

# CONFERENCE

# The Challenges that COVID-19 Brings to Health Systems

Document for the dissertation in the Webinar "The Challenges that COVID-19 Brings to Health Systems" by the Ombudsman of the Province of Santa Fe, member of the Board of Directors of the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen (IFO) and Director for the Caribbean and Latin American Region of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), Raúl Lamberto, held on May 22, 2020 and organized by FIO and the Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the American Continent (NNIPPHR).

Friday May 22, 2020



## INTRODUCTION.

### **Argentina. Geography and General Social and Economic Data.**

Argentina is located in the Southern Hemisphere, in the American continent, with a surface area of 3.8 million km<sup>2</sup> stretching along 3,800 km from 22° to 55° south latitude. It borders with Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. It is a federal country subdivided into twenty-three provinces and one autonomous city, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, which is the federal capital of the country.

The provinces enact their own Constitutions and assume all the functions not entrusted to the federal government.

Based on the 2010 Census, more than 40 million people live in the country<sup>1</sup>; mostly in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Cordoba and Santa Fe.

Following information from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC)<sup>2</sup>, in April 2020, the monthly cost variation for the basic food basket (CBA<sup>3</sup>) was 3.1% (compared to its cost in March) while the variation for the total basic basket (CBT) was 1.4%.

The Basic Food Basket (CBA) definition is based on two criteria:

- a) *Energy requirements*: the cost of the basket should be affordable so that people can buy the food they need to meet their energy requirements, based on age, sex and physical activity. This cost is expressed in kilocalories (kcal).
- b) *Nutritional balance*: The CBA should satisfy a nutritional balance and guarantee an adequate quality diet, taking into account the type of nutrients that contribute the needed kcal coming from proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

The recommendations issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are the basis for the two criteria mentioned above.

Globally, CBAs are updated every time new information on consumption patterns arise. In Argentina, CBA is updated every time the National Survey of Household Expenditures (ENGHo) are conducted. The current measurement system dates back to 2016. It uses

1. Source: Indec. <https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Nivel3-Tema-2-41>

2. Website: [www.indec.gob.ar](http://www.indec.gob.ar)

3. All acronyms other than official English acronyms are in Spanish.



a specific basic food basket per region (Cuyo, Gran Buenos Aires, Noreste, Noroeste, Pampeana, and Patagonia), and is based on the 1996/1997 ENGHo. The processing of the 2017 and 2018 ENGHo is at its final steps. INDEC will update the baskets once the process is complete.

This Ombudsman Office has jurisdiction over the province of Santa Fe, one of the three most important provinces in the country. INDEC's last population estimate for our province, based on the components method, calculated 3,509,113 million people<sup>4</sup>.

**Access to Health. Report published in the book *"Progresos y Desafíos de los Derechos en la Provincia de Santa Fe"* (Rights Progress and Challenges in the Province of Santa Fe)**

By late 2019, this Ombudsman Office presented *"Progresos y Desafíos de los Derechos en la Provincia de Santa Fe."* The book details the progress made in the development of rights from 2010 to 2019, in the context of an agreement signed between the Ombudsman Office and the National University of Rosario. A team of academic experts and researchers took part in the writing of the book.

The object of analysis of the book mentioned above is the evaluation of economic, social and cultural rights giving consideration to the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights (Protocol of San Salvador), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) included in the 2030 Agenda and the Belem do Para Convention.

Human rights are *"... rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible..."*<sup>5</sup>. They are the rights of every individual in society and against their own governments. Progressiveness is a human rights characteristic contemplated in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and provided for in Article 26 of the Pact of San José. States should work for the progressive development of these rights without losing sight of the fact that it involves no digressiveness, equality and no discrimination.

The book addresses the Right to Health that *"...has progressiveness traits supported by a wide legal framework where the State is the main guarantor. Legislation addresses mental health, the*

4. Source: <http://www.estadisticasantafe.gob.ar/contenido/proyeccion-y-estimacion-de-la-poblacion/>

5. Definition of the United Nations High Commissioner. Source: <https://www.ohchr.org/sp/issues/pages/whatarehumanrights.aspx>



*comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, disability, sexual and reproductive rights, protection of personal information, consents to accept or reject treatments, etc. Guaranteeing access to health and to proper health care is a characteristic of the system that features universal, equal and non-discriminatory access to all individuals in Santa Fe, a health network across the territory based on primary health care and legal instances that provide protection and safeguards ...<sup>6</sup>. We may add that "... The enactment of specific legislation at national and provincial level consolidates a sound legal basis to regulate and implement health policies while, at the same time, fosters access to the right of health making substantial progress in terms of protecting the most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged. In the province of Santa Fe, the passing of a law on the right to health as a whole is pending. As of June 2019, a Health Law (Draft) is being treated. The Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of the legislature) gave its approval in November 2018. This law aims at guaranteeing the right to health while respecting the principles of universal access, integrity, equity, accessibility and participation..."*

It is quite a challenge to discuss the right to health during a pandemic. Following the Protocol of San Salvador: *"Everyone shall have the right to health, understood as the enjoyment of the highest level of physical, mental and social well-being. In order to ensure the exercise of the right to health, the States parties agree to recognize health as a public good and, particularly, to adopt the following measures to ensure that right: primary health care; extension of the benefits to all individuals under the State's jurisdiction; immunization against diseases; prevention, treatment, and education of the population as well as the satisfaction of the health needs of those in the highest risk groups for being the most vulnerable as a result of their poverty."*

### **Access to the Right to Health in Argentina. Bodies. Subsystems.**

The World Health Organization defines the right to health as "a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Furthermore, the WHO definition of a health system is that it consists of all organizations, people and actions whose primary intent is to promote health (World Health Organization, 2015).

We have seen the many difficulties faced by health systems in different countries to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. It is appropriate to remember that Tedros Adhanom, Director-General of the World Health Organization, declared that the coronavirus outbreak originated in China is "a global public health emergency of international importance" and

6. "Progresos y desafíos de los Derechos en la Provincia de Santa Fe" is available at: <https://www.defensoriasantafe.gob.ar/publicaciones/progresos-y-desafios-de-los-derechos-en-la-provincia-de-santa-fe>



that the biggest concern is *“the possibility that this virus spreads to countries with the weakest health systems.”*<sup>7</sup>

A country's health infrastructure is, among other factors, essential when it comes to facing the epidemiological crisis. In Argentina, law 27541 on social solidarity and economic reactivation declared the emergency in different fields, including <sup>8</sup>health, and delegated certain functions provided for in the law to the Executive. Those functions are based on the need to *“... supply essential medicines for outpatient treatments for the highly vulnerable, provide access to medicines and essential inputs for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases and chronic, non-communicable diseases; look after the effective enforcement of law 27491 on the control of preventable diseases through vaccination and ensure access to essential health services for the beneficiaries of the National Institute of Social Services for Retirees and Pensioners and of the National Health Insurance System ...”*. Title X (sections 61 to 85 specifically refer to the health emergency declared in Article 1°).

As to health coverage, access to the right to social security, a system that in Argentina is basically organized, though not exclusively, on people's employment, must be considered. The National Social Security Administration (ANSES) is a decentralized body in charge of managing the social security system.

Furthermore, the coordination and articulation of policies at national level rely on the Federal Health Council (COFESA), created in 1981 by National Law 22373/1981. COFESA is an institutional space where subnational governments can express their defence of public health when there are cutbacks in resources, structures and hierarchies.

It is important to highlight two distinctive characteristics of the Argentinean system: 1) the public sector provides the services that all inhabitants are entitled to, irrespective of having another type of coverage or not and 2) the National Institute of Social Services for Retirees and Pensioners (INSSJP) also known as the Comprehensive Medical Attention Programme (PAMI) and managed by the National State, serves retirees, pensioners and their families (United Nations Development Programme, 2011).

In Argentina, from 1880 to 1943, the provision of health services was fostered by a community dimension expressed in hospitals, neighbourhood clinics, community centres and mutual organizations while a public and private offer based on hygienist and sanitariat principles also developed. There were no direct definitions on the part of the National State in matters of health, that, unlike education, was not part of political demands. The National

7. Published by BBD on 31 January, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-51318222>

8. Law 27541, <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/330000-334999/333564/norma.htm>



Constitution did not state any responsibility of the country's different jurisdictions vis-a-vis health, a weak and ambiguous setting that led to the creation of an heterogeneous system along the 20th Century.<sup>9</sup>

The complex evolution of the health system led to three sub sectors: A public, a social security and a private sector that feature a high level of fragmentation and disintegration.

The public sub sector includes the national, provincial and municipal jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction issues their own regulations that apply to hospitals, health care centres, clinics, etc.

We should not overlook the fact that the *universal* right to health can be better guaranteed when public health is managed in a collaborative and coordinated manner by the different levels of government, in a network system.

As mentioned in the first paragraphs, Argentina is a federal country subdivided into autonomous provinces that assume all the functions not entrusted to the federal government. Consequently, the provinces should develop and guarantee the rights to health, education, security and justice. That is why the provinces are responsible for their health plans, except in federal territories that are Federal responsibility.

### **Access to Health in the province of Santa Fe**

According to "Progresos y Desafíos...", in Santa Fe "... life expectancy for 2040 is 78.0 years for men and 84.0 years for women. Life expectancy by type of coverage and age group shows that in the period under analysis in the province of Santa Fe, persons aged 60.0 years old and above have 90% social security coverage. This is probably because most individuals aged 60.0 and 65.0 have had access to retirement or pension benefits and therefore, their health coverage is provided by the National Institute of Social Services for Retirees and Pensioners through its Comprehensive Medical Attention Programme (INSSJyP) for all SIPA contributors and by the Autarchic Provincial Institute of Social Security (IAPOS) for those who contribute to the provincial system (provincial public employees), among other people. Meanwhile, individuals between the age of 31.0 and 60.0 show a 62% and 70% that enjoy of social coverage, 1 to 7 percentage points up from 2010 to 2018 in Metropolitan Rosario and Metropolitan Santa Fe, respectively..."<sup>10</sup>.

Since 2008, health care in the province of Santa Fe is based on a public management model in a network with a focus on primary health care. This model translates into the strategic need to ensure universal access to all inhabitants in the province by bringing the State

9. Publication <https://www.defensoriasantafe.gob.ar/publicaciones/progresos-y-desafios-de-los-de-rechos-en-la-provincia-de-santa-fe>

10. Article referred to in the previous footnote, pp. 539, 540.



close to the territory. Based on such concept, the provincial administration developed a management model for an integrated network of services that is highly decentralized and provides primary health care.

The *integrated public network of health care services* includes health facilities managed by provincial and municipal governments. To ensure universal access and full coverage, there are three levels of health facilities based on their complexity.

The first level includes outpatient health care centres, that is facilities located throughout the province, close to the population. The second level includes hospitals and the System for the Medical Care of the Community (SAMCOS), low and mid-complexity facilities that provide care and diagnosis. The third level includes regional high-complexity hospitals with the adequate medical and technological means and serving a pre-defined territory.

The Integrated Medical Response System (SIES) articulates and guarantees the operation of the three levels. It has ambulances, medical transport vehicles, and an Operations Management Centre.

As mentioned before and as made evident worldwide, sound and quality health care infrastructures strongly entrenched in the community are a high value asset when it comes to fighting the pandemic. Public health must be part of public policies and be allocated true qualitative and quantitative investments to allow the development of health systems that can ensure universal access to this fundamental right.

The Santa Fe Ombudsman Office handles claims related to deficient service provision on the part of public health care facilities and problems linked to the Autarchic Provincial Institute of Social Security (IAPOS) and other medical plans. The Office has an area that works exclusively on the violation of the rights of the disabled.

### **Santa Fe Health System**

In this pandemic of coronavirus, the decided advantages of a health system that is embedded in public policies strongly supported by the State are evident.

Essentially, such policies build trust in the community that is the regular user of the public health system, and prove to be responsive in daily situations and in emergencies, as the one we are living.

Trust in the operators, articulators and leaders of the public health system translates into concrete and proven benefits when it comes to preventing the spread of the pandemic.



When the public health system presence in the territory is real and tangible and when it is operated by people known to neighbours, prevention and containment is easier.

Large high-complexity hospitals and several health centres have been built in recent years. The provincial Pharmaceutical Industrial Laboratory (LIF S.E.)<sup>11</sup> produces and provides pharmaceutical products and health services with the goal of improving the population's quality of life, with guaranty of quality and efficiency, contributing to greater accessibility.

In summary, investments are made in health policies; 25% of the budget in the city of Rosario is allocated to health. We can say that the provincial public policies clearly include the right to health and guarantee access to health services.

As shown in the report published by the National University of Rosario *"Progresos y Desafíos de los Derechos en la Provincia de Santa Fe"*, the different subsystems provide health coverage to the entire population of the province: social security (46.8%), public sector (33.3%), and private sector (19.9%).

Furthermore, *"... Public health facilities are distributed across all the provincial departments: 790 provincial and municipal facilities, 83.8% of which are primary care centres. Every individual who lives in the province is entitled to the services provided in these facilities. 75.2% are provincial facilities and 22.2% are municipal. The rest are part of the federal penitentiary service, the Armed Forces, the law enforcement forces, and the national public university system ..."*<sup>12</sup>.

The 790 public health facilities are distributed up and down the length and breadth of the province, with presence in 19 departments though more concentrated in the departments of Rosario (20.6%) and La Capital (13.9%) where the majority of the population resides. Five regions were benefited with high-complexity hospitals and the provincial capital received the Centre of Ambulatory Medical Specialties (CEMAFE).

