



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
FSM National Government
Capitol Street, P.O. Box PS 70
Palikir, Pohnpei 96941
Federated States of Micronesia
Tel: (692) 320-2619/2872/2643. E-mail: health@fsmhealth.fm. Fax: (691) 320-5263

Office of the Secretary

June 15, 2022

Mrs. Norleen O. DeOrio
Chair
Pohnpei Pandemic Readiness and Response Commission
P.O. Box 189
Kolonia, Pohnpei FM 96941

Subject: Medical Advisory Committee Recommendation of June 10th

Dear Chair DeOrio:

I would like to thank you for sharing the Pohnpei Medical Advisory Committee's (MAC) recommendations dated June 10th as the basis of Pohnpei State's request to delay the June 11th repatriation flight. Our National Medical Team has carefully reviewed your MAC's recommendations and would like to offer the comments below to help guide future repatriations, reopening of our borders by August 01, 2022 and normalizing travel and entry of people in FSM.

Pohnpei MAC's Recommendations:

- (1) Due to the reduction of number of quarantine days in Guam from 5 to 3 days, MAC recommended number of quarantine days in Pohnpei to increase from 5 to 7 days to maintain total of 10 days of quarantine recommended by CDC and considering that the 5 days quarantine in Guam is not as effective, given the active cases in MMA.
- (2) Due to the remaining active cases in MMA, MAC recommended additional time (2 days) for quarantine staff to properly disinfect and prepare MMA.

In response to MAC's recommendation #1, our National Medical Team could not identify any medical science that justified increasing the quarantine days from 5 to 7 days. Per the latest updated CDC Quarantine and Isolation Guidelines of January 4, 2022, the recommendation for quarantine had been reduced from 10 to 5 days. It also stated that if a person is fully vaccinated, he/she should not be quarantined. This CDC recommendation is the basis for FSM's decision to gradually decrease pre- and post-quarantine days in both Guam and FSM, and to eventually phase out all quarantine requirements for entry in FSM by August 1, 2022 so we can reopen our borders. Unless a person is tested positive in quarantine, he/she should be isolated and isolation days should be reset to at least 5 days from the day tested positive and need not be tested again. So, per CDC's latest recommendations (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html#quarantine>), we advise that you keep your post-quarantine at 5 days.

As of today, we have achieved 71% nation-wide full vaccination coverage of our eligible population (5 years and older) and at least 98% for our most vulnerable group (44 years and

older). A variety of therapeutics are now available to treat active cases to help prevent development of severe illness and hospitalization. Finally, planning and setting-up of *Test & Treat Centers/Sites* are underway in all 4 States as part of our final preparations for reopening of our borders and response to local transmission of COVID-19.

In response to MAC's recommendation #2, based on information that were made available to us and our National Medical Team's risk assessment of the remaining 2 positive cases in MMA, we concluded that they posed less risk to anyone, for the following reasons:

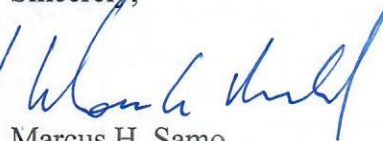
- The 2 cases were well isolated and confined in their room in MMA;
- The risk during initial testing was higher than after being isolated for more than 5 days;
- Their CT values for the 2 cases were in the mid 30s, which are indicative of less infectiousness and on the path to full recovery; and,
- The 2 cases may have been treated with antivirals and monoclonal antibodies (therapeutics);

Our National Medical Team's conclusion is as long as the positive cases were strictly confined to their assigned room, it is safe for the quarantine and health department staff to enter MMA and clean the other rooms that were used by the already released repatriated individuals. They would only need the minimal PPEs (masks and gloves) and physical distancing from the room in which the positive cases are isolated. If a new group were to be quarantined in the facility, there would be no increased risk if masking, physical distancing and strict room isolation protocols are strictly adhered to as demonstrated by the quarantine and security staff during the last repatriation. With regards to length of time needed to prepare our quarantine facilities, the clean-up of MMA on Sunday June 12th took 1 day. So, it is clear that MMA can in fact be cleaned up and prepared for repatriation in at least one day.

Based on the latest science from CDC, assessment of our National Medical Team and the logistical costs associated with delaying the flight, I am of the opinion that it is best to proceed with the repatriation flight as scheduled. I encourage our medical teams to continue to collaborate to provide sound medical advice to our Taskforces.

Let us continue to work diligently to prepare our communities towards the reopening of our borders in August.

Sincerely,



Marcus H. Samo
Secretary

FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs