



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

June 16, 2020

DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

No. 2020 - 0294

TO: ALL UNDERSECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES; DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS AND CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT; MINISTER OF HEALTH – BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO); EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS AND NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS, SANITARIA AND INSTITUTES; PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION; DIRECTORS OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL AND TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION CENTERS, AND OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Revised Interim Guidelines on the Zoning of COVID-19 Testing Laboratories

I. BACKGROUND

The number of licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories in the country has increased in the past weeks. This is expected to continuously increase with the ongoing number of laboratory/facility applications and setting up of pop-up / modular laboratories across the country. More importantly, the need to conduct more tests has become more apparent with transitions in quarantine rules.

Given these, an efficient system to coordinate testing across certified and applying testing facilities is called for. This is to ensure that demand for testing is matched with existing and upcoming capacities, the COVID-19 testing laboratories are maximized, and backlogs are reduced.

The Department of Health (DOH) hereby issues these updated guidelines on zoning of licensed testing laboratories to facilitate an organized and efficient system of testing for COVID-19.

II. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES

A. Certification and Licensing as COVID-19 Testing Laboratory

1. Health facilities shall be officially recognized as a COVID-19 testing laboratory following official certification from the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) and licensing from the DOH Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau (HFSRB), in accordance to standards as set forth by Administrative Order No. 2020-0014, entitled "Guidelines in Securing a

License to Operate a COVID-19 Testing Laboratory in the Philippines” and its amendment.

2. All licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories shall prioritize the testing of patients and healthcare workers in accordance with the latest guidelines on expanded testing for COVID-19. They shall likewise prioritize testing of admitted patients from COVID-19 referral hospitals, and ensure that these do not form part of the backlog of a facility on any given day of operations.

B. Regional Zoning of Licensed COVID-19 Testing Laboratories

1. Zoning shall form the basis for coordinated sending and receipt of samples from specimen collection sites to licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories.
 - a) Zoning shall be organized at the regional level, coordinated by the DOH Centers for Health Development (CHDs). This shall be done in partnership with the respective provincial health offices (PHOs) and/or city health offices (CHOs) that form the region.
 - b) All government-owned licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories shall automatically be part of the regional zoning.
 - c) CHDs shall immediately coordinate with all applying and licensed private COVID-19 testing laboratories within their respective areas for zoning, and possible re-routing of samples. Zoning agreements shall be formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the CHD.
2. CHDs, in partnership with the DOH Field Implementation and Coordination Team (FICT) and concerned offices from the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), shall coordinate the linking of specimen collection sites with licensed COVID-19 laboratories within a regional zone. This shall be regularly updated as more swabbing sites and/or licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories are identified.
3. HFSRB shall inform all health facilities applying for COVID-19 testing laboratory license upon start of their application regarding zoning.
 - a) HFSRB shall likewise immediately inform CHDs of ongoing applications of testing facilities within their region, including and their respective licensing status.
 - b) DOH shall collect information and necessary projections of machines, kits, supplies, and consumables expected for use by the applying health facility before issuance of license, or once the laboratory has been given a panel for proficiency testing.

4. HFSRB and RITM shall match licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories and applying health facilities within regional zones based on their machines, kits, supplies, and consumables.
 - a) This will allow CHDs, in coordination with concerned laboratories, to facilitate immediate re-routing of specimens within regional zones as necessary.
 - b) DOH FICT and CHDs shall be regularly provided with an updated match list to facilitate re-routing as necessary.
5. In instances where there are insufficient or no licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories in a given region, HFSRB and RITM shall provide the concerned CHD with the closest, most proximally practical licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories from a nearby region.
 - a) The CHD, in coordination with testing centers within its region, shall identify appropriate second and third levels of referral for contingency purposes. Proximity shall be one of the main considerations in selecting these contingency referral networks, prioritizing testing centers within the province or region. Should none be available, linking nearby regions shall be prioritized.
 - b) Match of machines, kits, supplies, and consumables, as applicable, shall also be a primary criteria in selecting these contingency referral networks.
 - c) Concerned CHDs shall coordinate with each other to facilitate timely and efficient sending and receipt of collected specimens for testing.