It is a 12,000 sq. m. building that has changed the outpatient attention paradigm. Every resident can go to the closest health centre and request an appointment to receive medical specialty services at CEMAFE. Therefore, seeing a specialist is easy and fast. CEMAFE serves the centre and northern region of the province. Physicians see 22 000 patients and perform an equal number of practices every month. Next year, CEMAFE is expected to double its capacity.

There are three outpatient operating rooms, two endoscopy rooms, sixteen temporary

11. LIF S.E. website: <http://www.lif-santafe.com.ar/home.html>

12. Op. cit. Pp.539.



admittance beds for pre and post-surgery purposes, two conventional X-ray systems, one OPG X-ray equipment for panoramic views of the jaw and teeth, a cutting-edge laboratory with a system that is unique in the country, eight stations for chemotherapy, forty-two outpatient offices, a pharmacy, a rehabilitation gym, four stations for physical therapy, one auditorium, one reading room, and a cafeteria. Ambulances and technical minivans circulate through internal streets to facilitate the easy flow of referred patients. CEMAFE concentrates the outpatient offices that used to be in hospitals that now have new spaces to receive patients referred from primary care centres.

CEMAFE is the second centre of its kind in the province. Together with CEMAR, located in Rosario, they are part of the network health strategy implemented by the Progressive, Civic and Social Front to ensure access to public health.

The density of physicians, that is the total number per 1000 population, in 2014 was 50.35. There are many medical schools in private and public universities in the province, for instance, the National University of Rosario (UNR), the National University of the Littoral (UNL) in the two largest cities, that is Rosario and Santa Fe.

### **Basic Infrastructure and COVID-19.**

Access to safe drinking water, sanitation and adequate hygiene is essential for the good health, survival, growth and development of all human beings. Access to safe drinking water is indispensable to ensure an adequate quality of life and is associated to better health.

The province of Santa Fe started implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)<sup>13</sup> in 2008 after signing the International Cooperation Framework Agreement with the United Nations System (SNU). The purpose was having technical assistance and mutual collaboration, and working together to meet the goals while generating meaningful information to address poverty and therefore strengthen provincial policies on inclusion, health, housing, and employment rights for the entire population.

For many years now, Santa Fe has been developing and expanding power, drinking water and gas resources to advance its economy. In 2016, the province created ENERFE SAPEM, a company where the provincial state retains majority holding and which purpose is increasing renewable energies generation and gas production. Aguas Santafesinas S.A. (ASSA) is a public utility that supplies the community with drinking water and sewerage. ASSA also manages the water supply systems already in operation.

13. See more information at: [https://www.odsargentina.gob.ar/public/documentos-/seccion\\_provincias/santa\\_fe/documentos/informe\\_ods\\_santa\\_fe.pdf](https://www.odsargentina.gob.ar/public/documentos-/seccion_provincias/santa_fe/documentos/informe_ods_santa_fe.pdf)



Simultaneously, a programme has been implemented to improve water and sanitation services in less developed areas in the short and mid-term. The goal is to upgrade the current facilities, build new water treatment plants, expand the distribution networks and enhance water distribution networks with water carrying trucks and containers at critical periods.

Since 2006 , the public utility -Aguas Santafesinas- supplies fifteen cities and towns with drinking water and sewerage. ASSA also manages the water supply systems already in operation.

Up until 2008, the remaining 40%, that is 347 communities did not have a guaranteed quality service. That is why the Santa Fe Government made the strategic decision to develop and execute an inter-tied network of twelve water supply systems. The design horizon is thirty years. This inter-tied system is a public policy aimed at guaranteeing access to quality drinking water across the territory of Santa Fe.

It was recently published in the press that<sup>14</sup> *“... The coronavirus containment attained in the largest city of Santa Fe can be a useful example for other cities. Planning public health, urban design and public policies that go beyond the administrations...”,* and, as Eng. Miguel Lifschitz, former provincial governor said *“...one of the main reasons for the current health situation in the city results from “a high quality health system with universal access, efficient, that can provide health services to every citizen for free, and high complexity health services to patients at risk, that is close to the people, that provides primary care, that no citizen, even the poorest of the poor should walk more than ten blocks to find a **health centre**, that has a direct, daily, and ordinary link with the community...”*.

This health system design is not new; it dates back many years when a pandemic like this one was not even imaginable. Ever since Dr. Hermes Binner was appointed as Municipal Health Secretary in 1989, to later become City Mayor in 1995, the current health system started to take shape, a public, integrated, and comprehensive system with reach in the neighbourhoods, respecting different social and cultural characteristics.

The success of the health system in the province of Santa Fe and especially in the city of Rosario is based on the continuous development of properly planned urbanization policies centred on a comprehensive city perspective.

*“... In Rosario, two different living conditions coexist, affluent neighbourhoods and marginal districts where the provision of essential services is inefficient, as in every other big city in the*

14. Full note published in Diario Perfil available at: [https://www.perfil.com/amp/noticias/opinion/roderick-mac-lean-pandemia-rosario-no-es-un-milagro.phtml?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://www.perfil.com/amp/noticias/opinion/roderick-mac-lean-pandemia-rosario-no-es-un-milagro.phtml?__twitter_impression=true)



country. A substantial difference with Buenos Aires poor neighbourhoods such as Villa 31 in Retiro, Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), Villa 1 11 14, and so many other shanty towns that burgeon in Greater Buenos Aires (AMBA) is the lowest density by square meter and the absence of high buildings that add to the expansion of the most deprived districts in AMBA. 222 tests were made in vulnerable districts on people with symptoms compatible with COVID-19. All the tests were negative, a big difference with the current situation in CABA and the province of Buenos Aires..."<sup>15</sup>.

### **Comprehensive Intervention Programmes. The Experience of Plan Abre.**

Governments should look at the infrastructures that improve the quality of life of families, mainly in low-income and deprived neighbourhoods; strategic works for habitat improvement, better facilities, sanitation and access to sunlight," and safe water. Plan Abre is a clear example. It is an overarching strategy that approaches the territory with the focus on the people living there, their needs and rights, and aimed at transforming inequalities<sup>16</sup>. It is structured around three core working axis: combining projects, programmes and actions.

- Infrastructure and Habitat
- Coexistence and Participation
- *Abre Familia*

This plan focuses on infrastructure and habitat. Projects aim at providing better accessibility, connecting deprived districts to the urban mesh, recovering and rehabilitating strategic public spaces, and the buildings that house social organizations and institutions. The plan strives to guarantee access to adequate public goods including sewage, tap water, paved streets, street lighting, etc.

*Plan Abre* also addresses health care in the province of Santa Fe that is based on a public management model in a network with a focus on primary health care.

### **Measures taken by the Argentine Government in the context of COVID-19 pandemic**

Since early March this year, the National Government started working to face the COVID-19 pandemic.

Account needs to be taken that Law 27541 on social solidarity and economic reactivation had declared a nationwide public<sup>17</sup> and sanitary emergency before the pandemic outbreak.

15. Story published in Diario Perfil, referred in the previous footnote.

16. More information Plan Abre: [https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/content/download-251241/1319911/file/Libro\\_PlanAbre20181.pdf](https://www.santafe.gov.ar/index.php/web/content/download-251241/1319911/file/Libro_PlanAbre20181.pdf)

17. Full text of the law available at: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/ane-xos/330000-334999/333564/norma.htm>



Measures specifically related to the pandemic were ordered through Decrees of Necessity and Urgency (DNU) No. 260/20 and 297/20.

- **DNU 260/20:** It extended the public sanitary emergency established by Law 27541 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the WHO for one (1) year. The Ministry of Health is the enforcement authority.
- **DNU 297/20:** In the context of the extended sanitary emergency, this decree announced the preventive and compulsory social isolation to protect the health of the population. This measure started at 0000, March 20, 2020. The decree also established exceptions to the compulsory isolation and to the restrictions to non-essential travels for individuals that work in activities declared to be essential in this emergency. The exceptions were later on extended by subsequent decrees.

These measures aimed at protecting everyone's health, at flattening the curve of COVID-19 infections, strengthening of the health system, delaying the possible peak in infections and reducing the death toll. There has been a broad consensus and a strong support on the part of the citizens.

The following are the most relevant sanitary, social, and economic measures:

1. **14 March 2020. Restructuring of the academic calendar of all universities and higher education institutions in the country.**
2. **15 March 2020. Suspend face to face classes in all schools** (following an agreement with the provinces)
3. **16 March 2020. Leaves of absence and work from home for the public and private sector.**
4. **16 March 2020. Closure of borders.**
5. **17 March 2020. Strong social protection measures:** Increasing the allowances for school and community kitchens so that the most vulnerable would have their access to food guaranteed. The Tarjeta Alimentar, a card that provides welfare benefits, would be temporarily charged every week. A bonus for those who receive social plans and an extraordinary bonus for over nine million retirees, pensioners, and for those who receive the universal child allowance (AUH) and the maternity allowance. On the other hand, the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) extended the grace period of loan payments due in April and May.
6. **17 March 2020. Measures to protect production, employment and the supply system.**
7. **Maximum Prices Programme**, for thirty days and applicable to the basic



food basket and essential goods. This programme includes hypermarkets, supermarkets, retailers and wholesalers, as well as convenience stores, groceries and self-service stores. The programme was extended and is currently in force up to June 20. Renewal of the Ahora 12 instalment plan.

8. **18 March 2020. Setting up of the COVID-19 Unit:** With the participation of the National Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the CONICET, and the I+D+i Agency, this Unit is intended to coordinate the capacities and capabilities of the scientific and technological systems for the diagnosis and research on COVID-19.
9. **18 March 2020. Building of twelve modular emergency hospitals** to strengthen the health system, increase the number of beds to 840 and provide 24/7 attention.
10. **19 March 2020. Preventive and compulsory social isolation:** In a bid to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, the national government restricted the circulation in national roads and in the cities across the country. Citizens are only permitted to leave their homes to get food, medicines, toiletries and cleaning products.
11. **23 March 2020. Family Emergency Income:** Aimed at compensating the loss or serious decrease in income of people affected by the nationwide lockdown. A 10,000-peso allowance in April granted to the unemployed and informally employed (including those in domestic service), people in the informal economy, as well as to the single tax category taxpayer registered in tax categories "A", "B", and "social". Only one family member can receive the allowance that has to be requested to ANSES. This benefit was extended to May.
12. **24 March 2020. Suspend the closing of bank accounts:** the national government suspended the application of fines and the obligatory closing of insolvent bank accounts with bouncing cheques until April 30. **26 March 2020. Ban on commissions on ATM services.**
13. **24 March 2020. Temporary suspension of basic utilities shutoff for lack of payment** (including power, tap water, gas provision, land and mobile phone lines and the Internet, as well as cable TV).
14. **26 March 2020. Extend the closure of borders.** (This measure was thereafter extended)
15. **26 March 2020. Grant loans to medium-sized firms (MiPyMEs) to pay salaries**
16. **26 March 2020. One-off payment to the healthcare staff**
17. **28 March 2020. One-off payment to the security and defence personnel.**
18. **28 March 2020. Assistance to nationals in foreign countries:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship set up a specific programme intended to give assistance by guaranteeing accommodation, food, health care



and any other basic need to nationals or residents unable to cope with the situation by their own means.

- 19. 29 March 2020. Temporary freezing of rents and the suspension of all evictions.**
- 20. 31 March 2020. Ban on dismissals and suspensions for sixty days.** This measure was extended and is currently in force.
- 21. 1 April 2020. Emergency Labour and Production Assistance Program:** aimed at employers and employees. It decrees the postponement or reduction of the payment of employer contributions to the Social Security System and of the payment of non-remunerative allowances for public employees, a comprehensive system of unemployment benefits, and allowances through the Productive Recovery Program (REPRO) created by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.
- 22. 1 April 2020. Eliminating import tariffs on critical inputs.**
- 23. 7 April 2020. Health coverage for children born after February 20:** Children of Health Insurance Agents of Private Health Service Providers, born after February 20, 2020 who could not take the necessary steps to be granted their identity card (DNI), will have health coverage for up to 45 calendar days after the end of the preventive and compulsory social isolation, by showing proof of the birth.
- 24. 8 April 2020. Municipal coordination to monitor prices.**
- 25. 13 April 2020. COVID-19 was declared an occupational illness.** Therefore, Workmen's Compensation Insurers were ordered to immediately provide coverage to infected workers.
- 26. 25 April 2020. Bonus on the *Tarjeta Alimentar*.**
- 27. 5 May 2020. New formula to calculate power consumption in residential households.**
- 28. 18 May 2020. Freeze on phone land and mobile lines, the Internet and cable TV:** Information and communications technologies (ICT) were declared an essential activity. Any price increase on land and mobile lines, the Internet and cable TV was suspended until August 31.

The measures listed above are some of the many decreed by the National Government that were then adopted by the provinces. A more detailed report on the measures can be found in Annex I.

The preventive and compulsory social isolation made the country's *long-standing social inequalities* distinctly visible. Social disparity prevented many people from complying with the slogan #Stay at Home (*#QuedateEnCasa*). About 40% of the population lives in vulnerable conditions, mainly children and adolescents.



People showed a good response to the quarantine measures that are stricter than in other countries. So far, the results are acceptable but there is still concern for the areas where the number of COVID-19 infections has increased. Also, for the developments in the next days or weeks, since experts believe that the peak in infections has not yet been reached.

### **Current COVID-19 situation in the province of Santa Fe.**

The prevention strategies taken in coordination with different levels of governments, the public policies associated with health and adopted before the outbreak of the pandemic, the budget reinforcements and the existing health infrastructures put Santa Fe in a strong position to face the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no seriously ill COVID-19 patients in the intensive care units, which frees the system to cope with potential peaks in infections. Check!

