



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Office of the Court Administrator
Manila

OCA CIRCULAR NO. 271-2023-A

TO : ALL JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL OF THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL COURTS

SUBJECT : LIFTING OF THE STATE OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES DUE TO COVID-19

For the information and guidance of all concerned, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., through Proclamation No. 297 dated 21 July 2023, lifted the Public Health Emergency throughout the Philippines due to COVID-19, effective immediately.

In view of Proclamation No. 297, all prior Orders, Memoranda, and issuances from the Supreme Court and the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), unless otherwise directed, that were effective during the State of Public Health Emergency are now deemed withdrawn, revoked, or canceled and shall no longer be in effect.

As such, all issuances on court operations before the COVID-19 pandemic should be fully complied with, except if these have been subsequently modified or amended. Utmost priority shall be given to in-court or face-to-face hearings and the conduct of videoconferencing hearings, if warranted, in court, from home or in other locations shall be subject to the provisions of OCA Circular No. 43-2022 dated 1 March 2022. **Accordingly, videoconferencing hearings are still allowed but only for cases involving (a) Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), except when the presiding judge deems it necessary for the PDL to appear before the court, (b) deaf litigants and witnesses¹, and (c) senior citizens, if they have the capacity for the purpose.** Also, and among others, the raffle of cases in multi-sala stations should be in-person.²

Likewise, per the letter dated 28 July 2023 of Atty. Maria Carina A. Matammu-Cunanan, Deputy Clerk of Court and Chief Administrative Officer, Office of Administrative Services, Supreme Court, and as approved by Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, the updated health and safety protocols hereunder provided should be observed by all trial courts:

¹ OCA Circular No. 106-2022 dated 11 May 2022 (CONDUCT OF VIDEOCONFERENCING HEARINGS IN CASES INVOLVING DEAF LITIGANTS AND WITNESSES)

² OCA Circular No. 181-2023 dated 1 May 2023 (COURT OPERATIONS FROM 2 MAY 2023 UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS OF THE COURT)

1. Only symptomatic and suspected COVID-19 cases would require antigen testing, whether at home or in a health center/clinic/hospital. Positive antigen test result at home should be validated with an RT-PCR result, if still available, and if the result is confirmed positive, the infected person needs to isolate for at least five (5) days from start of symptoms on sick leave, if a Judge or staff, and secure a fit to work certification from a medical practitioner or doctor.

2. PHILJA and SC–Office of Administrative Services (OAS) face-to-face seminars will continue to require antigen tests at their discretion.

3. The wearing of face masks is now optional inside the Supreme Court premises and in the halls of justice. However, Judges, upon their discretion, may require wearing of face masks inside their courts or halls of justice.

4. All Judges and Clerks of Court must be vigilant and monitor the health condition of their staff and report any symptomatic or sick employees of COVID-19 to the OAS-OCA.

5. Antigen test may be required by the Judges for visitors in their courts or halls of justice on justified medical grounds.

Furthermore, Sec. 6.0 of Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 2, s. 2022 dated 18 January 2022³ provides as follows:

“6.0 Effectivity

“The guidelines under CSC Resolution No. 2101122 dated December 31, 2021 shall take effect retroactively on March 16, 2020, the start of the Enhanced Community Quarantine in Luzon, and **shall remain in force until the State of Public Health Emergency and the Community Quarantine has been lifted by the Office of the President.**” (emphasis supplied)

Accordingly, OCA Circular No. 350-2022⁴ dated 20 December 2022, anchored on Supreme Court Memorandum Order No. 123-2022 (Updated Quarantine and Isolation Protocols for COVID-19 cases in the Supreme Court) and the said Memorandum Circular No. 2, s. 2022, is now hereby deemed superseded.

³ Amendment to the Revised Interim Guidelines on the Use of Leave Credits for Absences Due to Quarantine and/or Treatment of COVID-19

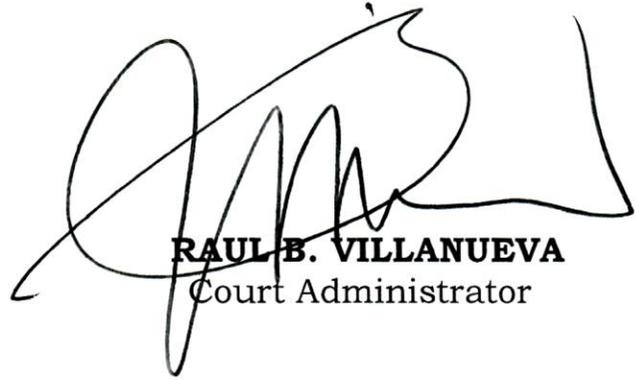
⁴ UPDATED GUIDELINES ON COVID-19 HEALTH PROTOCOLS, QUARANTINE AND AMENDMENTS ON THE USE OF LEAVE CREDITS DUE TO QUARANTINE AND/OR TREATMENT OF COVID-19 dated 20 December 2022

Re: OCA Circular No. 271-2023-A (Lifting of the State of Public Health Emergency Throughout the Philippines Due to Covid-19)

Finally, and as a fervent reminder for everyone's safety, the World Health Organization advised that it is time to transition to long-term management of the COVID-19 pandemic⁵, which may include constant self-assessment and self-monitoring of one's health.

This circular amends OCA Circular No. 271-2023 dated 04 August 2023.

11 August 2023



RAUL B. VILLANUEVA
Court Administrator

 MMA/ACJ/PPP/circular-liftingofpublichealthemergency

⁵ 7th Whereas Clause of Proclamation No. 297, *ibid.*