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**Advisory issued by W&CD and MS Department:
Strict adherence of Covid-19 Protocols with regards to implementation of ICDS Programmes**

Bhubaneswar, 15 May2021,

Women & Child Development and Mission Shakti Department has issued advisory regarding the strict adherence of Covid-19 protocols for implementation of various Anganwadi services under ICDS programmes catering to the needs of children, pregnant and lactating women, adolescents in the State. Principal Secretary of the Department Smt. Anu Garg reviewed the current Covid situation and measures taken by the Department through a virtual meeting with DSWOs and ICDS functionaries. Accordingly, Director, ICDS and Social Welfare Sri Aravind Agarwal has written a letter to the Collectors in this regard.

Through the letter special emphasis has been laid down upon Covid appropriate behaviour and precautions in wake of second wave of Covid-19 in the country to be strictly followed by ICDS functionaries and beneficiaries at all time.

The basic Covid appropriate behaviours and practices suggested are:

Wearing face masks in the correct way (covering the nose & mouth well) at all times during interaction with people and while going out, is mandatory both for the frontline functionaries and beneficiaries. Since many children are getting affected by the virus in the second wave, children must always wear masks when they move out of their homes. Parents must ensure that children above 2 years must always mandatorily wear face masks when they step out of their houses.

Majority of children with Covid-19 infection may be asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic. In case of cold, cough, fever, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, loss of smell/taste, poor feeding in infants, and other medically indicated conditions, children, pregnant & nursing women, adolescents and youth must go for testing, treatment, isolation, and medical advice. Children with underlying co-morbid condition may also be managed at home, if they have features of mild disease and there is easy access to health facility in case of any deterioration. In case there is lack of proper arrangement to manage these children at home/ access to health facility is difficult, such children may be admitted.

Children 0-19 years or pregnant & nursing women who have tested positive for Covid-19 or asymptomatic but has a close/household contact with a Covid-19 case, need to be suggested isolation and referred for Covid-19 testing/ medical advice in case of any symptoms.

Physical distancing of 6 feet (dui gaja) must be ensured while interacting with another person. This should be the norm even while distribution of SNP, observance of VHSND, Routine Immunization sessions and home visits by AWWs.

Hand-washing with soap and water (or hand sanitization with alcohol-based sanitizer) for at least 40 seconds, avoidance of unnecessary touching of face, nose, eyes must be avoided to keep the infection at bay.

Pregnant & nursing women and children must be counselled to avail optimal nutrition for improved immunity. Consumption of SNP (HCM & THR) and IFA/calcium supplementation by the targeted

beneficiaries only must be ensured. Food rations meant for pregnant women must not be shared by other family members.

Pregnant women should consume nutritious food, take adequate rest, wear masks appropriately, practice handwashing with soap, social distancing, and seek medical advice/ self-isolate in case she notes any of the symptoms.

In case a nursing mother or the child (0-2 years) is found positive, breastfeeding must continue in either case, as breast milk strengthens the immune system by directly transferring antibodies from the mother. However appropriate precautions are to be followed during breastfeeding and handling of the child.

Children should be given freshly prepared nutritious complementary food (which are not high in fats, sugar, or salt); which will aid in their growth and development and improve their immune systems

Children identified as SAM/MAM/SUW should be given special focus and adopted by CDPOs/Supervisors/ AWWs as per earlier guidelines sent by the Department. The health & nutrition status of these children are to be strictly monitored and followed up. Children with SAM and with clinical conditions are to be referred to NRCs for treatment.

Establishment of kitchen gardens may be promoted at household level particularly in households with pregnant & nursing mothers and SAM/MAM/SUW children, to ensure availability of fresh vegetables at all times.

Weekly dose of IFA supplementation through observed administration for adolescent girls is to be continued at doorstep of the beneficiaries (through AWWs, ASHAs) every Saturday. Similarly, adolescent girls who are in schools will be provided IFA tablets by their teachers along with their MDM rations. Adolescent girls found with symptoms of cold, cough, fever, gastrointestinal-tract infection, loss of smell/taste and other medical conditions are to be referred for Covid-19 testing and be suggested for isolation or medical advice.

Since the youth have maximum contacts, they also carry sizeable risk of infection. Eating nutritious foods to build immunity, wearing masks and washing hands frequently with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, leading healthy life-style and exercising daily are some of the healthy practices during this time.

Growth monitoring of children is extremely important during these critical times (to address growth faltering early and prevent severe malnutrition) and needs to be ensured during VHSNDs, in a staggered manner. Wearing masks during weighing of children shall be mandatory for both frontline functionaries and beneficiaries. The growth monitoring devices are to be appropriately sanitized after every use. However, children/caregivers with any kind of symptoms like cold, cough, fever, loss of taste/smell, gastrointestinal-tract infection, any other medical conditions are to be referred for immediate Covid-19 testing and health advice.

If the VHSND/UHND is discontinued in a containment zone, it will be resumed after the containment is over and measures will be taken so that no child is left unvaccinated or does not receive services.

Vaccination against Covid-19 must be ensured for all eligible beneficiaries at the earliest which is the most effective protection against this deadly virus. If feasible, Arogya Setu App should be downloaded.

Last but not the list, the advisory issued by the Health & Family Welfare Department on children, adolescents and pregnant & nursing women also be followed scrupulously by the field functionaries.

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