In Rosario, the municipality articulated a proper intervention in care homes, with the development of an Immediate and Operating Response Protocol for COVID-19 suspected cases. The 189 care homes located in the city were geo-referenced and surveyed. More than 5,000 older people live in those homes.

The protocol listed two criteria that have been observed in other jurisdictions, that is:

- *Suspected case of a person living in the home:*
- *Suspected case of a person working in the home:* it is necessary to know whether symptoms start when the worker is in his/her home or at the care home.

Scenarios forecast and procedures:

*Phase 1:* Surveying of the care homes. It is important to determine accessibility, number of vehicles needed, and health coverage to define referrals.

*Phase 2:* The Emergency Operating Commands (COE) arrive at the home and distribute tasks within five minutes of their arrival. COE: Central: person in charge to contact the owner of the care home.

### **Actions taken by the Ombuds Offices in this coronavirus pandemic**

The Ombuds Offices of Argentina have participated in the vaccination campaigns, in claims for food delivery, in steps to get different social services and benefits, in claims against medical plans, claims related to rent prices, and have forwarded citizens' concerns to the competent public bodies. The Ombuds Offices have cooperated in the protection and fulfilment of the rights of all citizens.



The Offices have requested the swab testing of the health staff exposed to COVID-19 infected cases, the manufacturing of masks to be distributed for free, and have been involved in the management and transport of people stranded in houses other than their own.

The Ombudsmen have also become involved in claims against saving plans and housing loans (UVA), even though conflicts emerged before the outbreak of the pandemic.

This Ombudsman Office has used its own staff and vehicles to transport disabled people from four provinces to Santa Fe. Efforts were also made for the return of nationals stranded abroad. Furthermore, since the beginning of the preventive and compulsory social isolation, this Office has sent twenty-seven requests to national bodies and agencies, including:

- Requests to the Central Bank (*Banco Central de la República Argentina, BCRA*) asking for the postponement of credit card payment due dates; extension of mortgage payments (UVA); voicing concern for the long queues outside banks and demanding urgent measures; limit the use of ATMs; more measures to help small and mid-size companies (PyMES); over-the-counter payment of social benefits including the unemployment insurance.
- Requests to ANSES asking to streamline the steps to receive the family emergency income (IFE); to have alternative communication channels for inquiries; voicing our concern because citizens claimed they could not complete certain administrative steps that require beneficiaries or their proxies to be present when the UDAI offices are closed to the public; pointing out restrictions to cash and/or register with the IFE as well as other benefits.
- Requests to the Chief Cabinet Office relative to rent prices, UVA loans at the beginning of the lockdown; to include in the list of exceptions the return of disabled people stranded in houses other than their own when Decree 297/2020 was issued.
- Requests were also sent to the Ministry of the Interior, of Foreign Affairs, Agency for Disabilities, Bureau of Legal Entities, PAMI, Secretary of Commerce and other institutions including ADEBA, ABAPRA, Chambers of Real Estate Agents, banks, Chamber of Extra-banking Collections.

Finally, it is important to highlight the role that Ombudsman Offices have played in the defence of human rights progressiveness and non-digressiveness, particularly about:

- Abuses by law enforcement agents: "Fundamental rights cannot be suspended



even when a National Emergency is in force or a country admits exceptions to its obligations towards human rights” (IOI). This Office has received claims resulting from abusive controls of the compulsory social isolation, mainly in vulnerable districts. The Ombudsman Offices have been proactive, recommended and deterred the public forces to continue with the abusive controls.

- Virtual closing of towns, cities, and blocked roads led the Ombudsman Office of the province of Santa Fe to issue a declaration demanding the free circulation of people and things with the required authorization.
- A request to organize the payment of social benefits; six proposals for concrete measures sent to the BCRA; one of the proposals was accepted, that is payment based on the last number of people’s identification card.
- No violence or discrimination against health staff: The Ombudsman Offices of Argentina have recommended and suggested measures to accompany and support health workers who became unexpected targets of controversies, debates and rejections for being considered a threat because of their proximity to infected patients.

### **Isolation and Mental Health**

The WHO defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.

Experts have pointed out that selective quarantine and compulsory isolation may cause anxieties, anger and distress in anyone, anywhere.

### **Isolation and Pre-existing Pathologies**

The pandemic cannot be an excuse to stop treatment of any pre-existing pathology. Different health organizations have insisted that treatments, follow-ups and controls should not be abandoned. It is important to prevent and avoid the worsening of pathologies and chronic diseases for lack of medical attention. Advantage should be taken from remote follow-up systems, and modern technology. The pandemic cannot be an excuse to abandon medical treatments.

### **Dengue fever and COVID-19**

There is a high number of dengue cases reported. Since there is no specific medicine to treat



dengue fever, the infection can only be contained with hygiene and sanitary measures. The health system resources are focused on COVID-19 and meanwhile, dengue fever spreads up.

It is indispensable to continue raising awareness, to empty anything that may contain water, to follow security protocols and, when there is a positive case, taking suitable preventive measures is of utmost importance.

Just like with the COVID-19 infection, a vaccine is needed to stop dengue fever. Such vaccine does not exist and therefore, more prevention is required. Dengue fever will be stopped not with health systems for everyone, but with health systems WITH everyone, that is, strengthening citizens' and institutions' commitment to inform and raise awareness.

### **Final Thoughts**

Further reflection is needed on the context created by the pandemic, and on the post-pandemic world on the assumption that the society has embraced new fundamental principles.

- The COVID-19 pandemic should not affect the progressiveness of the right to health. The progressiveness established in the Protocol of San Salvador means that States cannot adopt policies, measures or enact legislation without proper justification or that affect people's economic, social and cultural rights.
- Democracy weakens without the implementation of public policies that guarantee the effectiveness of human rights. Politics feed and support democracy as long as it represents collective and not individual interests. Institutions must guarantee mechanisms for the protection of democracy.
- The coronavirus pandemic shows the relevance of health systems. The response to a pandemic is more robust when a well-functioning health system is not wrongfully fragmented, and does not support differences or inequalities. When the health system approach is unequal, uncoordinated, or fragmented, the sanitary response may be a concern.
- Guaranteeing the right to health does not just involve health measures. The right to housing, to food, to potable water, to education, to basic utilities, civil and political rights should also be protected.

The pandemic outbreak highlights the need for suitable health buildings, spaces that offer adequate physical distancing between patients, their families, and medical staff. Better



medical devices, equipment, training, and protection measures are required.

It is essential to visualize the significance of a primary care network with presence in the territory, in the understanding that the territory is where you can make a difference, especially in vulnerable and deprived areas. A primary care network refers seriously-ill patients to hospitals and frees emergency rooms. The proximity and trust built around neighbourhood health centres allows facing a myriad of problems including child abuse, and gender violence. Competent actors and the Ombuds Offices can cooperate with other government agencies to protect people from harm.

On the other hand, COVID-19 requires efforts to protect the rights of people in detention. Prisons: it is indispensable to draw the attention to the social and health vulnerability of people deprived of liberty and prison staff.

Care homes and older people residences: infection prevention and control in these facilities needs re-thinking and re-visiting.

### **Final Recommendations:**

Based on the concepts and analysis detailed above, this Ombudsman Office, as outlined by the UNR in "Progresos y Desafíos...", believes that the following is needed to guarantee the right to health:

- Consolidate a normative and legal basis for the health system based on human rights, public institutionality and to guarantee its sustainability as a public policy.
- Strengthen universal and quality access to health for vulnerable groups or populations that does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ethnicity, disability and/or territorial situation.
- Increase public spending on health to provide coverage to larger territories; build, renovate and maintain infrastructure; strengthen and train human resources and increase the number of services and inputs.
- Develop intersectoral and inter-jurisdictional public policies; ensure their comprehensiveness and integration to improve and guarantee social inclusion, wellbeing and access to rights.
- Enhance health vigilance systems by optimizing the collection, analysis y





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dissemination of key data for the prevention and control of diseases.

- Upgrade existing information systems for better access to data from a human rights perspective and aiming at the systematic production of public information and its breakdown.
- Move forward with the creation of an integrated monitoring and evaluation system to favour exchanges, learning and progress in the access and exercise of the right to health.

Santa Fe, Argentina  
Ombudsman Office  
Raul A. Lamberto.  
Ombudsman



# ANNEX

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DEFENSORÍA DEL PUEBLO  
Provincia de Santa Fe



# ANNEX I

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## MEASURES TAKEN BY THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT IN THIS COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Decree of Necessity and Urgency (DNU ) 260/20:** It extended the **public health emergency** established by Law 27541 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) for **one (1)** year. The **National Ministry of Health is the enforcement authority**.

**DNU 297/20:** Based on the health emergency extended by DNU No. 260/20, this decree ordered the **Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation (ASPO)** to protect the health of the population. This measure started at 0000, 20 March 2020. The decree also established **exceptions** to the compulsory isolation and to the restrictions on non-essential travels for those working in activities designated as essential in this emergency. The exceptions were later on extended by subsequent decrees.

### SPECIFIC MEASURES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

(For further information on each measure, visit: [https://www.google.com.ar/search?sxsrf=ALeKk02HZCiqzmf6n6Tiy9wXVTK2I1eSSA%3A1590240571378&source=hp&ei=OyXJXuzk-FPqz5OUPv7WSmAQ&q=medidas+tomadas+por+el+gobierno+argentino+por+la+pandemia&oq=medidas+tomadas+por+el+gobierno+argent&gs\\_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQAxgAMgIIA-DoHCCMQ6glQJzoFCAAQgwE6BAgjECc6BQgAEMsBUIHC4gFYzfTiAWDZ\\_OIBaAFwAHgAgA-GaAYgBtR-SAQUxNy4yMZgBAKABAaoBB2d3cy13aXqwAQo&scient=psy-ab](https://www.google.com.ar/search?sxsrf=ALeKk02HZCiqzmf6n6Tiy9wXVTK2I1eSSA%3A1590240571378&source=hp&ei=OyXJXuzk-FPqz5OUPv7WSmAQ&q=medidas+tomadas+por+el+gobierno+argentino+por+la+pandemia&oq=medidas+tomadas+por+el+gobierno+argent&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQAxgAMgIIA-DoHCCMQ6glQJzoFCAAQgwE6BAgjECc6BQgAEMsBUIHC4gFYzfTiAWDZ_OIBaAFwAHgAgA-GaAYgBtR-SAQUxNy4yMZgBAKABAaoBB2d3cy13aXqwAQo&scient=psy-ab))

1. **10 March 2020. Setting up of a special fund for 1,700 million pesos** to support the country's response to the spread of the new coronavirus, specifically, to procure laboratory and hospital equipment and inputs.
2. **13 March 2020. Creation of a Crisis Committee for transport matters:** aimed at enforcing and monitoring COVID-19 prevention measures.
3. **13 March 2020. Enquiry hotline for older people:** The Comprehensive Medical Attention Programme (PAMI) set up an enquiry phone line (138 and press 9) so that older people could request information on the new coronavirus and have access to specific recommendations to look after themselves.
4. **14 March 2020. Restructuring of the academic calendar of all universities and higher education institutions in the country:** The National Ministry of Education recommended the restructuring of the academic calendar to all education institutions in the country.
5. **15 March 2020. Suspend face to face classes in all schools (following an agreement with the provinces)**

1. All acronyms other than official English acronyms are in Spanish.



- 6. 16 March 2020. Leaves of absence and work from home for the public and private sector.** To combat the spread of the new coronavirus in the work sphere and strengthen prevention measures, the government exempted pregnant women, those aged over 60 years old and at-risk groups from going to their workplaces. National public employees were authorized to work from home, except those in essential services. Private sector employers should adopt measures to allow home-working. Read the full text of the decree [here](#).
- 7. 16 March 2020. Closure of borders.**
- 8. 17 March 2020. New regulations for public transport:** Among the many prevention measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, the National Ministry of Transport suspended all domestic flights, long-distance trains and buses from Friday, March 20 to Tuesday, March 24 (this measure is still in force).
- 9. 17 March 2020. Phone line (134) for quarantine violations.**
- 10. 17 March 2020. Strong social protection measures:** Increasing the allowances for school and community kitchens so that the most vulnerable would have their access to food guaranteed. The Tarjeta Alimentar, a card that provides welfare benefits, would be charged every week, effective for a time only. A bonus for those who receive social plans and an extraordinary bonus for over nine million retirees, pensioners, and for those who receive the universal child allowance (AUH) and the maternity allowance. On the other hand, the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) extended the grace period of loan payments due in April and May.
- 11. 17 March 2020. Measures to protect production, employment and the supply system:** To minimize the impact of the health crisis, the national government exempted sectors affected by the pandemic from paying social contributions, expanded the Productive Recovery Program (REPRO), strengthen the unemployment insurance and increase the public works budgetary allocation.
- 12. Maximum Prices Programme: for thirty days and for essential products. Renewal of the Ahora 12 installment plan.**  
**20 March 2020. Maximum Prices Programme for the basic food basket and essential goods:** Prices for the food basket, beverages, toiletries and cleaning products should remain at their prices as at March 6. This programme applies to hypermarkets, supermarkets, retailers and wholesalers, as well as convenience stores, groceries and self-service stores. The programme was extended and is currently in force up to June 20
- 13. 18 March 2020. Setting up of the COVID-19 Unit: With the participation of the National Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the CONICET, and the I+D+i Agency,** this Unit is intended to coordinate the capacities and capabilities of the scientific and technological systems for the diagnosis and research on COVID-19.



