FDH placement services. Also, to shorten the time that FDHs will need to stay in EAs' boarding facilities, the Immigration Department will process applications for changing employers in Hong Kong from FDHs whose employment contracts have expired as soon as possible.

Regulation of employment agencies

During the COVID-19 epidemic, LD has approached EA associations a number of times to remind the industry that they cannot arrange FDHs arriving in Hong Kong to undergo compulsory quarantine in EAs' boarding facilities; and that EAs should avoid arranging FDHs to stay in crowded environments, be

alert and remind FDHs to pay attention to personal hygiene and maintain social distance. EAs can make reference to CHP's "Guidelines on Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for the General Public" (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/nid_guideline_general_public_en.pdf) and "A Guide to Personal, Home and Environmental Hygiene" (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/a_guide_to_personal_home_and_environmental_hygiene_keep_clean_be_healthy_booklet.pdf).

Pursuant to the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies (CoP) promulgated by the Commissioner for Labour (the Commissioner), should an EA conduct any other activities (e.g. holding training classes or providing temporary accommodation) or non-EA related business at an EA's licensed address or other premises, the EA must comply with the relevant laws at all times. EAs in breach of the CoP may have their licences revoked or refused renewal by the Commissioner.

Publicity and education

On July 18, 2020, the Government gazetted the specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to impose conditions based on public health grounds in order to further reduce the number of imported cases of COVID-19. A traveller who, on the day on which the traveller boarded a civil aviation aircraft that arrives at, or is about to arrive at Hong Kong, or during the 14 days before that day, has stayed in any specified place (i.e. Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and South Africa), he/she must meet the conditions specified by the Secretary for Food and Health. Since the relevant specifications came into effect at 0.00am on July 25, 2020, the number of FDHs coming from the specified places has dropped markedly.

The Government will continue to conduct publicity to FDHs and appeal to them to avoid non-essential gatherings, stay at home for rest as far as possible, and maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene at all times to safeguard their personal health and public hygiene. In particular, LD, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Police will conduct mobile broadcasts in Chinese, English and major FDH languages (including Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia and Thai) on August 8 and 9, 2020 at popular gathering places of FDHs to call upon FDHs to comply with the regulations on the prohibition of group gatherings and mask-wearing requirement in public places; conduct publicity to FDHs during the broadcasts; and distribute leaflets printed in FDH languages to appeal to them to maintain environmental hygiene, refrain from conducting unlicensed hawking activities, including cooked food or other hawking activities. Also, the Police will increase manpower to step up patrols at those places.

The Government spokesman said, "The Government announced on August 3, 2020 (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202008/03/P2020080300770.htm) that it had gazetted directions and specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) to

extend the social distancing measures already in place, including prohibition on group gatherings of more than two persons in public places and requiring a person to wear a mask at all times when the person is boarding or onboard a public transport carrier, is entering or present in an MTR paid area, or is entering or present in a public place (indoor or outdoor). Offenders are liable to prosecution. The Government reminds employers and FDHs to observe and comply with the relevant requirements and restrictions. As of August 2, 2020, a total of 12 FDHs had been fined a fixed penalty of \$2,000 for being in breach of the direction on prohibition of group gatherings in public places."

The spokesman continued, "When discussing rest day arrangements with their FDHs, employers should explain the current special circumstances and express mutual understanding in fighting the virus. Employers may encourage their FDHs to stay at home for rest, or take their rest day on weekdays instead of at the weekend. If FDHs choose to go out on their rest day, they should wear a mask, keep a distance of at least one metre from others where possible, avoid gathering and going to crowded places, and keep their hands clean at all times."

"Also, LD reminds employers that under the Employment Ordinance, if an employer requests an FDH to work on a rest day, the employer must substitute another rest day for the FDH within 30 days after the original rest day; the employer must also notify the FDH of the arrangement within 48 hours after he/she is required to work. Besides, an employer may substitute another rest day with the consent of the FDH, in which case it must be within the same month before the original rest day or within 30 days after it. An employer who compels his/her FDH to work on a rest day without the agreement of the FDH or fails to grant rest days to the FDH is in breach of the Employment Ordinance and is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000."

