



Reykjavík, 20 March 2020

Re: Children and the ban on gatherings

Schools, pre-schools, and athletic organisations have carefully organised their schedules for the days and weeks to come in order to comply with the Minister of Health and Social Security's instructions restricting school activities and gatherings.

It is extremely important that children's parents and guardians **simultaneously reduce the number of people in their children's contact network** outside of school in order to avoid working against these measures. It is helpful to bear the following in mind:

- Schoolmates who are not in the same group in school (the same class) **should not interact closely outside of school**.
- If the children are mature enough to obey instructions on reduced contact with friends, it is possible to permit them to play together. If they do so, they must not engage in any play that involves touching one another physically, or sharing toys or equipment that they touch with their bare hands.
- Children and young people should always **wash their hands thoroughly**, both before they meet their friends and after they come home.
- Families should bear in mind that if children interact frequently with friends or relatives from other schools or school groups, there will be contact between groups that would otherwise remain separate. **Such contact should be avoided** as much as possible.
- Families are encouraged to **use technology** to maintain good contact with loved ones who are at increased risk of catching COVID-19 — particularly elderly people and those with underlying illnesses.
- This is also a good opportunity to teach children to write letters, which will help them to practise handwriting and spelling, use their imagination, and think in “problem-solving mode” about interactions with loved ones.

Concerning households where some members are in quarantine and others are not:

- Children who have the maturity and capacity to take care of their own hygiene and keep the required distance from quarantined parents and from their schoolmates may continue to attend school. It is very important to observe proper hygiene; for instance, to use bathroom facilities.
- Parents of older children who are in quarantine and can maintain the required distance from children during their quarantine may continue to go to work if remote working is not an option.

- The entire household must quarantine itself if the children do not have the maturity or capacity to follow the instructions that apply to quarantine measures. Another solution in such cases would be for the household members who are not in quarantine to move elsewhere during the quarantine period.