



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
REGION X

SCHOOLS DIVISION OF MISAMIS ORIENTAL

Office of the Schools Division
Superintendent

26 September 2022

Division Memorandum

No. 550, s. 2022

NEW HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN LIGHT OF COVID -19 PANDEMIC

**To: Public Schools District Supervisors / District In-charge
Elementary and Secondary School Principals/ Heads
School Health Personnel
All Others Concerned**

1. The Department of Education issued DepEd ORDER No. 039, s. 2022 dated September 19, 2022 titled: **Health and Safety Protocols in Light of the COVID - 19 Pandemic** which includes:
 - a. An updated guidance for teaching, non-teaching personnel and learners regarding COVID – 19 vaccination and testing in the Department;
 - b. Minimum public health standards (MPHS) and other related protocols relative to their reporting for work or school beginning School Year (SY) 2022-2023;
 - c. Efforts to promote COVID- 19 vaccination; and
 - d. Handling attendance records of personnel affected by matters related to COVID – 19.
2. All schools are advised to exercise due diligence and take precautionary measures to minimize exposure to risks associated with COVID -19 and to support government efforts to contain the spread of the virus.
3. The provision of the OSEC Memorandum dated June 28, 2022, titled **Concerns on COVID -19 Vaccination and Testing of Personnel of the Department of Education**, and Office Order No. 00-OSEC -2022-003 titled **Interim Guidelines on the Expansion of Limited Face to Face Classes** are **repealed**, while Item No. 52 of DO 034, s 2022 titled **School Calendar of Activities for SY 2022 -23** is **amended**.
4. Enclosed in this Division Memorandum is the **“Health and Safety Protocols in Light of COVID – 19 Pandemic”**
5. For information, guidance, and compliance

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Schools Division Superintendent

To be indicated in the Perpetual Index
under the following subjects:

POLICY LEARNERS
SCHOOLS TEACHERS

SGOD/ med -vcs



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HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN LIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

I. RATIONALE

1. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Education (DepEd) has released various issuances to guide schools and offices on ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of personnel and learners, especially in the context of the resumption of face-to-face classes amid the pandemic. The said issuances have always been based on the guidance provided by health authorities and the national government.
2. To date, the latest issuance which provides such guidance is **DepEd Order No. 34, s. 2022** titled *School Calendar and Activities for the School Year 2022-2023*, particularly **Section VI. Prevention of COVID-19 and Other Infectious Diseases**.
3. Various issuances are available to schools. However, some of the provisions of the said issuances are no longer applicable or have been updated based on latest evidence or guidance from health authorities or the national government. With this, it is deemed necessary to provide the updated protocols and standards that should be in place as schools implement face-to-face classes.
4. With regard to COVID-19 testing and vaccination, DepEd strictly implements a **“no-discrimination”** policy in terms of managing its personnel and learners, regardless of their vaccination status.
5. This DepEd Order supports the implementation of face-to-face classes by strengthening the provisions of DO 34, s. 2022 particularly on the prevention of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, and addressing related concerns that schools may have regarding the implementation of such provisions, including concerns on COVID-19 testing and vaccination, and handling of attendance records of personnel affected by matters related to COVID-19.

II. SCOPE

6. This DepEd Order shall apply to all public elementary and secondary schools, including community learning centers (CLCs) nationwide, and their offices. SUCs/LUCs offering basic education and private schools are highly encouraged to adopt this DO.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

7. DepEd issues these health and safety protocols to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of learners and personnel in the implementation of in-person classes amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

IV. GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 VACCINATION AND TESTING

8. All teaching and non-teaching personnel and learners, regardless of vaccination status, shall be allowed to attend in-person classes.

9. Unvaccinated teaching and non-teaching personnel and learners shall not be required to undergo regular COVID-19 testing.

10. DepEd offices and schools shall not be held liable if a teaching and non-teaching personnel or learners should turn COVID-19-positive.

