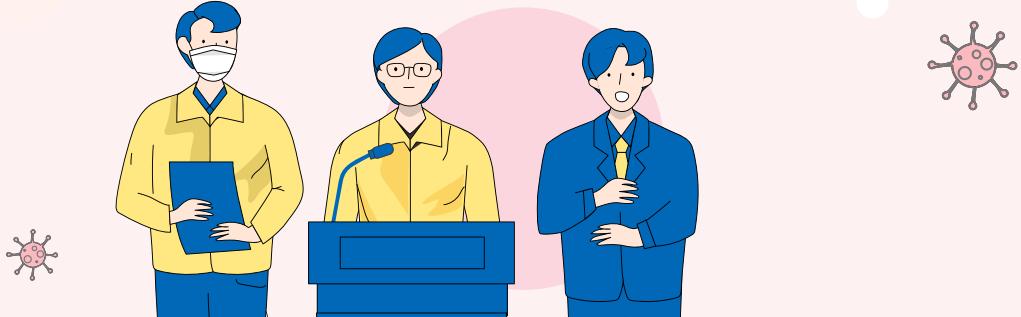


Measures in Response to COVID-19 by Korean Local Governments



The spread of COVID-19 has taught many lessons – the stark fact that without preparedness in various sectors including economic policies as well as healthcare, our usual daily life can be hindered or collapse at any time.

After the first case of the COVID-19 happened in Korea on January 20th, the spread of the coronavirus was relatively well managed for about a month. However, with the 31st case, identified on February 18th in Daegu Metropolitan City, and massive infection spikes in the Shincheonji Church in Daegu and the Daenam Hospital in Cheongdo, the number of cases began to spiral sharply higher. The government has since beefed up testing capacity and established aggressive preventive measures against the pandemic, and now the number of new infections has fallen to about 10 per day, with the total number of patients under treatment declining. Thus, Korea is assessed as having entered the stability phase of the coronavirus.

Measures taken by the Korean government against COVID-19 can be divided into six categories, and we will examine the kinds of responses taken against various epidemics including COVID-19.

01 Election Conducted Amid Measures to Control the Spread of COVID-19, Setting a New Paradigm.

With the spread of the coronavirus, the longstanding traditions and methods of holding an election had to change. In particular, the parliamentary elections on April 15th, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the way South Korea would handle the logistical challenges of holding a national election drew keen interest around the world. The election was held without a subsequent spread of the infection, setting a precedent for future elections, ensuring the public can cast votes in a safe and controlled environment.

During the election, citizens visited polling stations while wearing masks, with ID cards, and cast ballots observing safety rules and procedures. Before entering polling stations, the staff measured their temperature. People with a fever or respiratory symptoms cast ballots at separate makeshift polling locations and left personal contact information at the station. Voters were required to sanitize their hands, wear plastic gloves, and keep a distance of 1 meter between them. Polling station staff regularly disinfected spaces, ballot tools and polling booths to control the spread of the virus.

People in self-quarantine were allowed out to participate in the election. Those in self-quarantine who wished to cast ballots and without a fever or respiratory symptoms on the election day could participate, observing a set of procedures for going out and voting. Once a person in self-quarantine cast a ballot, the entire polling station was immediately disinfected to prevent any infection.

02 Goyang City is Response to the Coronavirus

Goyang City, Gyeonggi-do introduced the first drive-through COVID-19 screening centers in Korea and video conferencing between the COVID-19 screening centers and the community healthcare center. This method helped avoid unnecessary contacts among people waiting in line while protecting the medical staff and reducing inconvenience.

The drive-through COVID-19 screening center enabled staff to need only ten minutes to do interviews, measure temperature, and collect specimens from the nose and mouth of visitors that remained seated inside their cars. Using pre-existing methods, it took 30 minutes to one hour to screen only one person. Thanks to the advantages of reducing time and avoiding additional possible infections, the drive-through stations began to spread to other locals nationwide.

Videoconferencing examination using tablet PCs is a method of examination that allows people at home to talk with a doctor through videoconferencing, take their temperature by themselves, answer diagnostic questions, and be moved to a hospital via ambulance (to three community health centers if an infection is suspected.) In addition, at the three community health centers, patients with symptoms are guided to COVID-19 screening centers, which are detached from the community health centers, where they undergo diagnosis through videoconferencing with doctors. This helped minimize the amount of movement of patients and promoted speedy treatment.

03 Clean Zone and Walk-through Testing Stations at Jeju International Airport

People are nervous about going out due to the spread of the coronavirus. To address such concerns, Clean Zones were designated. There are two types of Clean Zones: places that are disinfected after being visited by people with confirmed cases of the coronavirus, and public use facilities that are regularly sanitized voluntarily.

Jeju Provincial Government decided to run the walk-through testing stations of Jeju International Airport after confirmed cases who visited overseas were detected, in order to ensure speedy collection of samples and halt the spread of the coronavirus on the island. The walk-through testing centers at the airport were installed in the parking lots of the airport and began to operate on March 30, 2020, with 18 staff members on a rotating basis and the Jeju National Quarantine Station acting as the screening institution.



04 Disaster-related Basic Income Support to Help Households That Were Financially Crippled by the Coronavirus

Many local governments in Korea have implemented an anti-disaster living expense support measures to relieve the pain of people who are experiencing economic difficulty due to the spread of the coronavirus. Jeonju City was the first local government to introduce 'Jeonju-type Disaster-related Basic Income.' Let us look at how local governments in Korea are using the disaster-related income system to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

The Jeonju-type basic income is to provide non-universal basic living expense support to citizens aged 15 and older as of March 1, 2020, with an address in Jeonju City. Citizens are required to file applications with a copy of resident registration, a health insurance payment certificate, and a health insurance status confirmation.

The disaster basic income support is expected to produce a “multiplier effect” of reinvigorating depressed local economies hit hard by the coronavirus. As the basic income is paid out in the form of a local card or local currency, it will generate a positive effect on the local economy.

05 Review of Measures to Support Small Businesses and SMEs by Cities and Provinces amid COVID-19

To provide support for small businesses and small and medium enterprises that were hit by the coronavirus crisis, the national government and city and provincial governments announced various supportive measures. Let us look at the types of support developed by each region to help them overcome economic difficulties caused by the COVID-19.

06 Support for Young Business People and Workers at Risk in Blind Spots

The national government and local governments are establishing policies to assist young business people and workers engaged in special types of jobs, freelancers, and arts and cultural professionals.

Seoul Metropolitan City is helping youths who have lost jobs due to the coronavirus with emergency allowances. Fast-track support programs were invented through public subscription and offered to young freelancers to help them continue to run activities and overcome the economic crisis.

As people are avoiding personal contact to avoid the chance of infection, employees in special positions such as teachers of home-study materials or tourism businesses were particularly hit hard. As such, additional measures to help these workers and others in special types of jobs are being prepared.

Arts and cultural professionals were also among those hit hard. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, performing arts communities are experiencing unprecedented challenges. To help them, Seoul Metropolitan Government arranged the production of on-line performances and covered the costs of broadcasting online, while Gwangju Metropolitan City Government is assisting arts and cultural performers by running the “YouTube Home Arts Theater.”