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DepEd Task Force COVID-19
MEMORANDUM No. 588
05 January 2022

For: **Leonor Magtolis Briones**
Secretary

Subject: **MANDATORY TESTING OF PERSONNEL REPORTING ON-SITE STARTING 05 JANUARY 2022, AND REITERATION OF THE REQUIRED HEALTH STANDARDS, INCLUDING WHEN NOT TO REPORT ON-SITE**

COVID-19 cases in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces have been notably increasing and are expected to continue to increase. In this regard, the DepEd Task Force COVID-19 raises the following recommendation (Item 1) to the Honorable Secretary and reiterates the succeeding reminders (Items. 2, 3, and 4) for the guidance and observance of all personnel at the CO.

Regional Directors are cc'd in this memorandum to provide them a reference on similar measures that they can implement in their respective jurisdictions to ensure the safety of their personnel and prevent the further spread of the virus.

1. The CO Task Force COVID-19 issues this memo¹ on the **mandatory antigen testing of all personnel reporting on-site which has already started today, 05 January 2022, the results of which shall be considered valid for up to two (2) weeks from the date of testing**, unless the personnel develop COVID-19 symptoms or are tagged as close contacts, for which they shall stop reporting on-site, but report immediately to the CO Clinic Medical Doctor and their respective Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) for the necessary next steps of action.
 - a. Testing shall be on a *first-come, first-served* basis before personnel are allowed entry to the DepEd CO premises.
 - b. Those who will not be able to log-in on time via the biometric clock because of waiting in line for their turn to be tested may raise their request for time-in via the EHRIS, using their logged-in time of entry

¹ If approved by the Secretary, this memorandum shall effectively supersede CO Task Force COVID-19 Memorandum No. 001, dated 01 September 2021, titled *Mandatory Regular Testing and Strict Observation of Health Protocols of Central Office Skeleton Workforce and Frontline or Mobile Personnel*.



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at the CO gate.

- c. Testing shall also be administered to personnel who will be on official travel, before they travel and upon their return.
 - d. Those who will test positive shall follow the next steps that will be advised by the CO Medical Clinic to ensure proper management and monitoring.
 - e. While personnel are not restricted from administering antigen tests at home for personal use, these shall not be honored as basis for being allowed entry to CO premises. Said personnel shall still be subjected to the testing administered by the CO Medical Clinic.
 - f. Consequently, the same requirement shall be expected of visitors who will need to enter CO premises, regardless of their vaccination status.
2. All personnel reporting on-site, regardless of the antigen test result or the vaccination status, are also reminded to **strictly observe the required health standards at all times.**
- a. This entails wearing of masks, practicing proper hand hygiene and cough etiquette, observing physical distance, ensuring airflow, and avoiding crowded and enclosed spaces.
 - b. Personnel are strongly enjoined to use properly fitted surgical masks instead of cloth masks. For personnel who may not be able to use surgical masks, cloth mask that fits snugly on the face and made of at least two layers of cotton (e.g., t-shirt fabric) or non-woven nylon with aluminum nose bridge may be used.
 - c. Practically speaking, this translates to the following examples of expected behaviors²:
 - i. Masks shall be worn even when attending virtual activities if another personnel is physically present in the same room.
 - ii. Masks shall be worn as much as possible even during necessary photo-ops in face-to-face activities.
 - iii. Personnel shall eat their lunch alone in their desks, avoid chatting with officemates while eating, and immediately mask up as soon as they are done.
 - iv. Meetings in closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings shall be avoided. If inevitable, such as when in public transportation, all are reminded to mask up.
 - v. Adequate ventilation should be strictly enforced in the shuttle

² References: Department of Health (DOH) Philippines Facebook page infographics, DOH Workplace Handbook on COVID-19 Management and Prevention



services. The opening of windows, with at least three (3) inches of opening, while in transit should be practiced whenever possible. Proper disinfection before and after each use of the vehicle is likewise mandatory.