C. Re-routing of Specimens

1. Testing centers shall coordinate and facilitate immediate re-routing of specimens within regional zones as necessary, following the matching organized with the CHDs..
 - a) Testing centers re-routing samples shall immediately inform their corresponding CHDs for monitoring purposes. Technical assistance may also be requested as necessary.
 - b) Upon prescribed cut-off time of reporting of test results to the DOH, any untested or unprocessed specimen that is beyond 25% of the total samples for testing in the facility shall be automatically re-routed.
 - c) Only licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories with no backlogs can receive re-routed samples.
 - d) CHDs shall coordinate with concerned licensed COVID-19 laboratories the number of samples for re-routing, including schedules and persons in charge.
2. All re-routed samples shall come with necessary documents to facilitate complete reporting of findings, as well as filing of claims to PhilHealth.

3. Samples may be re-routed to private licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories engaged by CHDs through a MOA, provided due coordination and documentation is done.
4. Samples that are not eligible for PhilHealth reimbursement following PhilHealth Circular No. 2020 - 0010 shall not be re-routed to private licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories, unless agreed upon with the private facility.

D. Scheduled and/or Unforeseen Disruption in Operations

1. All disinfection schedules shall be coordinated by the concerned licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories with their respective CHDs and relayed to the HFSRB and RITM. This is to facilitate re-routing of expected samples so as not to disrupt yield.
2. Any other circumstance that may affect capacity of a licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories to conduct tests (eg. breakdown of machines, damage from calamities, etc.) shall be immediately reported to the concerned CHD and relayed to the PHST, in order to facilitate re-routing of expected samples.

E. Reporting of Results

1. All licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories shall ensure the timely and diligent reporting of all the results to the DOH, Director of the Hospital/Facility, Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Units, and RITM, in accordance with Administrative Order No. 2020-0013, or the "Revised Administrative Order No. 2020-0012 'Guidelines for the Inclusion of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the List of Notifiable Diseases for Mandatory Reporting to the Department of Health' dated March 17, 2020" and Administrative Order No. 2020-0014-A entitled "Amendment to Administrative Order No. 2020-0014 entitled "Guidelines in Securing a License to Operate a COVID-19 Testing Laboratory in the Philippines."
2. All laboratories must submit the necessary information to DOH through COVID KAYA in compliance to Department Circular 2020-0227 entitled "Additional Requirement in the Licensing of a COVID-19 Testing Laboratory," and other platforms provided by the Department.
3. Data encoders shall only use these platforms to report laboratory testing data and other relevant information. Further, only the dedicated encoder/s are provided access to the online form.
4. The data submitted must conform with the questions or data asked in the reporting tool. Reports must be submitted regularly. Failure to submit will result in 'NO REPORT' in official DOH reports, releases, platforms, and other documents.

5. If there are noted corrections on submitted data for the day, the laboratory must notify the DOH immediately. These corrections shall be submitted before 12NN. Corrections to daily or historical data made and notified to DOH after 12NN will be reflected on the DOH report to be made the following day.
 6. The sending / originating laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring accuracy of report before submission. Editing of historical data after the said deadline is discouraged.
- F. All testing facilities shall utilize the appropriate PhilHealth benefit and/or any benefit provided by Health Maintenance Organizations or Private Health Insurance for COVID-19 testing to reimburse all costs, regardless if the test kits were procured or donated. Health facilities shall not be allowed to charge any co-payment to the patient nor shall they be allowed to solicit any donation from the patient or watcher to cover the cost of the test, in accordance to PhilHealth Circular No. 2020-0010 or “Benefit Package for Testing for SARS-CoV-2.”

III. TRANSITORY PROVISION

In the interim, government-owned licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories shall follow the zoning indicated in Annex A. The CHDs, in coordination with the FICT, shall ensure proper organization and formalities of the zoning arrangements within 30 days.

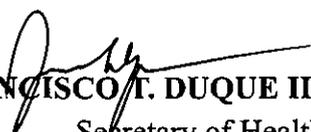
IV. PENALTY CLAUSE

COVID-19 testing laboratories and/or the responsible personnel thereof, who failed to comply with these guidelines in contravention of R.A. No. 9711 or Food and Drug Administration Act of 2009, R. A. 10173 or Data Privacy Act of 2012, R. A. No. 11332 or Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act, R. A. No. 11469 or Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, and other pertinent laws, rules, and regulations, shall be dealt with accordingly, which may include suspension or revocation of DOH-LTO.

