



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

19 May 2020

DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

No. 2020- 0260

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 : **Interim Guidelines on Integrated Helminth Control Program and Schistosomiasis Control and Elimination Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

I. BACKGROUND

Soil-transmitted helminthiasis (STH) and Schistosomiasis are Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) that remain as public health problems in the Philippines affecting marginalized and vulnerable groups including children, indigenous communities, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age.

Given the current challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Health (DOH) has reiterated through Department Circular 2020-0167 otherwise known as the Continuous Provision of Health Services during the COVID-19 Epidemic, the importance of maintaining essential health services during this crisis. In response, the DOH through the Integrated Health Control Program (IHCP) and Schistosomiasis Control and Elimination Program (SCEP) issues this guidance on the implementation of program activities and interventions in light of public health measures to curb COVID-19.

II. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES

- A. Consistent with DOH AO 2020-0015 Guidelines on the Risk-based Public Health Standards for COVID-19 Mitigation, and the proclamation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) regarding the suspension of mass gatherings, Mass Drug Administration (MDA) or deworming campaigns (both in communities and schools – public and private), community-based surveys, and active case finding activities requiring mass screening are **postponed until further notice**.

- B. Critical interventions such as (a) prompt diagnosis, treatment and care (selective treatment) of patients with NTDs in healthcare facilities especially those with chronic cases or presenting morbid conditions needing urgent or emergency care and referral to higher level of care, and (b) essential vector control measures shall continue, wherever possible.
- C. In accordance with the suspension of mass gatherings in areas under enhanced or general community quarantine, routine deworming of children ages 1-19 y/o shall be administered in the community through individual approach. Implementation shall be alongside with other child health and nutrition interventions or services (immunization, nutrition, etc.) while maintaining physical distancing and appropriate Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures.
- D. The provision of selective treatment for NTD patients, implementation of essential vector control and routine deworming services shall be guided by provisions four (4) & five (5) of DOH DC no. 2020-0167 which establishes guidance on the continuous provision of essential health services during the COVID-19 epidemic and DOH Administrative Order 2017-0007 which provides guidelines on the provision of the essential health service packages in emergencies and disasters.
- E. LGUs, Department of Education (DepEd) and development partners are enjoined to follow the WASH strategy (regular handwashing, use of sanitary toilets, hygiene promotion) and related interventions (respiratory etiquette).
- F. All health facilities, national government agencies and local government units involved in the provision of NTD services shall use existing NTD platforms including surveillance mechanisms, health promotion and education opportunities to support implementation of COVID-19-related measures, as appropriate.

For strict compliance.


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Secretary of Health

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