- 14. 18 March 2020. Building of twelve modular emergency hospitals** to strengthen the health system, increase the number of beds to 840 and provide 24/7 attention.
- 15. 19 March 2020. Setting up a video call service for hearing impaired people:** The National Disability Agency offers a video call service at 115728-4011, Monday to Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to provide adequate, reliable and accessible information on COVID-19 risk factors and prevention measures.
- 16. 19 March 2020. Nationwide preventive and compulsory social isolation:** In a bid to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, the national government restricted non-essential travels in national routes and within the cities across the country. Citizens are only permitted to leave their homes to get food, medicines, toiletries and cleaning products.
- 17. 23 March 2020. Family Emergency Income:** Aimed at compensating the loss or serious decrease in income of people affected by the nationwide lockdown. A 10,000-peso allowance in April granted to the unemployed and informally employed (including those in domestic service), people in the informal economy, as well as to the single tax category taxpayer registered in tax categories "A", "B", and "social". Only one family member can receive the allowance that has to be requested to ANSES. This benefit was extended to May.
- 18. 24 March 2020. Suspend the closing of bank accounts:** To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy, the national government suspended the closing of bank accounts, including the application of fines and the obligatory closing of insolvent bank accounts with bouncing cheques until April 30.
- 19. 24 March 2020. Temporary suspension of basic utilities shutoff for lack of payment:** power, water, and gas utilities as well as land and mobile phone lines, Internet and cable TV service providers are not allowed to cutoff service provision for failure to pay up to three consecutive or separate invoices. This measure will be in force for 180 days and applies to the universal child allowance (AUH) and the maternity allowance (AUE) beneficiaries, retirees and pensioners, unemployment insurance beneficiaries, the electro-dependent, medium-sized firms (MiPyMES), labour cooperatives, companies recovered by their employees and registered with the National Institute of Associations and Social Economy (INAES), and to public non-profit organizations that manufacture and distribute foods. By Resolution 173/2020, neighbourhood sports clubs and social encouragement societies will not be cutoff power and/or gas in case of arrears or failure to pay up to three consecutive or separate invoices due as from March 1, 2020. This measure was later on extended.
- 20. 26 March 2020. Extend the closure of borders. This measure was later on extended.**



- 21. 26 March 2020. Ban on commissions on ATM services:** The Central Bank of Argentina (BCRA) decreed that up to June 30 inclusive, financial entities should not apply charges and commissions on transactions (deposits, withdrawals, enquiries, etc.) made on ATMs. No amount restrictions apply except those expressly agreed upon for security reasons and/or resulting from ATM operational constraints, the number of withdrawals, whether made by a client or a non-client, and independently from the type of account. The goal is to reduce the number of people in the streets and mitigate the economic impact of the health crisis.
- 22. 26 March 2020. Grant loans to medium-sized firms (MiPyMEs) to pay salaries:**
- 23. 26 March 2020. One-off payment to the healthcare staff:**
- 24. 28 March 2020. One-off payment to the security and defense personnel.**
- 25. 28 March 2020. Assistance to nationals in foreign countries:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship set up a specific programme intended to give assistance by guaranteeing accommodation, food, health care and any other basic need to nationals or residents unable to cope with the situation by their own means.
- 26. 29 March 2020. Offering facilities for access to mortgage loans:** Until September 30, monthly payments of mortgage loans on properties for family's only residence -with occupants- should not exceed the March payment amount.
- 27. 29 March 2020. Temporary freezing of rent prices and the suspension of all evictions:** Until September 30, there is a ban on evictions throughout the national territory. Extension until September 30 of lease agreements which maturity date was March 20. Freeze on lease agreements price. Until September 30, rent prices should be the ones paid for March this year. No interests or penalties will apply to the difference between the prices stated in the lease agreements and the prices paid as a result of this freeze. This also applies to accounts payable.
- 28. 31 March 2020. Extension of the *Ahora* 12 instalment plan until June 30.**
- 29. 31 March 2020. Ban on dismissals and suspensions for sixty days:** Ban on unjustified dismissals or as a consequence of the reduction or lack of work, and/or force majeure events for sixty days as from the publication of the decree in the Official Gazette. **EXTENDED FOR SIXTY MORE DAYS ON 18 MAY.**
- 30. 31 March 2020. New digital prescriptions for PAMI beneficiaries.**
- 31. 1 April 2020. Emergency Labor and Production Assistance Program:** aimed at employers and employees. It decrees the postponement or reduction of up to 95% of the payment of employer contributions to the Social Security System and of the payment of non-remunerative allowances for public employees, a comprehensive system of unemployment benefits, and allowances through the Productive Recovery Program (REPRO) created by the Ministry of Labour,



Employment and Social Security.

- 32. 1 April 2020. Eliminating import tariffs on critical inputs.**
- 33. 7 April 2020. Health coverage for children born after February 20:** Children of Health Insurance Agents of Private Health Service Providers, born after February 20, 2020 who could not complete the necessary steps to be granted their identity card (DNI), will have health coverage for up to 45 calendar days after the end of the preventive and compulsory social isolation, by showing proof of the birth.
- 34. 8 April 2020. Municipal coordination to monitor prices.**
- 35. 13 April 2020. COVID-19 was declared an occupational illness.** Therefore, Workmen's Compensation Insurers should immediately provide coverage to infected workers.
- 36. 16 April 2020. Price cap on sterile masks, thermometres and hand sanitizers.**
- 37. 19 April 2020. Extension of the Emergency Labour and Production Assistance Program:** the number of beneficiaries and types of benefits are increased to include interest-free loans for single-tax category taxpayers and the self-employed, a supplementary salary for those employed in the private sector (50% wage subsidy scheme), and a comprehensive system of unemployment benefits. Cuts on employer contributions to the Social Security were simplified and REPRO registered beneficiaries were redirected to this benefit. These measures were extended until June 30 or until October 30 for those activities still affected by the pandemic. **5 May 2020. New extension of the programme:** some amendments enabled a larger number of companies to get access to the programme. The new provisions expand the number of activities included, allow over 800-employee companies to register and modify the sales loss criteria to welcome companies which sales dropped by 30%. **8 May 2020. Emergency Labour and Production Assistance Program (ATP) benefits extension and new registration criteria:** Mid-year bonus and employer contributions corresponding to May were included among the benefits of the programme. The Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Committee decided to include health, education, and transport companies and entities that meet the registration requirements.
- 38. 25 April 2020. Bonus on the *Tarjeta Alimentar*.**
- 39. 29 April 2020. New economic help for sports clubs.** Articulated with provincial and municipal administrations, this new line involves special subsidies of up to 60,000 pesos. Registration closed on May 22.
- 40. 30 April 2020. The closing of bank accounts suspension and the temporary suspension of basic utilities shutoff were extended.**
- 41. 30 April 2020. The grace period of ANSES loan payments was extended.**
- 42. 5 May 2020. New formula to calculate power consumption in residential**



**households.** The National Regulatory Entity for Electricity (ENRE) modified the formula to calculate power consumption in residential households and instructed EDENOR S.A. and EDESUR S.A. (the two power utilities serving the province of Buenos Aires) to use the lowest consumption registered in the same period in the past three years. To guarantee the adequate service provision, ENRE set up an Electricity Distribution Panel to articulate and coordinate with the service providers during the preventive and compulsory social isolation.

**43. 8 May 2020. Work from home and possible temporary closing of travel agencies.** Travel agencies were authorized to work online and were exempted from having a physical location. Furthermore, agencies may suspend their activity and temporarily close without losing their authorization to operate. Both measures will be in force until 31 December 2020.

**44. 14 May 2020. Federal Administration of Public Revenues (AFIP) payment facilities:** applicable to tax, customs and social security obligations. The new facilities finance obligations included in different payment plans expired on April 30, 2020: single-tax categories, income tax, personal property tax, etc. The new tax regime does not require payment on account and regularizes liabilities in up to six installments. The system will be in place as from May 21 on the AFIP website. Those interested may adhere to this tax regime until June 30, 2020.

**45. 14 May 2020. Argentina Construye Programme:** The Ministry of Territory Development and Habitat launched the Argentina Construye federal programme aimed at building 5,500 new dwelling units, financing 42,900 repairs including gas, electricity and sanitation infrastructure, the granting of microcredits to buy building materials and complete small scale works, and the conditioning of community spaces in popular neighbourhoods. The programme will be implemented together with the provinces and municipalities, and articulated with community organizations including small and mid-size companies, cooperatives, unions, utilities, self-employed workers and self-construction.

**46. 18 May 2020. Freeze on phone land and mobile lines, the Internet and cable TV:** Information and communications technologies (ICT) were designated as essential activities. Any price increase on land and mobile lines, the Internet and cable TV was suspended until August 31.

**47. 22 May 2020. Budget modifications to strengthen the health system:** Protecting the population's health is a priority in this emergency. It is therefore essential to allocate resources to the strategic policies that allow addressing and controlling the pandemic. The National Government modified the federal budget and allocated 127 million pesos to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. This increased allocation to strategic areas will promote rapid tests mass production and will strengthen community health teams.

**48. 24 May 2020. The mandatory isolation was extended until June 7,**



**inclusive.** The new “administered quarantine” takes into account the different epidemiological realities in the provinces. Local authorities will be part of the decision to relax or tighten the lockdown; everything will depend upon the result of continuous monitoring and the evolution of the pandemic.

**49. 26 May 2020. Tele-Covid, a service for medical consultations.** The National Government presented this service for online doctor consultations. This tool allows everyone, even those with no medical coverage, to make a consultation from home avoiding unnecessary exposure to the virus. There is continued assistance to at-risk groups and the service enables the follow-up of COVID-19 suspected and/or confirmed cases while people continues to stay at home. Patients and health staff are therefore properly protected.

**50. 26 May 2020. Subsidies to inter-jurisdictional transport companies:** It was necessary to implement containment and assistance measures for intercity transport companies affected by the health emergency with the intention to reduce the number of people in the streets. The Ministry of Transport set up a one-off 500 million compensation for companies that provide road inter-jurisdictional bus travels. Subsidies will be based on the number of vehicles owned by each company and registered in the National Registry of Passengers Transport.

**51. 28 May 2020. Unemployment insurance extension.** The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security extended the benefits of the unemployment insurance until August 31 in view of the health emergency and considering the lack of new jobs. Benefits extended to May 31, May 1 and July 31 were included in this new extension. The extended benefits amount to 70% of the original benefit.

The Decrees of Necessity and Urgency mentioned above include measures that are in force until May 28. New measures will be timely included.

Ombudsman Office  
Province of Santa Fe.



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Actions taken by the Ombudsman Office of the Province of Santa Fe in the Pandemic and the Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation (ASPO<sup>1</sup>) Measures.

The Ombudsman of Argentina is a national institution that operates with full operational independence and autonomy. Its mission is the advocacy and protection of the rights, guarantees and interests protected by the National Constitution and the laws, in the light of events, actions and omissions of the Administration, and the control of public authorities in the performance of their duties. It reports to the National Congress and its jurisdiction is given by the Constitution of Argentina, ss. 86 and 43, Law 24284, as amended by Law 24379.

For a number of years now, the National Ombudsman Office **does not have an appointed Ombudsman**, but it keeps an important and effective operation within the framework of its jurisdiction.

The mission of **the provincial and municipal Ombudsman Offices** is the individual and collective promotion, protection and advocacy of citizens' rights, guarantees and legitimate interests. They are members of **ADPRA (Ombudsmen Association of Argentina)**, a non-profit set up in 2017 whose purpose is the reciprocal cooperation of the country's Ombudsmen, the exchange of information, research, training, updating and development of the institutions. Up to the present time, ADPRA membership is over **50 human rights institutions**. The Ombudsman Office of Santa Fe is a member of said Association, and the provincial Ombudsman is its representative at Ombuds international organizations and Human Rights organizations (FIO, IOI and ILO).

The Ombudsman Office of Santa Fe is a decentralized, one-person, independent provincial agency, which does not act upon indications of others and has oversight powers not associated with any governmental power. It is in charge of protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of individuals and the diffuse or collective interests of the community against irregular, arbitrary, illegitimate, discriminatory, or negligent actions of public officers.

The Ombudsman Office defends the individuals and the community fundamental rights, economic rights (consumer protection) and diffuse interests. Therefore, the Ombudsman of the province of Santa Fe has jurisdiction to take action on:

a) Centralized public administration: the provincial government, ministries, secretaries and under-secretaries of the Executive, including health, public works, the environment, security, culture, community promotion.

1. All acronyms other than official English acronyms are in Spanish.



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b) Decentralized public administration: autarchic agencies such as the Autarchic Provincial Institute of Social Security (IAPOS), the tunnel-under-the-river agency (*Túnel Subfluvial*), Santa Fe Lottery (*Lotería de Santa Fe*), the provincial power utility (EPE), and the water utility (*Aguas Provinciales de Santa Fe, ASSA*).

c) Companies with a government interest and legal entities exercising public functions (professional associations).

The Ombudsman has jurisdiction over the entire provincial territory, and acts in case of a complaint by a citizen or group of people and/or institutions. It may also act on its own motion when an irregularity takes place, under the Diffuse Interest Act 10000 or even upon request by representatives and senators.

Notwithstanding its jurisdiction under the applicable rules, and toward the defence of individuals and the community, it also engages in good offices with other agencies (i.e.: union and private health insurers) with positive results since it is held in high regard.