For any update and health information on COVID-19, please visit the Government's "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng). Information in Chinese, English, Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Hindi, Sinhala, Bengali, Nepali and Urdu is available.

CHP investigates 95 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has announced that as of 0.00am, August 6, the CHP was investigating 95 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 3 850 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 3 849 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, four had travel history during the incubation period.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

In view of the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. As a number of recent cases involve elderly people, the CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with every day tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
 - Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
 - Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
 - Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
 - After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
 - Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
 - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
 - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
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Members of the public to pay attention to Macao's adjustment of prevention and control measures for persons travelling to Macao from Hong Kong

Regarding the announcement made by the Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR) Government today (August 6) concerning the COVID-19 nucleic acid test requirement for persons entering Macao from Hong Kong which will come into effect tomorrow (August 7), the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) urged members of the public to ensure that they can meet the requirement when travelling to Macao to avoid hiccups when crossing the border.

The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre of Macao announced that, starting from 6am on August 7, all persons entering Macao would be required to present a valid proof of a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test result issued by one of the testing institutions recognised by the HKSAR Government. The negative test result would be valid within 24 hours

(e.g. for a nucleic acid test conducted on August 6, the negative result report can be used for entering Macao on August 7). They are also required to undergo the compulsory quarantine of 14 days after entry into Macao. The designated testing institutions recognised by the HKSAR Government has been posted on the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories.pdf)

The Government spokesman said, "Before departure to Macao, members of the public must bring along a valid proof of negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test result that can meet the requirement of Macao SAR Government. When they re-enter Hong Kong after being refused of entry in Macao, they will be subjected to compulsory quarantine of 14 days pursuant to the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C). Members of the public should pay extra attention to avoid such a situation."

Apart from Macao, the Guangdong (GD) Provincial Government also announced yesterday that, starting from 10am on August 7, save for persons who received prior approval by GD for performing essential official and business duties and cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers who would continue be subjected to the prevailing policies applicable to them, all other persons who are entering GD via the Shenzhen Bay and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge control points would be required to present a valid proof of a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test result issued by one of the testing institutions recognised by the HKSAR Government. The Government spokesman reminded members of the public to ensure that they would hold a valid proof of a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test result that can meet the requirement of the Government of GD or Macao when travelling to these two places.

The Government called on members of the public again that in view of the severe local epidemic situation, they should avoid going out, keep social distance and avoid dining out. People should maintain stringent hand hygiene and put on a surgical mask when they need to go out. They are also urged to seek medical attention early even if mild symptoms develop to help prevent the spread of the disease in the community.

Caritas Medical Centre announces passing away of COVID-19 patient

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for the Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) announced today (August 6) that a patient confirmed with COVID-19 passed away.

The 87-year-old male patient (case number: 3553) in CMC with chronic disease was admitted on July 23 due to shortness of breath and heart failure.

His condition continued to deteriorate and eventually succumbed at 8.13pm today.

The Hospital was saddened about the passing away of the patient and would offer necessary assistance to his family.

Including the above case, 46 COVID-19 confirmed patients have passed away in public hospitals so far.

Concealing birth of child case in Lantau South reclassified as manslaughter

Police today (August 6) reclassified a concealing birth of child case in Lantau South on February 1 as manslaughter.

At about 10.30am on February 1, Police received a report from a passer-by that a suspected body of a baby was found in an alley in Tong Fuk Tsuen, Lantau South. Police sped to the scene and found a newborn baby girl collapsed on the ground with her umbilical cord and placenta attached. The baby girl was certified dead at scene. Upon investigation, a 21-year-old foreign woman suspectedly abandoned the baby girl after giving birth to her inside a unit nearby. She was arrested for concealing birth of child.

Upon further investigation by the Crime Unit of Lantau District, Police reclassified the case as manslaughter. The woman is holding charged with one count of manslaughter. The case will be mentioned at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts tomorrow (August 7).