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NOTES OF THE ONLINE TRAINING LECTURE

# Providing social and administrative services under quarantine

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## NOTES OF THE ONLINE TRAINING LECTURE

### PROVIDING SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES UNDER QUARANTINE

#### INTRODUCTION

The issue of providing social and administrative services is an exceptionally important one in the context of the current coronavirus pandemic. Although the period of time that has elapsed since the start of the epidemic in Ukraine is not very long, all of us have already seen the seriousness of the consequences of not just the epidemic itself, but the measures required to contain it. The first laws and regulations on combating the coronavirus pandemic in Ukraine were adopted in early February 2020, and in early March the issue of providing public services to the population became an urgent one. The issue of providing services to people that belong to vulnerable categories is the most urgent. Although the crisis is now in full swing and it may even seem that all time and efforts should be devoted to overcoming its consequences, the country should now start getting ready for exiting the nationwide quarantine. To do that, one should assess the potential risks and ways to minimize them, and designate persons who will be involved in tackling the consequences of the quarantine, and allocate responsibilities among them. This will ensure the coordinated and effective functioning of the entire system as the country exits quarantine.

## LAWS AND REGULATIONS

- Ukrainian Law No. 540 amending some laws to provide supplementary social and economic guarantees in relation to the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
- Ukrainian Law No. 530 amending some Ukrainian laws that aim to prevent the emergence and spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
- Ministerial Decree No. 329, dated 22 April 2020, on some issues related to social support for families with children
- Ministerial Decree No. 264, dated 8 April 2020, on some issues related to the provision of state social benefits
- Ministerial Decree No. 245, dated 25 March 2020, on some issues related to the use of restrictive anti-epidemic measures to prevent the spread of the acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
- Ministerial Decree No. 247, dated 25 March 2020, on the specifics of granting housing subsidies

## PROVIDING SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES UNDER QUARANTINE

The following types of state social benefits for families continued to be provided automatically (i.e. without people having to apply for them) during the quarantine:

- state social assistance for needy families;
- child support for single mothers;
- state social assistance for people with life-long disabilities and children with disabilities;
- child support for minors and adolescents;
- assistance for children with severe and rare diseases who have not been declared disabled;
- assistance for persons who live together with, and care for, a person with group I or II disabilities due to a mental disorder, and who, according to a conclusion made by a medical commission of a medical institution, requires constant nursing care;
- temporary state assistance for children whose parents evade paying alimony, are unable to support their child, or whose place of permanent (temporary) residence is unknown;
- state social assistance for persons who are not entitled to a pension, and for persons with disabilities;
- all types of social benefits for internally displaced persons that were awarded before the quarantine was imposed;
- state social assistance for persons who were scheduled to undergo medical or consultative examinations for social security disability during the quarantine.

A list of administrative services that are provided by administrative service centres during the quarantine:

- issuing Ukrainian internal passports;
- placing a new photograph in people's passports when they turn 25 or 45 years old;
- the comprehensive yeMaliatko (I have a baby) service for the parents of newborn babies;
- issuing road usage permits for people who have non-standard vehicles;
- approving traffic routes for vehicles that transport dangerous cargos;
- registering, reregistering and deregistering vehicles that belong to medical facilities, or due to the loss of the vehicle's registration certificate;
- reissuing driving licences to replace lost or stolen ones;
- registering the birth of a child with the state and establishing the child's parentage;
- registering a death with the state;
- providing housing subsidies;
- providing subsidies for the purchase of liquefied gas and solid and liquid heating fuels;
- awarding temporary state assistance for children whose parents evade paying alimony, are unable to support their child, or whose place of permanent (temporary) residence is unknown;
- awarding benefits to women who have been given the honorary titles of heroine mothers;
- awarding pregnancy and childbirth benefits to those women who are not covered by state social insurance;
- awarding new-born child support, adopted child support, support for minors and adolescents or support for single mothers;
- registering or deregistering a place of residence and issuing registration certificates;
- issuing permits to carry out road- and earthworks.



## LET US CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PROCESSES STEP-BY-STEP:

- **1. Issuing IDP certificates to persons who applied during quarantine:**

With a view to preventing the emergence and spread of the coronavirus, visits to government offices by the public were banned by the decision of the State Commission for Human-Made Disasters and Environmental Safety and Emergencies at an extraordinary meeting. (each oblast issued its own decision) . Meanwhile, the procedure approved by Ministerial Decree No. 509, stipulates that in order to obtain a certificate people must apply in person. In some cases, applicants can be represented by authorized persons, who are also required to appear in person. No other existing law or regulation establishes any other conditions for obtaining certificates during the quarantine.

The issuing of IDP certificates is considered an administrative service. Law No. 530 stipulates that, from the date of the start of quarantine, the terms for applying for administrative and other services and the terms for providing such services, as set forth in the applicable law, are suspended.