It has two headquarters, in the cities of Santa Fe and Rosario, and field offices in the 19 provincial departments, in the following cities and towns: Arroyo Leyes, Cañada de Gómez, Carcarañá, Casilda, Ceres, Coronda, El Trébol, Fray Luis Beltrán, Funes, Gálvez, Granadero Baigorria, Helvecia, Laguna Paiva, Las Parejas, Las Rosas, Rafaela, Reconquista, Rincón, Roldán, Rufino, San Javier, San Jorge, San José de la Esquina, San José del Rincón, San Justo, San Lorenzo, Santo Tomé, Sunchales, Tostado, Totoras, Venado Tuerto, Vera, Villa Constitución, Villa Gobernador Gálvez, and the south of Rosario.

Since the beginning of the **preventive and mandatory social isolation (ASPO)**, this Office has been providing assistance remotely, by phone or online throughout the province. In this context, enquiries typically have a **strong social focus** (over 40%).

ASPO has implied a **structural change in previous working methods** used at the office. Up to the beginning of the lockdown, claims were mostly associated with credit cards, bank transactions or utilities, that is to say, the user and consumer claim area.

In this pandemic, social cases are associated with the Emergency Family Financial Support (IFE), its beneficiaries, registration procedures, collections, etc.; enquiries about food cards by people who have not received them or been able to collect the relevant amount, even when they are entitled to; and questions regarding the Universal Child Allowance (AUH) or other benefits (the last two were implemented before the pandemic). That is, scenarios associated to direct state support.

Applications for food support meant a significant number of communications, as well as





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applications by beneficiaries of pensions under Law 5110 (provincial benefit) to receive the IFE, a benefit granted by the National Government. The Ombudsman Office has sent notes and taken several administrative steps with the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) to give response to those applicants.

On the other hand, price increases reported by citizens is another matter of concern. The Office has spoken up with demands for price controls at national, provincial, and local agencies, according to regulations in force.

At the beginning of the lockdown, the requests for social and financial support were numerous and constant because a large number of people could not engage in their regular productive activities, and many were informally employed. Even when exceptions have been expanding as days pass by, there are still many people who cannot go to work. The Ombudsman Office takes every one of those cases and channels them through the suitable local, provincial and national entities and offices.

The Ombudsman Office work has been constant, responsive and productive, especially in the following areas, where more enquiries were received.

- **Rent prices:** Requests for advice on mortgage loans and rent prices are constantly expanding during ASPO. Ever since the first days of April, this Office mediators have been **facilitating the resolution** of some conflicts arisen and worsened in the quarantine, by helping with the interpretation of applicable rules, Decree 320/2020 and the Civil and Commercial Code of Argentina. Enquiries are mainly associated with the impossibility to pay the rents of commercial property and dwelling units. In most cases, the parts have reached a satisfactory agreement. Other frequent enquiries are associated with the extension of contracts, the possibility of terminating agreements, increased rent prices and the likelihood of payment on instalments, monthly payment through a bank and the reluctance of real estate agents and owners, as well as the additional percentages due to banking charges and commissions. Enquiries have also been received regarding authorizations to move to other properties and the applicable protocols.
- **Work-related enquiries.** At the beginning of the mandatory isolation, enquiries were associated with exceptions for workers, with leaves of absence if they had children to look after or for being part of a vulnerable group due to their age or personal health conditions. As days went by, enquiries started to be about compliance of employer obligations, safety measures, payment of salaries, layoffs, etc. It should be stated that, even when there is a ban on suspensions, there are claims associated with actions taken before the mandatory isolation



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or regarding personnel not included in the payroll. Several enquiries were received regarding applicable permits to leave home, their renewal, the possibility to use public transport, and more recently, in the light of the public transport strike, about the lack of other means to get to workplaces.

- **Utilities:** This Office received quite a number of enquiries regarding utilities invoices. People needed to understand the scope of the ban on basic utilities shutoff ordered by the national and provincial governments, the freeze on rates, the payment methods and plans, utilities connection and disconnection, and the ban on shutoff or temporary suspension of utility services.
- **Health care:** Health care requests have grown as medical procedures, supply of medications, chronic treatments and the mental health system were interrupted. This prompted actions by the Ombudsman Office to adjust the health system to the current reality and resulted in the implementation of digital prescriptions and influenza vaccine campaigns based on a schedule. Some examples of the actions taken by this Ombudsman Office: at the Comprehensive Medical Care Programme (PAMI) field offices in favour of its beneficiaries; with the director of IAPOS so that he or she may report on authorizations of drugs for chronic treatments; authorizations for older people caretakers; vaccination schedules, especially against influenza and registration; enquiries by practitioners regarding suspended authorizations for special practices for disabled people; enquiries regarding Workmen Compensation Insurer calls to an employee on medical leave to go to work; enquiries about the possibility of leaving the home for disabled people; reception of complaints from citizens for chemist services and the operation of the Health care Superintendency; doctors' claims about the need to implement prescriptions by WhatsApp; enquiries regarding the payment of subsidies or financial support for celiac disease; enquiries for face-to-face dentist and ophthalmologist care and the applicable protocols; collections of medical bonuses decreed in the pandemic; requests for action with the provincial government for the repair of a reverse osmosis plant that is vital for the health condition of the city, town and neighbouring areas; authorizations and acceptance to cover certain medicines on the part of IAPOS; enquiries regarding appointments with public hospitals and associated services in the province; medical transport; actions associated with the closing of care homes; safety and health protocols; actions requesting fumigations against dengue fever in certain areas; advice about the application of the dengue fever protocol.
- **Permits to leave home:** enquiries about these permits were frequent, especially about how to obtain an authorization to provide care to older or





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disabled persons, exempted workers, or children and adolescent parents' visitations. In cases of force majeure that justified travel and did not require a permit, the Ombuds Office coordinated actions and provided advice.

- **Banking transactions:** There has been a high number of claims associated with banks because banks were initially not considered an essential activity, a decision that was later changed. Most enquiries are made by older and low-income people who, despite having a bank account, are not familiar with online banking procedures.

The Ombudsman Office has been taking and continues to take actions with the Central Bank of Argentina and Nuevo Banco de Santa Fe S.A. to that effect.

The Central Bank of Argentina was requested to extend the Purchasing Value Units (UVA) loans due dates, and reconsider credit card due dates after 13 April; report whether there are new measures to support the self-employed, single-tax category taxpayers and shop owners; the possibility of delaying payments of UVA loans for April, May and June to the end of the loan term; include the beneficiaries of ANSES Unemployment Fund, Construction Fund, AUH, NGOs, among other family subsidies, in the exceptions for face-to-face collections at banks. This last item was also requested from Nuevo Banco de Santa Fe S.A.

Nuevo Banco de Santa Fe was requested to provide a solution to people who, despite having a bank account, do not have a debit card, and more information and/or clarifications regarding the insurance coverage offered to system users. Furthermore, formalities were carried out regarding claims for insurance coverage not purchased or consented to by users, the termination of service packages, direct debits that had not been requested, requests for information on debt overdue, and the collection of the Unemployment Fund, among other claims.

Finally, this Ombudsman Office has also put forward, both to the Central Bank and Nuevo Banco de Santa Fe, a set of actions to reduce the need for going to the bank in person.

- **Cable TV, Internet and Telephone Services:** requests for purchases, terminations, payment agreements, reduced rates or plan modifications. A Decree issued in May ordered the freeze on rates, but the assessment of provider compliance is still outstanding.
- **Consumers:** expert advice on domestic and international flights and tour





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packages purchased before the pandemic and how to reach a settlement; enquiries regarding other services, such as student transport, and whether they should be paid for or not.

- **Telephone and On-line Scams:** even when this criminal methodology has been more widely used lately, reports and enquiries received show that it has increased while in lockdown; therefore, the Ombudsman Office has issued recommendations to prevent people from becoming fraud victims.
- **Victim Support:** : the psychologists team at the Victim Support Services (CAV) have been making constant efforts, advising people about divorce, alimonies, or professional listening to women who are the victims of violence and had already reached for the institution before the pandemic. It is important to highlight that the Ombudsman Office was authorized to digitally channel claims associated to domestic violence to the Judiciary. Many actions have been taken through digital and telephone platforms.
- **Visitation time and exchange of minor children.** enquiries for transport across jurisdictions, permits to leave home and the applicable protocols, visit schedules and alimony (determination, amount increase or reduction).
- **Enquiries and reports for violations to the price-cap scheme.** collaborative work was conducted with national, provincial and municipal authorities to disseminate the rules in force, the reporting protocol and support of local governments in their implementation.
- **Enquiries about allowed activities:** including domestic workers, return to regular address, recreational outings, opening of shops, time schedules to pay for utilities and services, and exclusive pensioner schedules.
- **Enquiries of people stranded from their regular residence:** different presentations were made to the competent national and provincial authorities to provide answers to these individuals. . CAV received some 50 requests of transport that were facilitated through the articulation with the provincial Tourism and Security Bureaus, offices from other provinces, Ombudsmen Offices member of ADPRA and the Federal Council of Victim Support Services. After the Ministry of Transport and of the Interior issued Joint Resolution 2/2020, there was an institutional response authorizing the return of stranded people. The Ombudsman Office helped those individuals who had problems with the Back Home form to obtain the permit to leave home and move around. In many cases, and despite having the relevant permits, it was also necessary to



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contact government authorities and law enforcement officers to allow moving across jurisdictions (many cities and towns had closed their borders and set a 15-day lockdown for those who entered their jurisdiction, even when they were just crossing to another jurisdiction). Given the size of the country, the Ombudsman Offices had to arrange resting locations for longer travels with provincial and national authorities. When the lockdown was decreed, hotels or other temporary accommodations were closed.

- **Repatriation:** border closure in Argentina took place in March, including inbound flights, except for the exceptions especially authorized by the National Executive. . The Ombudsman Office of Santa Fe was actively involved in repatriating people who had been left stranded abroad, dealing both with Argentineans abroad and foreigners in the country seeking to go back home. To that effect, and through the **FIO Migrant and Human Trafficking Network**, a repatriation group was created. Each country appointed its representatives (e.g.: Argentina appointed three members, and this Ombudsman Office is one of them). This group made contacts and engaged in formalities with the Foreign Office and consular offices of the different countries, to support stranded people, provide them with accommodation, food and the required isolation until repatriated. Steps were taken with several countries including the United States, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and the Dominican Republic, among a number. **The effective solidarity actions of the repatriation group deserve special acknowledgment.**

It is worth highlighting that the efforts of the Ombudsman Office during ASPO have been constant, and covered the whole provincial territory. The field offices have played a major role. Their efforts in taking this office closer to the citizens have been critical, even more when taking into account that power decentralization and the different levels of government and decision-making instances in a federal country such as Argentina imply a large number of rules and regulations which application needs to be ascertained in every concrete case and territory.

Notwithstanding the actions mentioned in the main report, below you will find a detail of other actions taken by the Ombudsman Office during the **Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation (ASPO)**.

- Actions with the Foreign Office of Argentina and different countries toward repatriating Argentinean citizens abroad who were not able to return for border closure and the suspension of international flights.



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- Production of a Protocol to guarantee minimum safety and health conditions in the COVID-19 pandemic, which would support considering the possibility of exceptionally resuming face-to-face efforts at the Ombudsman headquarters and field offices. To that end national and international guidelines and recommendations from different instruments were reviewed.
- Remote service and appointment systems for those formalities that require face-to-face interaction, respecting social distance and prevention measures.
- A support note to health staff relative to the bonus decreed to increase their compensations in this pandemic.
- A support note to health staff regarding the discriminatory actions of some groups of people against them.
- The government authorities were requested to test for COVID-19 all health staff. It was a joint request with ADPRA.
- Note to the Supreme Court of Argentina (together with ADPRA) requesting the end of the judiciary leave and the operation of the judiciary services, with remote and partially face-to-face systems, with special protection for court employees and lawyers.
- Exchanges and contacts with the Provincial Secretary of Equality and Gender to convey the interest of the Ombudsman Director of Strategy and Management Office to have the general guidelines designed by Secretary to start planning and designing the training for the Ombudsman Office personnel according to National Law 27 499 (the Micaela Act), adhered to by the province under Law 13 891, as regulated by Decree 192/20.
- Exchanges and contacts with the Road Safety Office so that they may inform their scheduled actions on cross-jurisdictional roads that go across the provincial territory, and intended to check whether individuals moving along them have COVID-19 symptoms. This Ombudsman Office has requested all the above information to continue to cooperate with the actions intended to combat the new coronavirus pandemic.
- Production of the "Guide of Inclusive Responses in a Local Context, according to the OAS Practical Guide" ("*Guía de Respuestas Inclusivas en un contexto local, según lineamientos de la Guía Práctica de la OEA*"). This document was produced and drafted to give people the indications, recommendations and guidelines of



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international and domestic human rights organizations for the most vulnerable groups in this COVID-19 pandemic. The Guide includes the application and/or measures ordered by the executive offices and other competent offices in each case. The Practical Guide to Inclusive and Rights-based Responses to Covid-19 in the Americas was used as a reference. This document was published on April 7, 2020, by the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (SARE) of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States GS/OAS, and its foundation and orientation guides are as follows: *“Health is a right, necessary to guarantee the right to life, and safeguarding that right is essential to preserving public order...”* The Guide highlights the duty of the States **to guarantee the right to health, mainly of people in vulnerable groups**, i.e. those groups of people that for reasons of race, colour, lineage or country or ethnic origin, cultural identity, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, condition as a migrant, refugee, repatriated, country-less or internally displaced, disabled, their bio-psychosocial characteristics or any other, have been discriminated, and the acknowledgment, enjoyment or exercise of their rights have been denied or infringed (Inter-American Convention against all Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, OAS.)

