



International Civil Aviation Organization

South American Regional Office

Fifth Virtual Meeting of Civil Aviation General Directors of the South American Region on the Response to COVID-19

(Lima, Peru, 11 August 2021)

RV5/DGCA - IP/11

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Agenda Item 3: Innovation in Aviation Facilitation and Security aspects in the recovery framework

New WHO guidelines on social and public health measures in the context of COVID-19

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This working paper presents a new WHO guide on social and public health measures, including one that would allow flexibility of measures for individuals with natural or vaccine-induced immunity and other provisions.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On June 14, the World Health Organization (WHO) published provisional guidance on *Considerations for implementing and adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19*, currently available in English under the address <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/considerations-in-adjusting-public-health-and-social-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19-interim-guidance>).

1.2 This document is an update of the interim guidance published on November 4, 2020 entitled “*Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19*”. Public Health and Social Measures (PHSM) have proven critical in limiting COVID-19 transmission and reducing deaths. These measures include non-pharmaceutical individual and social interventions to control COVID-19. This updated version introduces relaxation considerations for some PHSMs for people with natural or vaccine-induced immunity.

2. CHANGES SINCE THE LAST VERSION

2.1 This guide provides updates on the assessment framework that drives decision-making for PHSMs, particularly on the type of indicators and thresholds in different epidemiological settings, and in the context of vaccine implementation and the circulation of variants of concern (or VOC).

2.2 Also contains a new section on considerations for individualized public health measures based on a person's SARS-CoV-2 immunity status after COVID-19 vaccination or past infection in the context of contact tracing, international travel and private social gatherings.

3. KEY IDEAS

3.1 The document presents the following key ideas:

- Public health and social measures (PHSM) have proven critical to limiting transmission of COVID-19 and reducing deaths.
- The decision to introduce, adapt or lift PHSM should be based primarily on a situational assessment of the intensity of transmission and the capacity of the health system to respond, but must also be considered in light of the effects these measures may have on the general welfare of society and individuals.
- Indicators and suggested thresholds are provided to gauge both the intensity of transmission and the capacity of the health system to respond; taken together, these provide a basis for guiding the adjustment of PHSM. Measures are indicative and need to be tailored to local contexts.
- PHSM must be continuously adjusted to the intensity of transmission and capacity of the health system in a country and at sub-national levels.
- When PHSM are adjusted, communities should be fully consulted and engaged before changes are made.
- In settings where robust PHSMs are otherwise in place to control the spread of SARS-CoV-2, allowing the relaxation of some measures for individuals with natural or vaccine-induced immunity may contribute to limiting the economic and social hardship of control measures. Applying such individualized public health measures must take into account a number of ethical and technical considerations.

3.1.1 WHO UPDATE - Technical Considerations for Implementing a Risk-Based Approach to International Travel in the Context of COVID-19

3.2 As an annex to the guide published last June, the WHO published an annex to this guide with considerations directly applicable to international travel in the context of COVID-19 which can be downloaded from the portal: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Risk-based-international-travel-2021.1> . It is included as Attachment B to this paper.

3.3 As key points of this document are:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, international travel should always be prioritized for essential purposes, including emergency and humanitarian missions, travel of essential personnel, repatriations, and cargo transport of essential supplies.
- As countries gradually resume or readjust non-essential international travel, the introduction of risk mitigation measures aiming to reduce travel-associated exportation, importation and onward transmission of SARS-CoV-2 should be based on thorough risk assessments conducted systematically and routinely.
- The application of a precautionary approach is warranted in the presence of scientific uncertainties such as emergence of variants of concern (VOCs) or variants of interest (VOIs).
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination should not be required as a condition of entry to or exit from a country.
- National authorities implementing testing or quarantine as a condition for entry of international travellers may consider individualized approaches to exempting them from these measures based on acquired immunity from vaccination or previous SARS-CoV-2 infection.

- Adherence to personal protective measures such as mask use and physical distancing must continue to be respected by all international travellers, both while on board conveyances and at points of entry.
- International travellers should not be considered by default as suspected COVID-19 cases or contacts or as a priority group for testing.
- The overall health and well-being of communities should be at the forefront of considerations when deciding on and implementing international travel-related measures, which should be communicated publicly and in a timely manner.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Finally, we recommend the Fifth Virtual Meeting of Civil Aviation Directors of the South American Region to take note of the content of this working paper and the WHO provisions that could be found at:

- Policy considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of COVID-19, 2 July 2021: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Policy-Brief-Risk-based-international-travel-2021.1>
- Technical considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance, 2 July 2021: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Risk-based-international-travel-2021.1>
- Interim position paper: considerations regarding proof of COVID-19 vaccination for international travellers, 5 February 2021: <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/interim-position-paper-considerations-regarding-proof-of-covid-19-vaccination-for-international-travellers> **(English only)**

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