11. DepEd continues to recognize vaccination as among the most effective strategies for the prevention of COVID-19 deaths. Schools shall coordinate with health authorities from the local government to encourage and educate stakeholders on the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination especially among the families of unvaccinated teaching and non-teaching personnel and learners and implement mobile vaccinations for those who sign a written consent to be vaccinated.

a. School Health and Nutrition (SHN) personnel shall continue to encourage teachers and the non-teaching personnel to have at least three (3) doses of their COVID -19 vaccination (two [2] primary doses plus at least one [1] booster dose), with inclusion of parents, guardians, and learners as applicable. SHN personnel shall document specific issues on hesitancy that unvaccinated personnel and learners may have. The Bureau of Learner Support Services-School Health Division (BLSS-SHD) shall coordinate with the DOH for the necessary capacity building activities for SHN personnel, including documenting, reporting, and addressing hesitancy. Hesitancy can also be monitored by promoting the DOH KIRA Chatbot (m.me/OfficialDOHgov), which serves as an accessible online tool for identifying common questions and concerns that people have relating to the vaccines. Promotional materials to encourage utilization of KIRA chatbot are available here (bit.ly/KIRAPromos).

b. Schools are encouraged to request the support of Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) as partners in education and health preservation; that they be involved in conducting information sessions and briefings on COVID-19 vaccination, or emphasizing its benefits to increase the wall of immunity or learners and the community.

c. Schools are enjoined to take active participation in the DOH *PinasLakas* Campaign, a demand generation campaign for COVID-19 vaccination, which adopts a settings-based approach. Campaign background and materials may be accessed at <https://bit.ly/PinasLakasSBCC> and <http://bit.ly/PinasLakasAssets> , respectively.

d. Vaccine cards/records shall not be used as a mandatory requirement for educational, employment, and other similar government transaction purposes.

12. All regional offices are reminded to ensure the regular reporting of the vaccination status of DepEd personnel to BLSS-SHD as practiced, pending the updated guidance from the Office of the Undersecretary for Governance and Field Operations (OUGFO) on the reporting template and schedule. The OUGFO shall ensure proper housekeeping and regular reporting of the said data. Data on the vaccination of learners shall continue to be part of the Learners' Information System (LIS). SHN personnel shall be given access to such data to ensure alignment of initiatives to promote vaccination and address hesitancy.

V. MINIMUM PUBLIC HEALTH STANDARDS (MPHS) AND OTHER RELATED HEALTH PROTOCOLS

13. While all personnel and learners will now freely interact with each other in shared spaces in the school setting regardless of their vaccination status, all concerned shall ensure observance of the MPHS, as provided for in DO 34, s. 2022, and as reiterated and further expounded in this section.

14. Materials for the promotion of the MPHS and related health protocols as part of the **BIDA KID campaign** may be accessed at bit.ly/BIDAKidCommsPackage.

Handwashing and Disinfection

15. Schools shall ensure availability of handwashing facilities with soap and conduct of group handwashing activities while observing MPHS, in line with **DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016** titled *Policy and Guidelines for the Comprehensive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools [WinS] Program* and **DepEd Memorandum No. 194, s. 2018** titled *Implementing Guidelines to DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016*. Per DM 194, s. 2018, a group handwashing facility should have at least ten (10) water outlets in elementary level, and four (4) water outlets in the secondary level.

16. Schools shall follow the latest guidelines on cleaning and disinfection as issued by the DOH and/or the WHO, and ensure that only disinfectants that are approved by the Philippine Food and Drug Administration (FDA) shall be used.

17. The Philippine COVID-19 Living Recommendations recommends against the use of footbaths, and ionizing air purifier, misting tents or disinfection chambers for preventing and controlling COVID-19 transmission, while it recommends against the use of UV lamps or other UV devices in any place outside of a controlled clinic or hospital setting to prevent and control COVID-19 transmission.

Wearing of Face Masks

18. Wearing of face masks shall be mandatory for all personnel, learners, and visitors inside classrooms, laboratories and other school rooms, but shall be voluntary in open spaces, or non-crowded outdoor areas with good ventilation, as well as in playing sports and other physical activities. Open spaces and outdoor areas shall mean areas or spaces with or without roofing.

a. The school shall ensure availability of face masks especially for learners who may come to school not wearing one. The school may seek the assistance of the local government as needed to ensure ample and regular supply of face masks. It is reiterated that health and sanitation expenses are among those "clarified as allowed to be charged against the Use of the Special Education Funds (SEF)," per DepEd-Department of Budget and Management (DBM)-Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Joint Circular No. 02, s. 2020 entitled *Addendum No. 2 [Clarification to DepEd-DBM-DILG Joint Circular No. 1, s. 2017 dated January 19, 20217, entitled, "Revised Guidelines on the Use of the Special Education Funds (SEF)"]*.

b. A face shield may be used in lieu of a face mask for specific situations where removal of face mask is warranted, such as activities requiring the entire face of an individual to be visible. During these specific activities, safe distance, adequate ventilation, and proper hygiene shall be strictly ensured at all times.