V. REPEALING CLAUSE

Department Memorandum 2020-0188 entitled “Interim Guidelines on the Zoning of COVID-19 Laboratories” and other related issuances inconsistent or contrary to the provisions of this Memorandum are hereby repealed.

For strict compliance.


FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary of Health

ANNEX A. Zoning of Regional Referral for COVID-19 Testing

REFERRING REGION	REFERRAL COVID-19 LABORATORY
Region I–Ilocos Region	Ilocos Training and Regional Medical Center; Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital and Medical Center (PCR and GeneXpert); Region 1 Medical Center
Region II–Cagayan Valley	Cagayan Valley CHD TB Reference Laboratory (GeneXpert)
Cordillera Administrative Region	Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center
Region III–Central Luzon	
Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Zambales, Aurora, Bulacan, Pampanga	Jose B. Lingad Regional Medical Center
Bataan	Bataan General Hospital (PCR and GeneXpert)
National Capital Region	
Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela	San Lazaro Hospital
Pasig	Philippine Genome Center
San Juan	National Kidney and Transplant Institute
Quezon City	Lung Center of the Philippines (PCR);
Manila, Mandaluyong	UP National Institute for Health
Marikina	Marikina Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory
Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Taguig, Pateros, Pasay, Makati	Research Institute for Tropical Medicine
Region IV-A CALABARZON	
Rizal	Lung Center of the Philippines (PCR)
Cavite	Ospital ng Imus
Laguna, Batangas, Quezon	Research Institute for Tropical Medicine
Region IV-B MIMAROPA	
Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon	Research Institute for Tropical Medicine
Oriental Mindoro	Oriental Mindoro Provincial Hospital
Palawan	Ospital ng Palawan (GeneXpert)
Romblon (San Jose)	Western Visayas Medical Center
Region V – Bicol	Bicol Regional Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory; Bicol Medical Center (GeneXpert)
Region VI – Western Visayas	
Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo	Western Visayas Medical Center
Negros Occidental	Teresita Jalandoni Provincial Hospital
Region VII – Central Visayas	Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center; Cebu TB Reference Laboratory
Region VIII – Eastern Visayas	Eastern Visayas Regional COVID-19 Testing Center
Region IX – Zamboanga Peninsula	Zamboanga City Medical Center (GeneXpert); Zamboanga City Medical Center-Department of Agriculture Satellite Laboratory for COVID-19 Testing

Region X – Northern Mindanao	Northern Mindanao TB Regional Center; Northern Mindanao Medical Center (GeneXpert)
Region XI – Davao Region	Southern Philippines Medical Center; Davao Regional Medical Center (GeneXpert)
Region 12 – SOCKSASRGEN	Cotabato Regional Medical Center (GeneXpert)
Region CARAGA	Southern Philippines Medical Center
BARMM	
Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Marawi City	Cotabato Regional Medical Center (GeneXpert)
Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-tawi	Zamboanga City Medical Center (GeneXpert); Zamboanga City Medical Center-Department of Agriculture Satellite Laboratory for COVID-19 Testing

COVID-19 Testing Laboratories using GeneXpert in the National Capital Region shall prioritize testing of admitted patients in the following DOH hospitals:

COVID-19 Testing Laboratories	Referring Hospital
Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital	Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital; Valenzuela Medical Center
Lung Center of the Philippines	Lung Center of the Philippines, East Avenue Medical Center, Philippine Heart Center, Quirino Memorial Medical Center, Amang Rodriguez Memorial Medical Center, National Center for Mental Health, National Children’s Hospital, Philippine Orthopedic Center, Rizal Memorial Center, Philippine Children’s Medical Center
Tondo Medical Center	Tondo Medical Center, Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center, Fabella Hospital, , San Lorenzo Ruiz General Hospital

*Samples for COVID-19 testing of uniformed personnel from Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Coast Guard, and Bureau of Corrections, shall be sent to Victoriano Luna Medical Center-Armed Forces Research Institute for Medical Sciences.

**Samples for COVID-19 testing of uniformed personnel from Philippine National Police, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and Bureau of Fire Protection, shall be sent to PNP Crime Laboratory.