



COVID-19 Response Committee

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HEALTH STANDARD PROTOCOL

Q1: What is expected from every OSG employee when physically reporting to work?

1. Wearing of face mask at all times except when eating or drinking. Face mask should cover nose and mouth.
2. Wearing of face shield.
3. Submission of Health Declaration Form (HDF) one day before reporting to work.
4. Observe proper coughing and sneezing etiquette.
5. Frequent handwashing for at least 20 seconds.
6. Observe social distancing.

Note: Please dispose face mask responsibly.

Q2: Does this apply to non-OSG employees as well?

Yes. Security guards, maintenance staff and visitors are also mandated to strictly observe the above protocols.

DIVISION/SERVICE UNIT POINT PERSON

Q3: Are Legal Divisions or Service Unit required to designate a point person?

Yes. The Assistant Solicitor General (ASG) or the Service Unit Director shall designate a single person to act as their point person.

The name and contact number of the point person must be submitted to the COVID-19 Response Committee (Committee).

Q4: What are the duties of the designated point person?

1. Report to the Committee all relevant matters related to COVID-19.
2. Disseminate COVID-19-related information to their respective Division/Service Unit.
3. Disseminate COVID-19-related information to the maintenance personnel in their respective division/service unit.
4. Assist in the conduct of contact tracing.
5. Assist the Committee in collating HDF which includes segregating those with symptoms and those without.
6. Ensure that they can respond within a reasonable amount of time.

AUTHORIZED PERSONS TO ENTER THE OFFICE

Q5: Who are authorized to enter OSG premises?

1. Members of the Skeleton Force who submitted their HDF.
2. Employees who are working from home but are expressly required or authorized by the Solicitor General, ASG or Service Unit Director to enter the office for valid reasons.
3. All other persons authorized by Solicitor General, ASG or Service Unit Director.

SKELETON FORCE

Q6: What is skeleton force?

It refers to a work arrangement where a minimum number of employees is required to man the office to render service when full staffing is not possible.¹

Q7: Is it required to submit a list of the skeleton force?

Yes. ASGs and Service Unit Directors are reminded to submit a list indicating the names of the skeleton force every Friday preceding their skeleton force schedule.

Q8: Where should the list be submitted?

The list should be e-mailed at secretariat.osg@gmail.com, skeletalforce.osg@gmail.com and hdf.osg.gov.ph@gmail.com. If an employee would like to avail the OSG bus transport service, the list indicating the name and

¹ CSC Memorandum Circular 10, s. 2020.

his/her respective address must be submitted at osgbus.list@gmail.com.

OSG SERVICE BUS

Q9: Who can avail the OSG bus transport service?

Only employees whose names are listed and submitted as part of the skeleton force are allowed to avail the OSG bus transport service.

HEALTH DECLARATION FORM

Q10: What is the purpose of the Health Declaration Form (HDF)?

The HDF shall serve as an initial screening tool to evaluate the health condition and COVID-19 risk of the employee. This will also serve as a guide to determine if the employee will be allowed to physically report to the office for work.

Q11: Who are required to submit HDF?

All employees are required to submit HDF. Non-employees such as security guards, maintenance staff and visitors when physically present within OSG premises are likewise required.

Q12: How often should one accomplish the HDF?

All employees must accomplish one (1) HDF every time they are required to report to the office.

Q13: What if there is a change in my health condition after I submitted my form but before reporting to work?

The employee must accomplish another form and inform the point person immediately.

Q14: When should the employee submit the HDF?

The employee should submit the HDF on or before 1:30PM of the day prior to their physical reporting to the office.

*Ex. (1) The employee is assigned as part of the skeleton force on **Monday** and **Tuesday**. In such case, the employee shall submit the HDF to the point person on **Sunday** as a requirement before the employee will be allowed to enter the office on **Monday**. The employee will submit another HDF on **Monday** as a requirement before the employee will be allowed to enter the office on **Tuesday**.*

*(2) The employee is assigned as part of the skeleton force on **Tuesday** and **Friday**. In such case, the employee shall submit the HDF on **Monday** and another HDF on **Thursday**.*

Q15: To whom should the employee submit the HDF?