Ventilation

19. All schools and offices shall ensure adequate ventilation in enclosed and shared spaces.

a. Adequate ventilation may be achieved through natural ventilation such as opening of windows and doors, while ensuring that nearby spaces of open windows are free from toxic gases and pollutants.

b. Other options to increase ventilation in enclosed spaces include using exhaust fans and placing fans near windows.

i. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), using a fan in an enclosed space can increase the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. This is why it is important to open windows and doors whenever using a fan to replace indoor air without outdoor air.

ii. Ventilation fans (i.e., floor, table top, pedestal fans) should be placed where air flow from these fans shall not be from person to person.

iii. The fan can be placed in front of an open window to increase air flow and push indoor air outside.

c. Proper ventilation in communal restrooms must not be overlooked. If installed, exhaust fans in these areas must be operational and at full capacity whenever the space is occupied. All users must remember to close the lids of toilet bowls before flushing. The acts of flushing contribute to dispersion of contaminants inside the restrooms.

Physical Distancing

20. All personnel, learners, and visitors shall observe physical distancing whenever possible.

21. Canteens can operate at full operational capacity. Eating should be done with distancing whenever possible.

School Health Programs and Services, including Vaccination

22. Schools shall ensure continuous implementation of school-based routine vaccination and other medical, dental and nursing services, and campaigns on healthy schools like smoke-free and vape-free environments, anti-bullying practices, nutrition, oral health, reproductive health, substance use prevention, mental health, and water, sanitation and hygiene), in line with existing initiatives such as *Oplan Kalusugan sa DepEd*, and the Healthy Learning Institutions (HLI) Framework.

23. Schools shall follow the latest protocols on identifying close contacts, isolation, quarantine, and treatment as implemented by local epidemiology and surveillance units (LESUs). As such, unless everyone in the office or the school has been advised by the LESU to undergo quarantine or isolation, there shall be no need for school or office closure.

COVID-19 Response and Management

24. All personnel and learners shall be regularly reminded to strictly monitor themselves for possible symptoms of COVID-19 before reporting to work or school. Those with flu-like symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, will not be allowed to report onsite but will be advised to stay at home, switch to distance learning (for learners), or avail of their sick leave credits (for personnel), as may be applicable. Similarly, visitors who show COVID-19 symptoms shall be advised to transact with the office or the school virtually or come back another time when they are no longer symptomatic.

25. Schools shall strengthen community monitoring measures and referral systems with LGUs and health centers and encourage participation and cooperation of parents and communities for safe transportation and home care isolation of learners when sick. Offices and schools are no longer required to have a dedicated isolation room for symptomatic learners or personnel, but shall ensure that personnel and learners who need to be transported home or to local health facilities due to COVID-19 symptoms stay or wait in a safe open space or holding area in the office or the school. The space/area shall be disinfected before and after use through wiping (not spraying or misting) of surfaces with FDA-approved disinfectants.

26. School-specific surveillance plans shall be established.

a. Schools shall identify and report case clusters and other unusual health events to the LESUs.

b. Schools shall coordinate closely with LESUs for case and cluster investigation and confirmatory testing and management as needed.

c. Schools shall monitor absences to determine if higher than usually recorded and investigate if the cause of absences is attributed to a similar event.

VI. HANDLING ATTENDANCE RECORDS OF PERSONNEL AFFECTED BY MATTERS RELATED TO COVID-19

27. Attendance records of personnel who will not be able to report to work onsite due to reasons related to COVID-19 (e.g., failing to report to work on-site for not complying with the regular COVID-19 test requirement; undergoing required isolation, or treatment; availing of vaccination; getting treated for Adverse Events Following Immunization [AEFI]) shall be handled in accordance to latest issuances. To date, these include CSC issuances such as MC No. 07, s. 2022; CSC MC No. 02, s. 2022 titled *Amendment to the Revised Interim Guidelines on the Use of Leave Credits for Absences Due to Quarantine and/or Treatment of COVID-19*; and CSC MC No. 16, s. 2021 titled *Interim Guidelines on Absences of Government Officials and Employees Due to COVID-19 Vaccination and/or Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) of COVID-19 Vaccine*.

28. All personnel shall follow the latest isolation protocols, including the prescribed period, as set by the latest national guidelines, and as implemented by their respective local epidemiology and surveillance units (LESUs).

