

WHE.SOP.XVII.###
Development and Management
of Emergency Policies,
Guidelines and Procedures
Health Emergencies Programme

Standard Operating Procedures
Target Audience: All Staff

DISCLAIMER

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) provide a step-by-step guide for staff directly involved in the processing of administrative actions to support and facilitate the implementation of WHO policies and procedures. The SOPs are for guidance only; they are neither authoritative nor binding. The SOPs reflect the policies and procedures of WHO at the time of writing; however, policies and procedures change from time-to-time. In the case of a conflict between the SOPs and the WHO eManual provisions, the WHO eManual provisions take precedence.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview/Description

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes how to develop, revise and disseminate emergency policies, guidelines and procedures.

1.2. General Guidance / Business Rules

1.2.1 Definitions

Policy: A policy is a formal, brief, high-level statement or plan that embraces WHO's general beliefs, goals, objectives, and acceptable procedures for a specified subject area.

Policies always state required actions, and may include pointers to standards. Policy attributes include the following:

- Require compliance (are mandatory)
- Failure to comply results in administrative action
- Focus is on desired results, not on means of implementation
- Is further defined by standards and guidelines, rules and regulations

Guidelines: Guidelines are general statements, recommendations, or administrative instructions designed to achieve the policy's objectives by providing a framework within which to implement procedures.

- A guideline can change frequently based on the environment and should be reviewed more frequently than standards and policies.
- A guideline is not mandatory, rather a suggestion of a best practice. Hence "guidelines" and "best practice" are interchangeable.

Procedures or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Procedures or SOPs are the mechanisms to enforce adherence to policy and describe the process or way to implement a policy: who does what, when they do it, and under what criteria. They can be text based or outlined in a process map.

- Procedures are a series of steps taken to accomplish an end goal, in a way that optimizes the use of resources, both human and financial.
- They provide a quick reference in times of crisis.
- They also help facilitate successful accomplishment of the end goal by ensuring that all critical steps are taken, thereby averting failure.

1.2.2 Preparation of policies, guidelines and procedures

- To allow for a rapid response during emergencies, there might be a need to:
 - develop new policies, guidelines or procedures
 - revise existing policies guidelines or procedures
 - institute exceptions to existing policies that would apply only to the emergency programmes
 - remove existing policies or procedures

- Article 18 of the WHO Constitution sets the prerogative to the World Health Assembly to determine the policies of the Organization. Any new policies or changes to policies have to be approved by the WHO governing bodies.
- Any unit/ team/ working group involved in the WHO reform project team, or in WHO emergency departments, may propose any of the above changes.
- Proposals will be facilitated by a Continuous Improvements Team, and discussed with the Team Leads or focal points per function. The functional area lead or focal point will confirm that a draft document should be prepared as per the standard format (see 1.2.3 below).
- Clear criteria to trigger activation of the policies and procedures, if relevant, should also be specified.

1.2.3 Format

Policies: All emergency policy documents should at least include an introduction, purpose and scope. The extent of the content required depends on the subject, and is at the discretion of the author.

Guidelines: The format recommended by the Guidelines Review Committee should be used to write guidelines. Detailed information is included on their website (see Section 1.3 Reference Material). All guidelines should have an executive summary, a main body and appendices. The main text of the guideline should include a table of contents, introduction, methods, recommendations and conclusions. All participants, roles and affiliations should be listed, with their conflicts of interests and how these were managed.

Procedures: The Emergency SOPs format¹ (see Section 1.3 Reference Material), should be used as a guide to write SOPs. This format is derived from the WHO/GMG SOP format and differs from the GMG format on the following points:

- The 'Process Steps' in the emergency SOP will include service delivery timelines (as defined by the Emergency Response Framework, or other relevant emergency policy documents) and key performance indicators.
- The emergency SOPs will also include a "quick reference guide" highlighting 5-10 key points (as defined by the Content Lead) for each SOP.

Further, all emergency policy, guideline and procedure documents will have the following comment elements:

- Title
- Version number
- Approval date
- As at date
- Expiry date (as applicable)
- Indicator if the document replaces an outdated or existing document
- Information Classification Category (1 – 4)
- Business Owner

¹ This format will need to be tested and validated for SOPs in non-core services functional areas.

1.2.4 Coordination

- The development, revision, update and maintenance of the emergency policies, guidelines and procedures will be coordinated by the OHE Continuous Improvements Team. A generic e-mail address (emanualemergency@who.int) has been established to facilitate change requests. The Continuous Improvements Team will work with the relevant functional area focal points to review proposals sent to this email address, and to facilitate the clearance and approval process.