- vi. When face-to-face meetings are warranted, organizers shall opt not to serve drinks or snacks during the meeting so that no one shall be compelled to take off their masks.
 - vii. The maximum number of people who can use the elevator at a time is four (4) people only. Less is better. Conversations shall be avoided. Security guards shall strictly impose this restriction and signages shall be posted anew to remind elevator users.
 - viii. Only one person shall use the bathroom sink at a time, especially when washing their faces or brushing their teeth, because this will mean that they will be standing closely next to each other without their masks on.
 - ix. Where physical distancing may be compromised, offices shall ensure installation of physical barriers such as sneeze guards (acrylic plastic sheets), glass panels, theater ropes and stanchions, hazard warning tape.
 - x. Natural ventilation shall be maximized through open windows or repositioning workspaces. Even in air-conditioned spaces, windows, doors and other openings shall be frequently opened.
 - xi. Existing prohibition on smoking in CO premises shall be strictly enforced. Such activity does not only pose health risks, but also involves the removing of masks and usually entails unnecessary congregation of personnel.
- d. Similar applicable health standards are expected to be observed by personnel when in transit or on travel.
3. While all offices shall adhere to the minimum onsite work capacity for government agencies (i.e., at least 60% for government agencies in areas under Alert Level No. 3),³ the following exemptions as to who shall be expected to report on-site are reiterated:
- a. Personnel who are not fully vaccinated shall be discouraged from reporting on-site, but be strongly encouraged to be vaccinated immediately, unless validly disqualified for medical reasons.
 - b. The following are reminded to **not report on-site** but instead explore work-from-home arrangements, if applicable, unless otherwise cleared to report to work by the CO Clinic Medical Doctor, upon presentation of necessary documents, as may be required (e.g., completion of quarantine):

³ DTFC Memorandum No. 587 titled *Reiteration of the Required Health Standards, Vaccination, and On-Site Requirements*



- i. Personnel who have tested positive on COVID-19 whether through antigen test or RT-PCR;
 - ii. Personnel who are probable or suspect cases, including those who have pending test results;
 - iii. Personnel who are close contacts of confirmed, probable, and suspect cases (these include personnel who are exposed to persons who have symptoms of COVID-19 or are waiting for their COVID-19 test results); and
 - iv. Personnel who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, regardless of possible explanation (e.g., *“I usually get a cough after riding an airconditioned vehicle so this must be normal of me to be coughing.”*)
- c. Personnel who experience COVID-19 symptoms⁴ are advised to report to their attending physicians, if applicable, their respective BHERTs, and the CO Clinic Medical Doctor, for appropriate evaluation and assessment of need of testing, and monitoring.
 - d. All personnel shall be subjected to a temperature check prior to being allowed entry into the workplace, or the designated vehicle for those availing of transportation service, both when CO-bound and when homeward bound. Only those with temperature below 37.5°C shall be allowed entry. Those whose temperature is 37.5°C and above, when CO-bound, shall be advised to return home, and when homeward bound, shall be advised to stay at the waiting area, and report to the CO Clinic Medical Doctor immediately.
 - e. As an extra precautionary measure, personnel who are exposed to close contacts of confirmed cases (second-generation close contacts), may be advised to work from home, if practicable, until the status of the first-generation close contacts is confirmed. Should the second-generation close contacts report onsite, they shall be expected to strictly observe the required health standards.⁵
 - f. It is reiterated that quarantine/isolation shall not be deducted from existing leave credits for permanent positions, while Contract of Service (CoS) personnel shall not be considered absent during their quarantine/isolation, as long as they produce expected work deliverables. The Bureau of Human Resource and Organization Development (BHROD) is requested to provide updated guidance on handling the attendance records of abovementioned personnel; e.g.,

⁴ COVID-19 symptoms include fever (37.5°C or higher), cough, general weakness, fatigue/tiredness, headache, muscle/joint/body pains, sore throat, colds/runny nose, difficulty of breathing (requires immediate medical attention), loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of smell, loss of taste, rashes (DOH DM 2020-0512)

⁵ This provision effectively updates DTFC Memorandum No. 95 titled *Updated Protocols in Handling, Managing, and Testing of Reported COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts at the Central Office*; the said memorandum required that those exposed to close contacts shall also be on WFH arrangement; however, the said memorandum was written when there were not as much test kits available as today, and when the government's vaccination program had not been rolled out



WFH arrangements, applicable types of *leave*.

4. All personnel are enjoined to access the DOH Kira ChatBot for relevant, up-to-date, and accurate information on COVID-19 management and vaccination: <https://m.me/OfficialDOHgov> .
5. For medical and other health-related concerns discussed above, **Dr. Rainerio Reyes**, CO Clinic Medical Doctor, may be contacted through 0939-912-9668 or email at rainerio.reyes@deped.gov.ph .

For queries regarding this memorandum, please contact the **DTFC Secretariat, BLSS-SHD**, through (02) 8632-9935 or email at medical.nursing@deped.gov.ph .

For the Secretary's consideration and approval, and for the proper guidance of all concerned.


ALAIN DEL B. PASCUA
Undersecretary
Chairperson, DTFC



cc: Wilfredo E. Cabral
OIC Undersecretary for Human Resource and Organizational Development

Regional Directors



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