- Organization of virtual meetings of the Rosario and Santa Fe offices staff with the field offices in the south and centre-north of the province, respectively, in coordination with the different delegations of the Ombudsman Office.
- Permanent CAV contact with members of the Federal Council of Victim Support Services to exchange information about events in other provinces, having meetings via the Zoom platform to update the communications of the Council and the methods to approach crime victims. These actions proved essential to take steps to transfer an individual between provinces, and members of the Council made themselves available to that end.
- Technical support to file reports and further follow-up. Interventions with the Court Support Centre (CAJ), the Human Rights Office, the Criminal Defence Service and the Office of the Secretary of Internal Affairs of the provincial Ministry of Security.
- Drafting the data bases for social organizations (mutual and neighbour organizations, cooperatives, NGOs) for the later articulation of a social organization network.
- Production, delivery and distribution of **informative leaflets with preventive measures** against COVID-19 and dengue fever.





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- Organization and coordination of **voluntary actions to manufacture face masks** that were then delivered for free in solidarity actions to different civil-society organizations.
- **Blanket, and warm-clothes collection and donation** campaigns for the most needy, together with other civil-society organizations.
- Virtual participation in training activities, rights advocacy, exchange of problems and solutions, remedial justice, etc., organized by ADPRA, FIO, AGOL and drafting a document about Covid-19 written within the framework of IOI.
- Special credit should be given to the actions taken during lockdown by the **Children and Adolescents Ombudsman**, part of the Ombudsman Office of Santa Fe, whose efforts to protect children rights are described in its own reports.

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## Measures taken by the Government of the province of Santa Fe in the COVID-19 pandemic

(See a longer report at: <https://www.santafe.gob.ar/ms/covid19/normativa/>)

1. **March 11 2020. Decree No. 0202/2020.** Exceptional leave of absence for the provincial public workers who return to the country from abroad. On a mandatory or voluntary basis, these workers should stay at home for fourteen (14) calendar days to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. This measure was rescinded by amendments introduced to Decree of Necessity and Urgency (DNU ) 297/20.
2. **12 March 2020. Decree No. 213/2020. The province of Santa Fe adhered to DNU 260/20. Suspension of public shows across the province.**
3. **13 March 2020. Decree No. 219/2020.** It states that the Ministry of Education should, in all educational establishments of any level and modality, adopt the applicable criteria in the event any principal, executive officer, teacher, aide, non-teacher or student tests positive for COVID-19 or is a suspected case, following Resolution No. 103/20 issued by the National Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the decree states the need to adopt prevention measures for passengers' transport under provincial jurisdiction. It implements a reduction in business hours for the Autarchic Provincial Institute of Social Security (IAPOS) offices as well as for the Provincial Pension and Retirement Fund offices.
4. **15 March 2020. Decree No. 259/2020. At-risk groups were exempted from going to work.**
5. **15 March 2020. Decree No. 261/2020. Suspension** of classes in all educational establishments, either kindergarten, primary, secondary or higher education institutes within the Ministry of Education of the province. Distance learning and remote schooling. This measure was ordered for fourteen calendar days and later on extended. As at 30 May 2020 all educational institutions were still shut down.
6. **15 March 2020. Decree No. 262/2020. It gives the provincial Ministry of Health the authority to order a health quarantine in the city of Ceres, Department of San Cristóbal,** due to the contacts and contagions of its citizens with people residing in the neighbouring province of Santiago del Estero.
7. **15 March 2020. Decree No. 263/2020.** It states that, in this pandemic, the Secretary of Domestic Commerce and Services of the Ministry of Production, Science and Technology, being the enforcement authority of national laws on

1. All acronyms other than official English acronyms are in Spanish.



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commercialization and the defence of consumer rights, should **implement the control, monitoring and eventual penalties on behaviours that may affect the rights of consumers and users of critical inputs**, as confirmed by DNU 260/2020, National Law 24 240 and other national regulations on commerce that may apply. **This decrees also grants authorization to enter into agreements with local governments.**

8. **16 March 2020. Decree No. 264/2020. Provincial Public Sector: Request to have a leave of absence for having children or adolescents to look after. Only one parent, employee of the provincial public sector** within the provincial Executive, can use this justification. Confirmed by Decree No. 266/2020. This provision is only applicable when children are minor and go to kindergarten or primary school.
9. **16 March 2020. Decree No. 265/2020. Compulsory isolation for anyone who enters the province from a foreign country.**
10. **18 March 2020. Decree No. 267/2020. Shopping centres, shopping malls and other retail shops included in article 2° paragraph e) sub-paragraph 4, Law 12069, from 0000, March 20 to 12:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 24.** This measure was later extended several times. Retail was partially reopened, under specific control measures, in May.
11. **20 March 2020. Decree No. 270/2020. The province adhered to DNU 267/20 that decreed the Preventive and Mandatory Social Isolation (ASPO).**
12. **20 March 2020. Decree No. 277/2020. It states that public employees can be ordered to perform tasks other than their own and related to the emergency** Furthermore, any employee being called to work should conduct the tasks face-to-face only as far as the tasks require such direct contact or confrontation.
13. **23 March 2020. Decree No. 279/2020. It increased budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Health.**
14. **24 March 2020. Decree No. 283/2020.** The province of Santa Fe adhered to DNU 311/20. Order to **temporarily suspend utility shutoffs (power, drinking water) and sanitation services for 180 days.**
15. **24 March 2020. Decree No. 284/2020. Increased budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Social Development.**
16. **25 March 2020. Decree No. 293/2020.** Creation of a Coordination Committee for the design and follow-up of measures linked to the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), with jurisdiction in the province of Santa Fe.
17. **27 March 2020. Decree No. 302/2020.** Granting of a non-wage bonus for provincial **government staff performing critical tasks** in this pandemic.
18. **31 March 2020. Decree No. 304/2020. The province of Santa Fe adhered to DNU 325/20. ASPO extension up to 12 April.**



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19. **31 March 2020. Decree No. 305/2020. Enactment of Provincial Law 13978** authorizing the provincial Executive to write loans for a total amount of **\$15,000,000,000.00** with public or private entities, national or international, for the total or partial **funding** of expenditures required by this **COVID-19 pandemic**.
20. **6 April 2020. Decree No. 318/2020. All women and gender diverse people victims of violence will be considered a case of force majeure** and granted a permit to leave their homes.
21. **6 April 2020. Decree No. 319/2020. It authorizes municipalities and communes in the province to control and inspect the commercialization of goods, and to apply price control measures...** **8 April 2020. Decree No. 323/2020. Freeze on the tariff user schedule applied by EPE and ASSA** (the power and water utility, respectively) **for 120 days**. Freeze on tolls in provincial routes.
22. **8 April 2020. Decree No. 324/2020. Extending the suspension of face-to-face classes, and the shutdown of shopping malls, casinos and bingos.** This decree also applies to day care centres, educational and therapeutic centres, employment training centres, the Provincial Network of Inclusive Greenhouses and any other educational facility within the Ministry of Health, including the Public Security Institute (ISEP) in all of its venues.
23. **8 April 2020. Resolution of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security No. 41/2020**, approving the **COVID-19 Prevention Protocol** applicable to all **exempted** activities under DNU 297/20 and Administrative Decisions made by the Chief Cabinet Office under No. 429/20, 450/20, 467/20, 468/20, as well as any other decision that in future may apply. **Employers** should adopt and implement a **Health and Safety Protocol** jointly with their Occupational Medicine Service and inform it to the Health and Safety Joint Committee or Prevention Delegate... Such protocol should include an evaluation of risks by position and establish the prevention measures to be adopted (engineering, isolation, protection or administrative) focusing on the contagion risk of COVID-19.
24. **11 April 2020. Decree No. 328/2020. The province of Santa Fe adhered to DNU 355/20. The mandatory isolation was extended until June 26, inclusive.** Furthermore, employers of exempted establishments, should see to the strict compliance of Resolution No. 41/20 issued by the provincial Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security under penalty of sanctions as detailed in **Law 10468, including the suspension and closing of the shop or establishment, when applicable.**
25. **11 April 2020. Decree No. 329/2020, authorizing EPE to cut off power to users who, not being authorized to conduct a specific activity are nevertheless conducting such activity,** within the scope of the emergency



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and under regulations in force.

26. **11 April 2020. Decree No. 337/2020.** Penalties applicable to the **provincial public administration staff** for failing to comply with **ASPO** measures.
27. **11 April 2020. Decree No. 338/2020.** authorizing the acceptance of **donations, legacies, loans, services, gratuitous loans** and any other gratuitous contribution made by **legal entities** to cover the needs resulting from the health emergency.
28. **13 April 2020. Decree No. 341/2020,** passing the **Provincial General Prevention Protocol.**
29. **15 April 2020. Decree No. 347/2020,** ordering the **compulsory use of masks** while conducting activities or in the street, under the preventive and mandatory social isolation.
30. **Adherence to provisions of the Administrative Decision No. 524/20 made by the Federal Chief of Cabinet Office, expanding the exceptions to the preventive and mandatory social isolation<sup>2</sup>.** The following exceptions were included: scheduled medical and dentist services, clinical analysis laboratories and imaging centres with previously scheduled appointments, optics stores, with previously scheduled appointments, facilities for people victims of gender violence;
31. **21 April 2020. Decree No. 355/2020, setting up mechanisms to grant financial support to activities affected** by the emergency through Associations or Agencies for Regional Development or similar economic organizations.
32. **29 April 2020. Resolution No. 611/2020 issued by the Ministry of Health. Medical services - Activities authorized to be conducted** - Service modalities - Applicable protocols
33. **29 April 2020. Decree No. 367/2020. New exceptions to the preventive and compulsory social isolation,** including a) private construction works with no more than five (5) workers; b) home collections; c) mechanic workshops, car wash, car and motorbike maintenance and repair shops, with previously scheduled appointments for the delivery and removal of units, and with no more than three people working together in the same place; d) retail shops, with compulsory use of protection elements and social distancing, exclusively in towns of up to 5,000 inhabitants, ... These exceptions DO NOT apply to large urban conglomerates such as Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe, and to the city of Rafaela... since they have been defined as areas or conglomerates with local transmission of COVID-19". **Private works with no more than five workers in Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe** were authorized on 7 May 2020 by Decree No. 389/2020.

2. The relevant national rules may be found at: <https://www.boletinoficial.-gob.ar/suplementos/2020041801NS.pdf>



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34. **30 April 2020. Resolution of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security No. 75/2020**, Passing of the Private Works Protocol.
35. **4 May 2020. Decree No. 375/2020. One-time transport of Santa Fe residents stranded in other provinces** due to the measures taken by the National and Provincial Government in this pandemic. Applicable procedures and protocols.
36. **5/5/2020. Decree No. 382/2020. New exceptions to the preventive and compulsory social isolation and restrictions** to non-essential travel of people performing certain activities, including: **liberal professions, real estate agents, movers, hair stylists and allied services, activities developed by Development Associations and Agencies and entities with a similar goal, wholesalers and retailers. Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe** were not included in this decree. The city of Rafaela and neighbouring towns ... are no longer exempted by provisions of Decree No. 367/20.
37. **5/5/2020. Resolution No. 635/2020 issued by the Ministry of Health, authorizing psychologists, psycho pedagogues and nutritionists** to perform their activities, with previously scheduled appointments and subject to the presentation and approval of relevant protocols by the Ministry of Health.
38. **5/7/2020. Decree No. 386/2020.** As from 11 May 2020 and as long as the preventive and compulsory isolation is in force, **new business hours for the financial entities in Rosario**, that is Mondays through Fridays from 8:15 a.m to 1:15 p.m. and the working day for bank employees will be Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
39. **5/7/2020. Decree No. 387/2020. Real estate business and movers:** measures in force in the urban agglomerates of Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe.
40. **5/7/2020. Decree No. 388/2020. New business hours for the financial entities in Granadero Baigorria and Villa Gobernador Gálvez**, that is Mondays through Fridays from 8:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. and the working day for bank employees will be Mondays through Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
41. **5/7/2020. Decree No. 389/2020. The province of Santa Fe adhered to DNU 459/20. Extending the preventive and mandatory social isolation to 24 May 2020. Listing of new exempted industrial activities and restrictions to non-essential travels**, including 1) car manufacturing and car parts; 2) consumer electronics and white appliances; 3) clothing; 4) tobacco products; 5) metalworking, machinery and equipment; 6) footwear; 7) print, copies and printouts shops; 8) wood and furniture; 9) toys; 10) cement; 11) textiles; 12) leather products; 13) tires; 14) bicycles and motorbikes; 15) chemistry and petrochemicals; 16) paper mills and paper; 17) plastics and by products; 18) ceramics. **New activities exempted from the preventive and mandatory social isolation and restrictions to non-essential travel in Greater Rosario and Santa Fe**, including retail and liberal professions. **Extending** the legal force and validity of **authorizations, permits, leaves or licences** granted by