The employees should submit the HDF to their respective division/service unit point person.

Q16: What should the point person do after receiving the HDFs?

The point person should compile the HDFs and email them at hdf.osg.gov.ph@gmail.com on or before 3:30PM. The point person shall include in the e-mail a separate list for employees who have COVID-19 symptoms or exposure.

Q17: What are the other instances when an employee may be required to submit their HDF?

If the circumstances warrant, the ASG or the Service Unit Director may expressly require the employee to submit HDF.

Ex. An employee went to the office on Monday and Tuesday. The employee submitted his HDFs on Sunday and Monday. On Tuesday night, after returning from work, the employee had a fever. The employee must inform the ASG or Service Unit Director about his condition. The ASG or Service Unit Director should require the employee to submit an updated HDF.

Q18: What are the consequences of not submitting HDF?

1. The employee will not be allowed to enter the office premises.
2. If the employee is part of the SF, the employee will be considered absent. However, the employee may choose to file for a leave of absence.

Ex. Juan was assigned to be part of the SF on Monday. Juan failed to submit the HDF on Sunday. Juan will not be allowed to enter the office and will be directed to go home. He is also considered absent unless he files a leave of absence.

Everyone should remember that the HDF serves as a screening tool to determine whether or not he/she is a COVID-19 risk. This will ensure the safety of everyone in the office especially those persons he/she may encounter.

Q19: If a work from home employee needs to go to the office, is he required to submit HDF?

Yes. The employee must submit HDF.

Q20: Are there other requirements aside from the HDF?

Yes. The employee must request permission from the ASG or Service Unit Director to go to the office. It shall be discretionary upon the ASG or Service Unit Director to decide whether or not to allow the employee to go to the office.

Surprise visit to the office is strictly not allowed.

Q21: Can the employee submit a hard copy of the HDF?

No, only soft copies of the HDF are allowed. This is to keep the workplace safe and free from possible spread of the virus.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF COVID-19 CASES

Q22: Are there new classifications of COVID-19 persons provided by the DOH and WHO?

Yes, according to Department of Health (DOH) Administrative Order No. 2020-0013² the new classifications are Confirmed, Probable, and Suspect case.

Q23: Who may be considered a confirmed case?

A person who tested positive for COVID-19 through laboratory confirmation at the national or subnational reference laboratory, or at a DOH-certified laboratory testing facility is considered a confirmed case. This is regardless of whether the person shows clinical signs and symptoms of COVID-19.³

² DOH Administrative Order No. 2020 – 0013 dated April 9, 2020.

³ *Id.*; Department Memorandum No. 2020-0189 dated April 17, 2020.

Q24: Who may be considered as probable case?

Probable case refers to the following:⁴

- i. A suspect case who has been tested for COVID-19 but the results are inconclusive.
- ii. A suspect case who has tested positive for COVID-19 but whose test was not conducted in a national or subnational coronavirus reference laboratory, or an officially accredited laboratory for confirmatory testing.⁵

Q25: Who are considered suspect case?

Suspect case refers to the following:⁶

- i. A person with severe acute respiratory illness – fever, cough or sore throat, shortness of breath, and may even include severe pneumonia – whose cause is undetermined prior to testing for the coronavirus.
- ii. A person with influenza-like illness – fever, cough or sore throat – and who lives in or has traveled to an area that reported local transmission of the COVID-19 during the 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms.
- iii. A person with influenza-like illness – fever, cough or sore throat – and has had contact with a confirmed or probable case (see definition of “probable case”) of COVID-19 in the two days prior to the onset of that confirmed/probable case’s illness or before that confirmed/probable case showed negative on repeat testing.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

- iv. A person with fever or cough or shortness of breath or other respiratory symptoms and is one of the following: 60 years old or older; with a comorbidity or pre-existing illness; in high-risk pregnancy; a health worker.