29. Excused absence shall be applied personnel who are required to undergo isolation, pursuant to CSC MC No. 02, s. 2022. Personnel who are considered to be under "excused absence" are not required to report for work, but are entitled to payment of salary. Their absence shall not be deducted to their accrued leave/service credits.

30. Work-from-Home arrangement shall apply to personnel who are required to undergo isolation due to exposure but are asymptomatic and/or are able to perform their work assignments at home. Excused absence shall apply to personnel who are in isolation due to exposure to COVID-19 but are not able to perform their work assignments at home, provided that they submit a certification issued by their respective Heads of Offices, attached to their Leave forms.

31. For the purpose of claiming COVID-19 isolation and leave benefits, a medical certification issued by a certified attending physician/Barangay Health Emergency Response Teams (BHERT)/office or school medical physician may suffice provided it should include the following minimum information: name of patient, severity of symptoms, diagnosis as probable or confirmed COVID-19, and date of end of isolation period. Additional documents required as provided in **CSC MC No. 02, s. 2022** such as but not limited to:

- a. Copy of COVID-19 test result
- b. Copy of Barangay/Office Clinic Contact Tracing Form
- c. Approved Travel Authority/Locator Slip
- d. Certificate of Appearance
- e. Laboratory results and other medical supporting documents

32. Diagnostic reports and test results shall come from accredited laboratory or testing centers and shall be subject to validation for authenticity as may be needed. Absences without the required medical certification shall be deducted to employees' accrued leave credits/service credits or salary, if applicable.

33. For absences from work during the day of COVID-19 vaccination (first and second dose, including booster shots) and absences due to the adverse effects following immunization shall be considered as "excused absence," subject to the requirements and provisions of CSC MC No. 16, s. 2021.

34. For Contract of Service (COS) and Job Orders (JOs), the provisions under the Commission on Audit (COA)-DBM Joint Circular No. 01 dated 19 March 2020, titled *Interim Guidelines Governing Contract of Service (COS) and Job Orders (JO) Workers in the Government for the Duration of the State of Calamity and Community Quarantine Due to COVID-19*, specifically item no. 3.4 of which states that "COS and JO workers who will be required to work from home shall be paid their corresponding salaries/wages during community quarantine period" shall be applied.

35. Furthermore, following the scope and coverage of DO No. 11, s. 2020, and to promote the welfare and well-being of all DepEd personnel, the application of COVID-19 leave benefits shall be extended to all COS and JOs in all DepEd offices, schools, and CLCs. In lieu of the required leave form (CSC Form No. 06 s. 2020), COS and JOs shall attach the required documentary requirements/medical certification/vaccination card to their duly signed Daily Time Records (DTRs), as supporting documents for the processing of their salaries.

VII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

36. BLSS shall provide regular updates as needed and with the Regional Offices (ROs) and SDOs, monitor the compliance of schools with the sections and provisions of this DepEd Order pertaining to the MPHS and other related health protocols, guidance on COVID-19 vaccination and testing, and efforts to promote covid-19 vaccination. For this purpose, BLSS shall coordinate with other offices concerned, such as the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Services (DRRMS), per DO 34, s. 2022.

37. The Bureau of Human Resource and Organizational Development (BHROD) shall provide regular updates as needed and monitor the compliance of offices and schools with the sections and provisions of this DepEd Order pertaining to handling the attendance records of personnel affected by matters related to COVID-19.

38. SDOs, through the counterpart units/sections/personnel of the BLSS-SHD and BHROD, shall provide technical assistance to schools and monitor their compliance with the provisions of this DepEd Order relevant to the functions of the said units/sections/personnel, and through the Regional Offices (ROs), submit reports to the BLSS and BHROD.

VIII. EFFECTIVITY

39. The provisions of OSEC Memorandum dated June 28, 2022 titled *Concerns on COVID-19 vaccination and testing of personnel of the Department of Education*; and Office Order No. OO-OSEC-2022-003 titled *Interim Guidelines on the Expansion of Limited Face-to-Face Classes* are repealed. All other DepEd Orders, Memoranda, and other related issuances, rules, regulations, and provisions which are inconsistent with these guidelines are repealed, rescinded, or modified accordingly.

40. This DepEd Order shall take effect immediately upon issuance and publication on the DepEd website and shall be registered with the Office of the National Administrative Register (ONAR).