Once the quarantine is lifted, these terms will be extended, taking into account the time that had elapsed before the terms were suspended. Applications for certificates will be considered after the quarantine is over. Certificates must be issued on the day of application if an applicant's passport states that that person is registered in the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine. This is likely to lead to a large number of conflicts and additional queues, as all applicants who emailed their applications will also be required to attend in person appointments. In addition, for technical reasons, the Unified Database of IDPs assigns a date and number to a certificate on the day that the certificate is printed.

Therefore, the relevant department is recommended to enter information about applicants in the Unified Database of IDPs and to keep this information in draft form for the entire period, and only print this information out on the day an applicant applies in person - this should significantly reduce the time required to service such persons.

- **2. Actions to be taken if a person's IDP certificate is revoked during quarantine on the grounds that the person has been absent from their registered place of residence on their IDP certificate for over 60 days.**

Law No. 530 stipulates that while the quarantine or restrictive measures related to the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are in place, and, until 30 days from the date the quarantine is lifted, certificates confirming that a person has been registered as an IDP cannot be revoked on the grounds that: a person that has been absent from their registered place of residence for for over 60 days, provides reasonable grounds to believe that the internally displaced person has returned to the permanent place of residence that they previously abandoned.


In this light, any revocation of IDP certificates on the above grounds after 18 April

2020 and within 30 days of the date the quarantine is lifted will be in breach of the law.

It should also be noted that technically it is impossible to renew IDP certificates that have been revoked for the above grounds. In such cases, a person must obtain a new certificate. One should also keep in mind that a large percentage of certificates are linked to social benefits.

- **3. Verifying the information people provided online during the quarantine to receive social benefits:**

Ministerial Decree No. 264, states that the relevant social protection body must within one month after the quarantine is lifted, recalculate the amount of paid state social assistance and state social assistance to persons with lifelong disabilities and children with disabilities, persons who are not entitled to a pension and persons with disabilities, on the basis of an application submitted by that person or their legal representative, and any supporting documents.

 **Important!**

Law No. 540 stipulates that, for the period of the quarantine and for 30 days after the date the quarantine is lifted, commissions charged with awarding or renewing social benefits to internally displaced persons can make decisions to award (renew) or refuse to award (renew) social benefits without the applicant having to produce attestations regarding their family's living conditions and financial standing. These attestations will only be required when applying for cash benefits. Therefore, if assistance was awarded during the quarantine without the applicant having to provide an attestation, then, after the quarantine, the applicant will not be required to produce a new attestation to verify whether or not the applicant actually lives at the address that is indicated in their application (this verification procedure was cancelled in 2018). An attestation will be required when awarding cash benefits to applicants for the next six months.

- **4. Recalculating the amounts of social benefits paid (making additional payments to those people who were paid less than what they were entitled to, and the procedure for recovering overpaid amounts):**

Recalculations are based on the first day of the month in which the period of benefit payments expired, but not earlier than a month from the start of the quarantine.

If after the recalculation, the amount of benefits paid is less than the recalculated amount, the relevant social protection body will make an additional payment to cover the difference between the recalculated and paid amount of benefits.

However, if after recalculation the recipient does not qualify for social benefits, or calculated that the recipient is entitled to lesser amount than the benefits paid during the quarantine, the relevant social protection body is to recover the overpaid amount within one month of the date of the quarantine being lifted, as set forth in the applicable law. However, the recoverable amount must be no more than 20 percent of the amount of benefits paid.



The procedure for returning overpaid amounts of social benefits has remained unchanged. Beneficiaries deemed to have been overpaid due to their submission of unreliable documents and/or due to the failure to notify the relevant authority of changes in their living conditions that affect benefits qualifications must return the amount overpaid. With the consent of the beneficiary, the amount overpaid will be withheld from subsequent benefit payments until the overpaid amount is recovered. Full payments to the beneficiary will be withheld or, by decision of the relevant authorized body, a repayment plan whereby no less than 20% of the beneficiary's eligible payment will be withheld until the full amount owed is returned to authorities. Where it is impossible to obtain consent to return overpaid amounts, or deduct these amounts from monthly payments, the overpaid amounts will be recovered through court rulings.

### **AWARDING SUBSIDIES DURING QUARANTINE**

Ministerial Decree No. 247, dated 25 March 2020, outlines the specifics of granting housing subsidies while measures to prevent the emergence and spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are in effect. Among other things:

During quarantine, the relevant authorities are prohibited from cancelling housing subsidies in the cases outlined by Regulation No. 848, apart from in circumstances that make it impossible to provide housing subsidies. These include the relocation of a household to another place of residence, or the death of a person living alone.