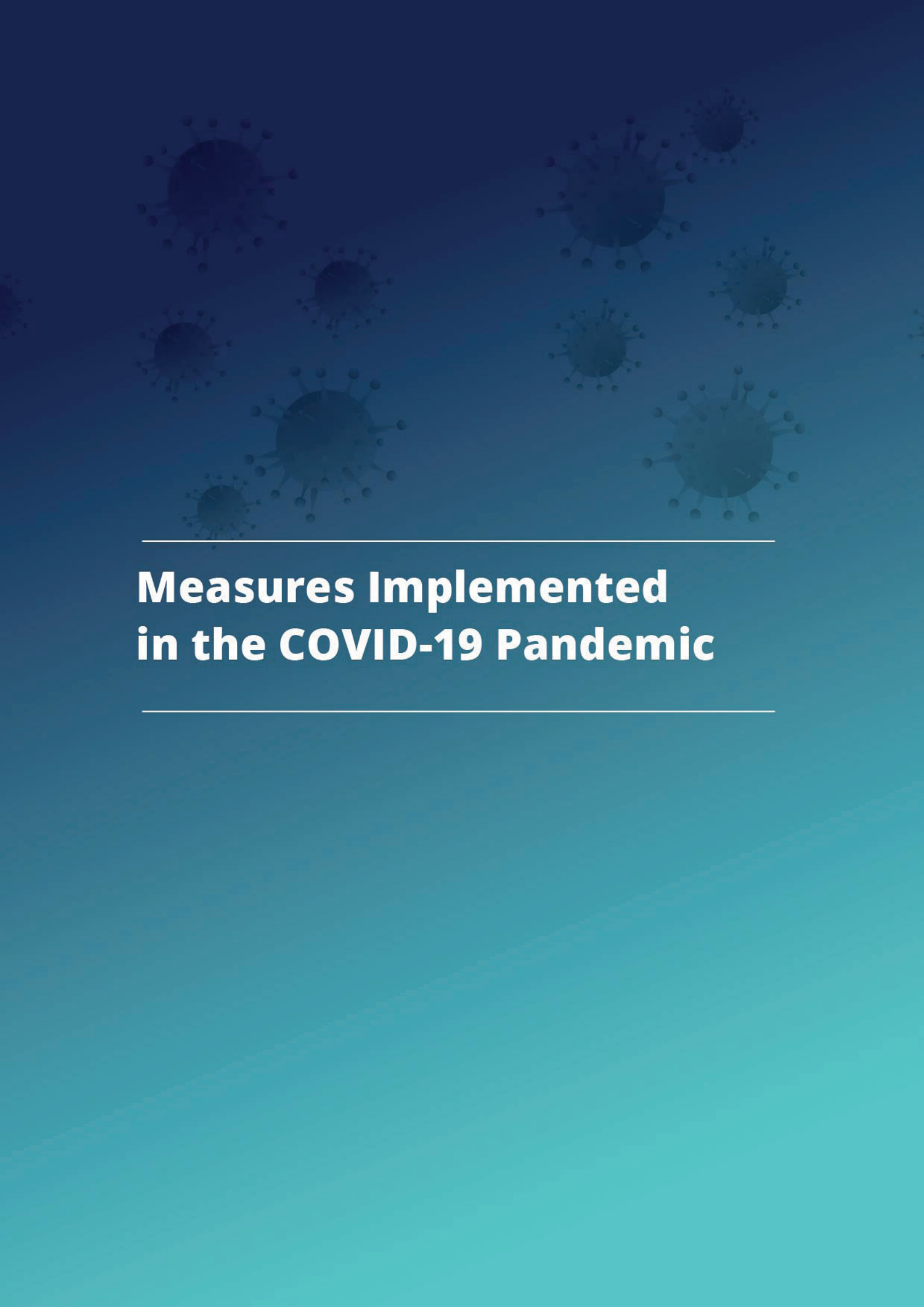
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the province or any agency of the provincial Executive. **Authorization to go to the shops with a minor dependent child.**

42. **5/11/2020. Decree No. 411/2020. Creating the Volunteering Programme in the context of the pandemic** to be implemented by the Secretary of Equality and Gender and the Ministry of Social Development. The programme is intended to promote and facilitate the solidarity participation of citizens, and civil society in the containment and help of very vulnerable and at high risk groups.
43. **5/12/2020. Decree No. 414/2020**, defining the effectiveness of **exceptions to the preventive and mandatory social isolation and the restrictions to non-essential travels in the urban agglomerates of Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe** for car repair shops, car wash, hair stylists and allied services, home collections and the activities performed by Development Associations and Agencies.
44. **5/20/2020. Decree No. 436/2020. Going outside and taking short recreation walks are authorized, detail of the applicable prevention measures and requirements. The practice of sports, use of squares, parks, promenades, children playgrounds, and gyms, even those still open are not allowed.** This authorization **does not apply** to the cities of **Santa Fe and Rosario**. The two cities were authorized two days later by Decree 438/20.
45. **5/25/2020. Decree No. 445/2020. The province of Santa Fe adhered to DNU 493/20, extending** the preventive and mandatory social isolation to 7 June 2020.
46. **5/26/2020. Decree No. 446/2020, authorizing private works of up to ten (10) workers, domestic workers, and household workers except** in the urban agglomerates of Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe. These cities were included in the exception by Decree 456/20 dated May 29 2020.
47. **5/27/2020. Decree No. 449/2020**, setting up the effectiveness of **individual religious activities in churches, temples and closeby places of worship** of the Roman Catholic Church and religious entities registered in the National Register of Religions that, **in no case may celebrate ceremonies the gathering of people.**
48. **5/29/2020. Decree No. 455/2020**, making exceptions to the preventive and compulsory social isolation and to the restrictions to non-essential travels, **except in the large urban agglomerates**, for the activities and services of **unions, business associations, health insurers, cafes and restaurants offering take away services**, retail shops in commercial centres, promenades or shopping malls that offer pick up services.



The background of the slide features a teal-to-blue gradient. In the upper half, there are several stylized, dark blue virus particles with spiky protrusions. In the lower half, a faint, light blue line graph is visible, showing an upward trend from left to right.

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# **Measures Implemented in the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## Measures Implemented in the COVID-19 Pandemic. An Update<sup>1</sup>.

### PHASES IMPLEMENTED IN ARGENTINA

Different measures have been implemented to flatten the curve of COVID-19 infections and strengthen the responsiveness of the health system since March.

According to regulations set forth in the COVID-19 pandemic, different PHASES (F, for short) have been implemented since March 2020. Each phase has had its own characteristics and restrictions, based on the infection curve and the national and provincial health systems capacities.

	F 1. STRICT LOCKDOWN	F 2. ADMINISTERED LOCKDOWN	F 3. GEOGRAPHIC SEGMENTATION	F 4. PROGRESSIVE REOPENING	F 5. NEW NORMALITY
AUTHORIZED	ONLY ESSENTIAL SERVICES	NEW AUTHORIZATION	PROVINCIAL EXCEPTIONS	PROVINCIAL EXCEPTIONS	WITH GOOD CLEANING AND HYGIENE PRACTICES
RESTRICTIONS	ALL OTHERS	NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS	NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS	NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS	
POPULATION MOVILITY	Up to 10%	Up to 25%	Up to 50%	Up to 75%	More than 75%
DOUBLING RATE	UNDER 5 DAYS	5 TO 15 DAYS	15 TO 25 DAYS	MORE THAN 25 DAYS	
GEOGRAPHIC	HOMOGENEOUS	NATIONAL EXCEPTIONS	SEGMENTATION BASED ON EPIDEMIOLOGIC CRITERIA	LOCAL RESTRICTIONS	HOMOGENEOUS

**Current measures are not uniform across the country. Each provincial, municipal or**

1. This Report details the different measures laid down for the period running from May 29 to July 21, 2020.



**communal jurisdiction defines what measures to apply based on their epidemiological situation.**

**PREVENTION MEASURES IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. AN UPDATE.**  
**(From May 29 to July 21)**

**29 May 2020. Suspend the collection of the toll fees for health care and security workers.** This measure aims at facilitating the circulation of workers who deliver essential activities, are more exposed to contagion and need to use their vehicles to go to their workplaces safely.

**29 May 2020. Creation of the Advisory Council to Plan the Return to Classes.** This is a multidisciplinary and advisory space that will evaluate the federal protocols for the return to classes in the different educational levels. Representatives of the education community from different jurisdictions and institutions, as well as experts and members of the health care system integrate the Council that will meet as long as the health emergency persists.

**31 May 2020. Emergency Program to ensure access to ICT's services for anyone living in vulnerable neighbourhoods in the COVID-19 pandemic.** This programme will ensure access to quality and affordable ICT services in neighbourhoods registered in the National Register of Vulnerable Districts (RENABAP) and that require and urgent solution in the health emergency. The programme involves an investment of Pesos \$100 million.

**1 June 2020. National evaluation of the pedagogical continuity process.** In a bid to assess the pedagogical continuity process in the COVID-19 pandemic, know the development of the pedagogical continuity process, and provide evidence to plan the return to classes, the Ministry of Health decided to conduct a National Evaluation of the Pedagogical Continuity Process. This initiative will survey 30,000 school principals and teachers across the country, as well as 2,800 families to evaluate education in this health emergency and define criteria to reorganize activities in the classrooms.

**1 June 2020. New payment of the Emergency Family Financial Support (IFE).** The IFE aims at assisting the most vulnerable whose income has been affected by the pandemic. The national government decided to deliver a new 10,000 pesos allowance to the more than 9 million beneficiaries.

**2 June 2020. Further extension of the *Progresar* Program for private school students.** Considering the impact of the health emergency and to ensure the right to education under fair and equal conditions, the Ministry of Education included private schools in the *Progresar* Program. The registration deadline to scholarships granted by the Finalización



de *Educación Obligatoria Program* was extended to up to 30 days after the preventive and compulsory social isolation (ASPO) ends. This programme refers to compulsory education in Argentina, that includes primary and secondary school. Students can register on line.

**4 June 2020. Payment facilities for companies' beneficiaries of the Production Assistance Program (ATP).** The Federal Administration of Public Revenue (AFIP) set forth a payment facilities plan for the companies that received the ATP in March, April, and May: deferred employer contributions to the Argentine Integrated Social Security System (SIPA) can be cancelled in up to eight instalments.

**4 June 2020. Launching of the National Register of Popular Economy Workers.** This tool will allow access to formal resources, such as credit opportunities, commercialization networks and financial inclusion. The Register includes each and every worker of the popular economy, including street vendors, stallholders, craftsmen or artisans, cardboard collectors and recyclers; small farmers, social and community workers, small manufacturers.

**4 June 2020. National Plan for Health Care Workers.** Considering the fact that health care workers are exposed to the virus, the Ministry of Health decided to establish a national plan to increase prevention measures among health care workers in public and/or private institutions, and among volunteers providing essential services in the health emergency.

**6 May 2020. Further extension of the agreements on layoffs.** Considering the current situation and the need to protect jobs and sustain employment and production, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security extended the duration of the agreement entered into by the Industrial Union of Argentina (UIA) and the General Labour Confederation (CGT) to allow temporary suspensions from work and payment of a minimum of 75% of the net salary. This measure will be in force for 60 days.

**6 June 2020. Extension of the Single Disability Certificates duration.** The National Disability Agency extended the duration of the certificates for a year as from their expiry date. Any Single Disability Certificate expired on or to be expired from January 1 to December 31, 2020 is extended for a year.

**7 June 2020. Further extension of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Isolation (ASPO) and setting of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Distancing (DISPO).** Taking into account the coronavirus transmission dynamics that were made evident in different epidemiological realities across our country, the national government decided to order the Preventive and Compulsory Social Distancing (DISPO) in every area where there is no community transmission. Where there is community transmission of the virus, the preventive and compulsory social isolation was to continue up to June 28, inclusive.



**9 June 2020. Further extension of the double compensation in case of dismissals.** The current situation requires to continue implementing measures aimed at protecting jobs and production. Therefore, the national government extended the double compensation that should be paid to people dismissed without cause. The top priority is to preserve jobs and guarantee social peace. Hence, this measure was extended for 180 days except for employees hired after December 13, 2019 and the national public sector.

**10 June 2020. Assistance Programs of the National Disability Agency.** The Coordinating Committee of the Agency created three assistance programs. The initiatives include financial support to homes and residences, as well as to production workshops, and an extra allowance for provincial input banks. Applications must be sent before July 10.

**11 June 2020. Emergency Compensation for Interjurisdictional Transport Companies.** Aimed at assisting long-distance bus companies providing transport services permitted in the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Transport established an emergency compensation for up to Pesos 50 million per month. This measure applies to companies providing services to Argentinians returning to the country and to foreigners going back to their homes.

**16 June 2020. Extension of temporary, provisional and unstable residences for 30 days.** The National Migration Office extended the residences granted to foreigners for 30 days. This measure has been in force since 18 March and includes all residences or registrations to expire as from that date, and suspends the terms to comply with notices, demands or processes timely requested. This measure was further extended on 16 July 2020.

**16 June 2020. Creation of the Assistance Program for Tourist Service Providers.** Financial support for tourist service providers, either companies or individuals, including tour guides, short trip guides, guesthouse and log cabin owners and managers.

**16 June 2020. Launching of *Potenciar Trabajo* Program.** This initiative includes the *Hacemos Futuro* and the *Salario Social Complementario* programs in one single plan to develop new production proposals, the completion of educational processes and job training.

**17 June 2020. Creation of the Critical and Direct Assistance Program for Family, Peasant and Indigenous Agriculture.** This initiative is aimed at assisting individuals, communities or groups of farmers registered in the National Registry of Family Agriculture (RENAF) and facilitates access to inputs, tools and materials that are indispensable for their production systems. The program implementation will require an initial investment of 30 million pesos.

**18 June 2020. The suspension of the closing of insolvent bank accounts is further extended.** The national government extended the suspension of the closing of insolvent



bank accounts up to December 31, inclusive.

**18 June 2020. Monetary incentives for the training of health care interns.** The Ministry of Health determined the granting of a non-wage monthly incentive for the commitment and dedication shown by health care interns. The measure includes the intern directors and applies to the months of May, June, July and August.

**18 June 2020. The ban on commissions on ATM services is further extended.** The Central Bank extended the ban on commissions on all ATM services. This measure applies to withdrawals, deposits, and queries, as well as to all other ATM services and will be in force until September 30.