Q26: What is the difference between the old and new classifications?

Based on Annex A of the Administrative Order No. 2020-0013, the DOH contrasted the OLD and NEW classifications side-by-side:

OLD CLASSIFICATION	NEW CLASSIFICATION
Neither a Person Under Monitoring (PUM) or Patient under Investigation	Not a COVID-19 case
PUM	Not included in the new classification
PUI (mild, severe, or critical) who was not tested or awaiting results	<u>Suspect</u>
PUI (mild, severe, or critical) with inconclusive test results	<u>Probable</u>
COVID Positive	<u>Confirmed</u>

A perusal of the new classification shows that only persons with symptoms are considered COVID-19 cases. In a footnote, the DOH rationalized this new treatment by stating “Because of evidence of local or community transmission in the country, its residents are assumed to have been exposed to the infection⁷”.

⁷ Id., Annex A.

Q27: Who are considered “Contact” cases?

A contact⁸ is defined as anyone with the following exposures to a COVID-19 case (Confirmed, Probable, and Suspect) from 2 days before to 14 days after the case’s onset of illness:

- a) Being within 1 metre of a COVID-19 case for more than 15 minutes;
- b) Direct physical contact with a COVID-19 case;
- c) Providing direct care for patients with COVID-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment (PPE);
- d) Other definitions, as indicated by local risk assessments;

If confirmed cases are asymptomatic, contacts should be managed in the same way as for a symptomatic case with an exposure period from 2 days before the case was sampled, to 14 days after.⁹

A table is presented to summarize the classifications by DOH and WHO.

Indicators	Classification
Persons who had contact with COVID-19 cases (Suspect, Probable, Confirmed)	<u>Contact</u>
Person with mild, severe, or critical symptoms who was not tested or awaiting results	<u>Suspect</u>

⁸ World Health Organization, Interim Guidance for Contact Tracing in the context of COVID-19 dated May 10, 2020.

⁹ Id.

Person with mild, severe, or critical symptoms with inconclusive test results	<u>Probable</u>
COVID Positive	<u>Confirmed</u>

Accordingly, based on updates by the DOH and WHO, the Committee has adopted different recommended remedies to COVID-19 cases.

Q28: Do the latest DOH classifications apply to the OSG?

Yes, the OSG now follows the new classifications provided by the DOH and WHO.

REMEDIES

Q29: What are the remedies available to the ASG or Service Unit Director towards the subject employee?

The remedies available to the ASG or Service Unit Director are Work from Home (WFH) Arrangement or quarantine.

Q30: How do the ASGs or Service Unit Directors determine if the employee should be placed on WFH or quarantine?

With new classifications provided, the Committee recommends that the ASG or Service Unit Director place symptomatic cases on quarantine, which means that suspect, probable, and confirmed cases shall be placed on quarantine.

On the other hand, for asymptomatic case, the Committee recommends that the ASG or Service Unit Director place asymptomatic or contact cases on WFH arrangement. The duration of the WFH arrangement is dependent on the

date of contact. An employee should not report to the office for 14 days from the date of contact. The 14-day period starts a day after the date of contact. Weekends are covered by the 14-day period.

Ex. On Monday Juan visited Maria. Juan was SF on Thursday. On Friday, Maria, told Juan that she was COVID-19 Confirmed. The 14-day WFH arrangement should have started on Tuesday. However, since Juan had already reported for work on Thursday and he is still asymptomatic, he should only be placed on WFH arrangement for 10 days beginning on Friday.

Q31: What is the difference between Work from Home (WFH) and quarantine?