The relevant authorities should consider whether or not to grant housing subsidies for the next period to all households that received housing subsidies in the 2019-2020 heating period without those households having to apply for housing subsidies, and without applying paragraph 78 of Regulation 848.

Persons who were made redundant by their employers during quarantine on the basis of paragraph 1, part 1, Article 40 of the Labour Code and who were registered as unemployed persons by the relevant unemployment office can be awarded housing subsidies with confirmation by the unemployment office of the applicant's registration..

Housing subsidies are to be calculated to account for a 50% increase in utilities consumption as set forth in Decree No. 409, and regardless of the number of days that the quarantine was in effect during a month.



## STRATEGIES FOR EXITING QUARANTINE

Exiting quarantine will be a new challenge for social workers. To prepare scenarios for exiting the crisis, one has to understand the issues that need to be addressed and possible ways to resolve them. The most likely scenario is that of a gradual exit from quarantine.

Therefore, at the initial stages personal appointments could be arranged as follows: in one office one worker receives applicants; such appointments can be attended by one applicant or one applicant and children at a time. Instead of queuing in the corridor, applicants wait outside, maintaining social distancing. If the epidemiological situation does not get worse, these rules could be relaxed in the future.

In the near future, one should expect that targeted programmes for exiting quarantine will be developed and implemented locally. These programmes will contain a list of measures, responsible authorities and financing/amounts. Recommendations that measures to secure the safe operation of social protection authorities be included in these programmes should be made while these programmes are still being developed. To do that, well thought-out proposals should be submitted in due time.

We recommend the following measures be included.

In any case, the following anti-epidemic actions will remain appropriate for a prolonged period:

- Educating people about how to comply with sanitary and hygienic norms and rules so as to prevent getting infected with the coronavirus. Not only recipients, but also providers of social services should be provided with such an education.
- One should mark the waiting areas for applicants, both in the offices where applicants are serviced, and in the corridors.
- The disinfection of the working area/the area where applicants are received/ plays one of the most important roles in preventing the spread of infectious diseases among employees. The health and lives of many people depend on the quality of disinfection measures carried out in the workplace.
- The requirement that people wear face masks that cover the nose and mouth (together with goggles and medical gloves) should be in place until the end of the pandemic, regardless of whether or not quarantine is in effect.
- When carrying out preventive disinfection measures in offices (after each customer), the surfaces which the applicant has touched must be disinfected. These include: door handles, chair backs, landline telephones and other common use devices.

- In addition, offices should be well ventilated.
- Work surfaces and keyboards should be treated with an antiseptic every three to four hours.
- A transparent screen between applicants and employees who receive applicants should also be installed.

### **WHAT SHOULD BE EXPECTED AT THE STAGE OF EXITING QUARANTINE:**

1. There will be a significant increase in the number of people applying for social and socially-related administrative services. The six-month period for receiving cash benefits expired for at least 30 percent of IDPs during quarantine. These people will claim benefits for the next period. There were changes in the circumstances of many families, which will either increase or decrease the amount of cash benefits they are entitled to (it is important to remember that only 20 percent of overpaid amounts will be recovered).

#### **Possible ways to resolve these issues:**

- temporarily increasing the number of vacancies and workers that provide social and administrative services;
- temporarily extending office visiting hours;
- informing the population, in due time (in the media, social networks, on the official websites of government authorities and on information stands) about the procedures that have changed as a result of quarantine, as well as new services and rules for obtaining them;
- introducing, where it has not yet been introduced, the possibility of making appointments (electronic queueing, possibly even via the Viber messaging service);
- extending the time allocated for the reception of each applicant to between 40 minutes
- and one hour (as in most cases applicants will have more than one question to ask);
- introducing working Saturdays for the reception of only able-bodied persons, provided that the workers who service such persons get extra payment.

2. The automatic extension of social assistance payments and, in particular, targeted assistance to IDPs, has resulted in some people receiving assistance to which they were not entitled.

**Possible ways to resolve these issues:**

- conducting an information campaign to inform the public of the need to return overpaid amounts of cash benefits, and the mechanisms for returning such amounts;
- sending letters to the persons who received more cash benefits than they were entitled to, requiring them to return the overpaid amounts to the budget, and informing them of the possibility of returning these amounts in instalments.

A large influx of people who need to have their identities verified, obtain new cards to replace expired ones, and so on, could strain the capacity of ordinary Oschadbank branches and cause a disease outbreak. Risks and possible pressures could be decreased through timely communications and the extension of positive measures.

## COMMUNICATING WITH SOCIAL BENEFIT RECIPIENTS DURING QUARANTINE AND AT THE STAGE OF EXITING QUARANTINE

Any crisis significantly increases the need for timely, complete and reliable information. A lack of quality information causes gossip and fake news, which could significantly complicate the work of officials and harm people's health. Under quarantine, some traditional communication channels have become ineffective, while the need for information has increased noticeably. At the stage of exiting quarantine, the need for timely communications will be even more urgent. In view of the above, it should now be assessed what communication channels are currently available and effective, and how they should be used more intensively.