**18 June 2020. The suspension of utility shutoffs is further extended.** The national government decided to extend the suspension of utility shutoffs and the freeze on utilities rates until the end of the year. This extension includes power, drinking water, as well as land and mobile phone lines, Internet and cable TV service whether radioelectric or satellite. Users can now accumulate up to six (not three as previously decreed) unpaid invoices without being shutoff.

**22 June 2020. MiPyME category update. The Ministry of Production Development updated the categories of medium-sized firms (MiPyME).** The new categorization increases the annual invoicing amount in every segment and sets new caps considering the specific situation of each industry.

**25 June 2020. Further extension of the ATP Program.** The Ministry of Production Development ordered a further extension of the Production Assistance Program (ATP). This new extension focuses on the supplementary salary and employers' contributions to the Argentine Integrated Social Security System (SIPA) due in June and considers the health schemes existing in every territory to determine the relevant salary caps. Interest-free loans availability was also extended up to July 31.

**25 June 2020. New measures announced by AFIP.** Considering the current economic situation, AFIP implemented new measures to help taxpayers fulfil their obligations: Suspend any precautionary measures on taxpayers registered in the MiPyMes Register; further extend the suspension of new proceedings for execution of debt and the duration of the period to adhere to the payment facilities regime announced to release debts. Deadline, in all cases, is July 31.

**26 June 2020. Creation of the COVID-19 Pandemic Ethics and Human Rights Committee.**



Members will be ad honorem. The Committee will issue recommendations to support initiatives aimed at public health care, based on the protection of the fundamental rights of the population and on WHO recommendations.

**29 June 2020. Further extension of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Isolation and Setting of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Distancing.** The preventive and compulsory social isolation was extended where certain sanitary parameters are fulfilled. The preventive and compulsory social distancing was extended in areas where the virus transmission rate is high, and new exceptions were established for essential activities. These measures will be in force until July 17.

**30 June 2020. Approval of a Program to ensure access to ICT's services and connectivity.** The National Communications Bureau (Ente Nacional de Comunicaciones) established the following programs funded by the Trust Fund called Fondo Fiduciario del Servicio Universal. Program for the development of Internet infrastructure; Program to provide access to ICT's services in areas considered adverse or unattended for the deployment of networks; Program to deploy networks to access mobile communication services; and Program to provide connectivity to public institutions.

**30 June 2020. Further extension of the Maximum Prices Programme.** The Secretary of Domestic Commerce extended the Maximum Prices Programme to continue ensuring access to essential products on reasonable, fair and equal conditions until August 30. This measure applies to 2,300 categories of products that will keep their 6 March prices. Furthermore, the programme will continue to coordinate monitoring activities with the different jurisdictions in manufacturing companies, wholesalers, and retailers.

**30 June 2020. Further extension of the *Ahora 12* installment plan.** The Secretary of Domestic Commerce extended the *Ahora 12* Program until 31 December 2020.

**1 July 2020. Creation of the Programme *Soluciona. Reactivación de la economía del conocimiento*.** This initiative aims at providing financial support to legal persons to reactivate production thanks to innovative solutions. The main focus is on developing the capacities of the economy of knowledge.

**2 July 2020. Further extension of the suspension of payments of ANSES loans.** ANSES suspended the payment of July and August instalments. This measure applies to all ANSES beneficiaries with ongoing loans but states that they cannot apply for new loans for as long as the grace period.



**7 July 2020. Creation of the National Programme for reactivating and finishing housing, infrastructure and habitat works.** This initiative focuses on reactivating and finishing works under the National Housing Plan that are currently paralyzed or delayed. The programme will encourage hiring, reintegration into working life and the economic renewal of local markets of construction materials and inputs.

**7 July 2020. Further extension of the payment due date of income tax and personal property tax obligations.** AFIP extended the payment due date of income tax and personal property obligations to 31 August.

**8 July 2020. Creation of the Programme for Universities in the COVID-19 Emergency.** This measure promotes active cooperation of universities with community actions linked to health care, prevention, and promotion, in coordination with different health facilities. The programme also considers assistance and support to at-risk individuals. Furthermore, it fosters the involvement and participation of university students and the community, and will be in force for six months.

**8 July 2020. Creation of the Programme *Argentina Unida por la Integración de los Barrios Populares*.** This measure will help funding, developing and implementing social and urban integration projects in neighbourhoods registered in the RENABAP. There will be three support lines based on the specific needs of every territory.

**8 July 2020. Creation of the Federal Programme *Argentina Construye Solidaria*.** This initiative finances the procurement of materials and equipment to execute minor works to better spaces providing services to the communities. Considering that these works often require completion in a short time, the programme provides for the active involvement of the provincial and municipal administrations that can speed up territorial governance matters.

**9 July 2020. Launching of the *Activar Patrimonio* Scholarships.** In view of the current circumstances and the absence of activities linked to the National Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Culture called for applications for emergency scholarships, the *Activar Patrimonio* initiative. It targets artists, writers, curators and researchers who develop projects related to museums and national institutes. Investment will be 1,500,000.00 Pesos.

**18 July 2020. Further extension of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Isolation and Setting of the Preventive and Compulsory Social Distancing.** Since there still are realities that require different epidemiological approaches, the national government decreed the extension of the ASPO and DISPO until 2 August, inclusive. Provincial authorities and the





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CONFERENCE

## **The Challenges that COVID-19 Brings to Health Systems**

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Mayor of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires may ask the Chief of the Cabinet of Ministers grant new exceptions to the restrictions to non-essential travels. The aim is allowing industrial activities, and the opening of services, retailers, social, sport or recreational institutions, always under strict prevention protocols.



## MEASURES TAKEN BY THE PROVINCE OF SANTA FE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. AN UPDATE.

**Decree 0456/2020.** It extends ASPO exceptions and eliminates restrictions to non-essential travels associated with activities and services linked to private works that require up to ten (10) workers in localities included in the Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe urban agglomerates.

**Decree 0460/2020.** It orders the health quarantine in Villa Ocampo, in the Department of General Obligado, as from 30 May 2020.

**Decree 0467/2020.** It extends ASPO exceptions and eliminates restrictions to non-essential travels associated with household workers, and employees of unions, business associations, cafes and restaurants offering take away services, retail shops in commercial centres, promenades or shopping malls that offer pick up services in localities included in the Greater Rosario and Greater Santa Fe urban agglomerates.

**Decree 0472/2020.** It creates the *Asistencia Económica de Emergencia* Programme under the Ministry of Production, Science and Technology. The programme offers assistance to activities and services impacted by ASPO and restrictions to non-essential travels. Decree 0607/2020 (06/07/2020) increased the number of beneficiaries and included activities and services linked to guesthouses, log cabins, bungalows, hostels, etc.

**Decree 0474/2020.** For the granting of ASPO exceptions and restrictions to non-essential travels, this decree sets forth certain requirements vis-a-vis the place of departure. It applies to sports practice, meeting friends and family, cafes and restaurants, and visiting cemeteries where local administrations have decided to open such activities. Decree **496/2020** authorized meetings with friends and families every weekday, from 09:00 AM to 11.00 PM. Unfortunately, meetings were again restricted to weekends and holidays by Decree No. **596/2020**.

**Decree 0534/2020** amended Decree No. 0474/20 and authorized sports practices for children above 12 years old and up to 09.00 PM.

**Decree 0487/2020.** The province of Santa Fe adhered to Decree of Necessity and Urgency (DNU) 520/20 issued by the National Executive that, in Article 2 orders the preventive and compulsory social distancing (DISPO) up until 28 June 2020 inclusive. This measure was later on further extended and is still in force. **Decree 0489/2020 set out the details of this new phase.** Pursuant to DNU 576/20, DISPO was further extended in the province by **Decree 0572/2020** (29 June 2020), and 0643/2020, up until August 2, inclusive.



**Decree 0495/2020.** The following services are authorized from 07:00 AM to 07:00 PM: 1. Sports and recreational fishing, 2. Recreational sailing, and 3. Sports clubs activities associated with others already mentioned.

**Decree 0497/2020.** For the duration of DISPO, it authorizes the following art and cultural activities: a) rehearsals and recordings in recording studios, keeping the required social distancing, b) pre production, production and post production of audios and audiovisual products; c) private lessons of art disciplines and expressions, and d) art and craft activities in the open air, in parks and promenades.

**Decree 0521/2020.** It orders the opening of some activities in Villa Ocampo, Department of General Obligado, including retail, industrial operations, private works, etc.

**Decree 0525/2020.** It authorized the National University of Rosario (UNR) to take in-person exams to the 49 cohort at the School of Medicine.

**Decree 0535/2020.** It ordered the health quarantine in Carreras, Department of General Lopez, as from 18 May 2020. It also ordered that activities and services in the city of Ceres, Department of San Cristobal, should be strictly limited to ASPO exceptions and banned all non-essential travels by Decrees 0367/20, 0382/20, 0393/20, 0414/20, 0446/20, 0455/20, and 0456/20, article 2 of the Executive.

Ministry of Public Management (MGP) Resolution 0205/2020, dated 8 July 2020, authorized ASPO exceptions and eliminated restrictions to non-essential travels included in Decrees 0367/20, 0382/20, 0393/20, 0414/20, 0446/20, 0455/20, and 0456/20 article 2° of the Executive. Then, Resolution 0219/2020 dated 20 July 2020 included ASPO exceptions and restrictions included in Decrees 0436/20, 0438/20, 0449/20, 0474/20 and amendments 0534/20, 0596/20, as well as activities authorized in the context of DISPO by Decrees 0487/20, 0489/20, 0495/20, 0496/20, 0497/20, 0595/20, and 0627/20.-

MGP Resolution 0206/2020 authorized exceptions to ASPO and limited the restrictions on non-essential travels in Ceres, as from 11 July 2020. Such restrictions and exceptions had been ordered by Decrees 0436/20, 0449/20, 0474/20 as amended by 0534/20 and 0596/20. Activities included in the context of DISPO by Decrees 0487/20, 0489/20, 0495/20, 0497/20, and 0595/20 were also authorized.

**Decree 0537/2020.** It ordered the reopening of commercial centres and shops included in article 2, paragraph e) 4, Law 12069 across the province.

MGP Resolution 0167/2020 (19 June 2020). It ordered the health quarantine in Ceres,



Department of San Cristobal. MGP Resolution 0194/2020, dated 3 July 2020, authorized ASPO exceptions and eliminated restrictions to non-essential travels included in Decrees 0367/20, 0382/20, 0393/20, 0414/20, 0446/20, 0455/20 and 0456/20 article 2° of the Executive in Ceres. -

Decree 0542/2020. (20 June 2020). It ordered the health quarantine in Santa Rosa de Calchines, Department of Garay. MGP Resolution 0176/2020, dated 3 July 2020, authorized ASPO exceptions and eliminated restrictions to non-essential travels included in Decrees 0367/20, 0382/20, 0393/20, 0414/20, 0446/20, 0455/20 and 0456/20 article 2° of the Executive in the town mentioned above. MGP Resolution 0195/2020 authorized exceptions to ASPO and limited the restrictions on non-essential travels. Such restrictions and exceptions had been ordered by Decrees 0436/20, 0449/20, 0474/20 as amended by 0534/20 and 0596/20. Activities included in the context of DISPO by Decrees 0487/20, 0489/20, 0495/20, 0497/20, and 0595/20 were also authorized.

**Decree 0543/2020.** It ordered that individuals travelling from areas where ASPO is still in force with final destination in a provincial locality while not being residents of the province are obliged to comply with the preventive and compulsory social isolation measures determined by the provincial Ministry of Health. ASPO is still in force in areas where there is community transmission of COVID-19, as defined by the National Ministry of Health. Furthermore, it restricted activities for individuals who travel to areas with community transmission of COVID-19, upon their return.

**Decree 0554/2020.** It decreed that residents in the province of Santa Fe already authorized to leave their homes who frequently, periodically or occasionally travel to areas under health quarantine, when returning to their places of residence, cannot take part in activities exempted of ASPO and are banned to travel, as referred to in the corresponding decrees and as detailed in article 2, Decree No. 0543/2020.

**Decree 0556/2020.** It set forth restrictions to activities and services timely authorized in the city of Venado Tuerto, Department of General Lopez, considering the increasing number of COVID-19 cases. By Resolution issued by the Ministry of Public Management (MGP) 0183/2020 dated 30 June 2020, exemptions to ASPO and restrictions to travel defined by Decree No. 0474/20, as amended by 0534/20 and 0596/20, are authorized in Venado Tuerto, as well as the activities that, in the context of DISPO, are authorized by decrees 0487/20, 0489/20, 0495/20, 0497/20, 0537/20 and 0595/20.

**Decree 0595/2020.** It authorized meetings and religious celebrations in churches, temples and places of worship from the Roman Catholic Church and other religious entities registered in the National Registry of Religions for up to thirty (30) people at the same time.



**Decree 0599/2020.** (Dated 1 July 2020) It ordered the health quarantine in Bombal, Department of Constitution.

**Decree 0600/2020.** It authorized the National University of Littoral (UNL) to deliver face to face essential classes and conclude the teaching learning process that completes the evaluation of nine (9) students of the School of Medicine.

**Decree 0617/2020.** It ordered that, as from 0:00 hours of 9 July 2020, in the city of Villa Constitución, Department of Constitution, restrictions apply to activities and services before authorized. This decree results from the increase in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and includes restrictions to authorizations granted in the context of DISPO and ASPO.

Resolution 0215/2020 issued by the Ministry of Public Management (MGP) on 17 July 2020 authorized again the activities and exemptions closed by the previous decree.

**Decree No. 0636/2020.** It ordered the health quarantine for Santa Isabel, in the Department of General Lopez, as from 0:00 of 18 July and for fourteen (14) days.