1.2.5 Review, Approval and Updates in Normal Circumstances

- Policies, whether proposed anew or revised, must be reviewed by Stakeholders, approved by Level 1 and Level 2 Approvers (see table below), and cleared through the Director-General's Office (DGO) by the Director-General (DG). The DGO will determine if Governing Body approval would be required, otherwise they are considered final once cleared by the DG.
- Guidelines and procedures must be submitted for a "no-objections" clearance to Stakeholders, and must be approved by Level 1 and Level 2 Approvers (see table above), at which point they are considered final. The timeline for this process is no more than 2 – 3 weeks.

Functional Area	Stakeholders*	Level 1 Approver	Level 2 Approver
Leadership (IM)	Regional Advisers HQ technical departments	Director (HQ technical department)	EXD OHE
Partner Coordination	Regional Advisers HQ technical departments	Director (HQ technical department)	EXD OHE
Information & Planning	Regional Advisers HQ technical departments	Director (HQ technical department) Director of PRP department	EXD OHE
Health Expertise & Operations	Regional Advisers HQ technical departments Regional DAFs	Director (HQ technical department)	EXD OHE
Operations Support & Logistics	Regional DAFs HQ OSS focal points	Director (HQ technical department and OSS)	EXD OHE ADG GMG**
Management and Administration	Regional DAFs HQ GMG departments	Director (GMG department)	EXD OHE ADG GMG**

*Stakeholders for Health Operations may depend on the topic

** If Level 1 Approver is a GMG Director, ADG GMG can be omitted under Level 2 Approver

1.2.6 Review, Approval and Updates during a Response Event

During a response event, a rapid approval process will be implemented. In the event that new policies, procedures or guidelines need to be issued or revised/updated, the incident manager will make a proposal (or send a request for

solution to a problem) to the Regional DAF, who will consult with the business owner (HQ GMG Director) and give a response within 48 hours, including the validity period of the approval, if granted.

In response to emergencies or to an urgent need, WHO may issue a rapid response guideline within one day to several weeks, or a rapid advice guideline within a somewhat longer timeline. The methods for producing a rapid response guideline are under development by the GRC Secretariat. For method of producing the rapid advice guideline please refer to the WHO handbook for guideline development (Section 1.3 Reference Material).

1.2.7 Dissemination and Repository Access

The emergency policies, guidelines and procedures will be disseminated through the WHO eManual² Platform with possibility for external access. External access will be defined for each document.

For dissemination through the eManual, the following pathway will be followed:

Policies: WHO policies related to work in emergencies will be included in the WHO eManual under section XVII, which is currently entitled “Emergency and Humanitarian Action and Public Health Event Management”. Cross-referencing in other non-emergency sections will be included under “related content” as much as possible.

Guidelines will be referenced in the eManual under “related content”, and will be included in the SOPs repository as examples of “best practice”.

Procedures will be referenced in the eManual under “related content” and will be housed in a central Sharepoint repository.

1.3. Reference Material

1.3.1. Staff Rules

1.3.2. WHO eManual

- XVII: Health Emergencies

1.3.3. UPKs

1.3.4. Related SOPs

1.3.5. Other

² The WHO eManual serves as the centralized authoritative source of information on WHO-s policies and it is mandatory for all staff to comply with the policies and procedures contained therein.

- Emergency SOP Template: This document is the standard OHE SOP template.



WHE SOP Template

- GMG SOP guidelines: This document provides detailed guidance on the SOP format and how to complete it.



GMG SOP
Guidelines.docx

- Website of the Guidelines Review Committee: The Guidelines Review Committee (GRC) was established by Information Note 16/2007 to develop and implement procedures for guideline development that ensure that WHO guidelines are consistent with internationally accepted best practices, including the appropriate use of evidence. The website gives all relevant information related to guidelines development

[\(http://intranet.who.int/homes/ker/grc/\)](http://intranet.who.int/homes/ker/grc/)

- Guidance material on minimum reporting standards for WHO guidelines, Emergency Procedures



proceduresforemergencyguidelines (1).pdf

<http://intranet-pdrive.who.int/public-drives/PubDept/KMS-WHP%20-%20WHO%20Press/GRC/proceduresforemergencyguidelines.pdf>

- WHO handbook for guideline development



WHO_Handbook_for_Guideline_Development

http://intranet-pdrive.who.int/public-drives/PubDept/KMS-WHP%20-%20WHO%20Press/GRC/WHO_Handbook_for_Guideline_Development_2nd_edition_Web.pdf

3. KEY RISKS & COMPENSATING CONTROLS

UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Risks	Compensating Controls	Process Step