While preparing this material, we analysed the websites of randomly selected Amalgamated Territorial Communities. Many of these websites lacked special sections on epidemic control measures and centralized information about changes in the provision of social and/or administrative services.

For example, the website of Kobleve amalgamated territorial community in Mykolaiv Oblast has no mention that quarantine has been imposed in Ukraine. The social protection section on that website was last updated in January and contains only one article about a meeting held by the social protection division. In the section on territorial centre activities, the latest article is dated 3 March and concerns public protection.

The Amalgamated Territorial Communities of Nova Praha in Oleksandria District of Kirovohrad Oblast and Hryshkivtsi in Berdychiv District of Zhytomyr Oblast also have no special sections on the quarantine or for social services.

A more positive example is Bila community in Ternopil District of Ternopil Oblast which has posted and pinned information about COVID-19 to the top of the community homepage. However, there is no social protection section.

Starovirivka community in Nova Vodolaha of Kharkiv Oblast posts information about the coronavirus in its news feed. But there is no up-to-date information in the social protection section as to how to obtain services during quarantine.

The number of amalgamated territorial community websites on which we found no information about the restrictions or new procedures in effect during quarantine was significantly larger than the number of websites on which this information was available.

### **Effectively overcoming of the crisis depends on three key factors:**

1. Coordinated policies for overcoming the crisis.
2. Using effective means of communication.
3. Designating responsible persons and clearly defining their duties.

In the context of exiting quarantine, the greatest risks could arise from there being an excessive workload on workers, and from these workers and/or recipients of social and administrative services being infected with the coronavirus. Uncontrolled queues, crowds in offices and non-compliance with anti-virus hygiene rules could cause new disease outbreaks. We have already discussed appropriate epidemic control measures above, so this section will focus on appropriate communications.

These risks could be greater or smaller, depending on the number of social service recipients and the structure of social service providers in Amalgamated Territorial Communities. In any case, they should be openly communicated to the public.

If you see that a situation is getting out of control and there is a risk of people getting infected, do not downplay the problem, and do not try to hide its seriousness. This will only make matters worse, and the media will soon discover the truth. Information about the number of applicants, whether or not there are queues, and the conditions for waiting for admission will enable applicants to adjust their plans and avoid excessive risk.

*Try to avoid situations that give rise to rumours. These include:*

- a lack of official information and reports from primary sources of information;
- incomplete reports from primary sources of information;
- increased demands and fears of the general public;
- incorrect information that gives rise to doubt;
- delaying decisions on serious issues;
- the feeling of being unable to influence one's own fate;
- major organizational problems.

*The following tools will help you fight rumours:*

- analysing the scale of rumours and their impact on the state of affairs;
- analysing the sources and motives of people who spread rumours;
- if rumours are being spread by the media or legal entities, one should send them an official request that they retract the incorrect information;
- immediately providing complete and reliable information about the object of the rumours through all available communication channels;
- if rumours have considerable social repercussions or could harm people's lives or health, one should call a meeting with key figures, informal leaders, opinion leaders, and so on.

Unfortunately, rumours tend to spread very quickly, especially on social media. It is rather difficult to stop this process, as positive news is reposted significantly less on social media. It is much more effective to act proactively, by posting up-to-date and complete information about the social relations that call for special attention.

**One should:**

1. Update and publish a map of social services.
2. Publish and make publicly available application and request forms, as well as information about the possibility of applying for or requesting a service online.
3. If a decision is made about special working arrangements, it should be published and distributed among potential customers.
4. Make public information about the possibility of making appointments.

Once the quarantine is lifted, recipients of social and administrative services will have at least 30 days, or more in some cases, to apply for and receive services. For example, Oschadbank has suspended its identity verification procedure until after the quarantine is lifted. Persons are also granted additional 30 days once the quarantine is over. This means that if a person had 30 days left to have their identity verified when the quarantine was imposed, they would have 59 days for identity verification once the quarantine is over.

This information needs to be intensively communicated to applicants, so as to distribute office visiting hours more evenly.



**Thank you for your attention!**  
**Here are some questions to reflect on:**

1. What do you think is the most vulnerable category of the population in your populated area?
2. Can social services be made more accessible to that category?
3. How has the number of social service recipients in your populated area changed since quarantine was imposed?
4. Will the workload of social workers increase, and if yes, by how much?
5. Can your populated area comply with WHO recommendations for receiving applicants, in particular the recommendation that there are 15 square meters of space per person in an office?
6. What information will be in the greatest demand when quarantine is over?
7. What forms and instructions should be distributed among social assistance recipients?
8. What other communication channels can be used to improve communications?