An employee on quarantine is NOT supposed to work. Quarantine is advisable when an employee is SYMPTOMATIC. In this case, the employee is encouraged to rest and recover, whether the employee was exposed to COVID-19 or not. The purpose of the quarantine is to increase the employee's resistance against COVID-19.

An employee on Work from Home (WFH) arrangement SHOULD work. When an employee is on WFH, the employee is expected to accomplish all duties from home. WFH is advisable when an employee is ASYMPTOMATIC. This remedy is typically proper when an employee is exposed to the virus but shows no symptoms.

The distinction is important in determining the employee's duties during the WFH arrangement or quarantine.

Q32: What are the remedies available to the ASG or Service Unit Director towards employees exposed to the subject employee?

The remedies available are Partial Quarantine or WFH and Entire Quarantine or WFH.

Q33: What is Partial Quarantine?

Partial Quarantine or WFH – In this case, some employees are on a WFH arrangement or quarantined, and some are assigned as SF.

Ex. Juan went to the office on Thursday. On Saturday he reported to his ASG or Service Unit Director that he has symptoms of COVID-19. Juan was directed to go on quarantine because he was symptomatic.

The ASG or Service Unit Director chose Partial Quarantine or WFH as a remedy. Thus, the ASG or Service Unit Director ordered Pedro, Mary, and Ariel, all those who were present on Thursday, to be on WFH arrangement.

On Saturday, Pedro had a fever. The ASG or Service Unit Director moved Pedro from WFH to quarantine because he had a fever.

The other employees are still required to follow their Skeleton Force schedule.

Q34: What is Entire Quarantine?

Entire Quarantine or WFH – In this case, all employees in the respective division/service are WFH or quarantined. No one is assigned as SF.

When a person is COVID-19 CONFIRMED, the ASG or Service Unit Director is given NO DISCRETION. The ASG or Service Unit Director must follow these steps:

1. Immediately conduct contact tracing and determine the contacts of the COVID-Confirmed employee.
2. Place all contacts on WFH arrangement until further investigation.
3. Coordinate with the Committee to determine the proper remedy to the situation.
 - The Committee will relay the appropriate remedy to the ASG/Service Unit Director after all relevant information has been taken into consideration.
 - The remedy may be partial quarantine, entire quarantine, or in some cases, revert to normal schedule if the risk of the virus spreading is low.
 - The Committee will report to the medical expert and advise the ASG or Service Unit Director when the subject employee can safely return to work.

Q35: What are the factors that must be considered by the ASG or Service Unit Director in these cases?

The ASG or Service Unit Director must consider the following factors in determining the proper remedy:

- i. Whether the employee takes public transportation in going to work.
- ii. The nature of the employee's job.
- iii. The number and severity of risks the employee was exposed to.
- iv. The exposure of the employee in the office.

Q36: What is the duty of the point person in these cases?

The point person of the division / service unit must accomplish the contact tracing tally sheet and submit a copy to the Committee. The rules on SF, WFH, and quarantine apply to the subject employee and other employees.

CLEARANCE FOR COVID-19 CONFIRMED, PROBABLE, AND SUSPECT PERSONS

Q37: What are the requirements before a COVID-19 CONFIRMED, PROBABLE, AND SUSPECT persons can return to office?

DOH Memorandum No. 2020-0258 dated May 29, 2020 provides:

Discharge and recovery criteria for suspect, probable, and confirmed COVID-19 cases shall no longer entail repeat testing. Symptomatic patients who have clinically recovered and are no longer symptomatic for at least 3 days and have completed at least 14 days of isolation either at home, temporary treatment and monitoring facility, or hospital, can be tagged as a recovered confirmed case and reintegrated to the community without the need for further testing, provided that a licensed medical doctor clears the patient. Patients who test RT-PCR positive and remain asymptomatic for at least 14 days can discontinue quarantine and tagged as a recovered confirmed case without need for further testing, provided a licensed medical doctor clears the patient.

Furthermore, the updated WHO guideline for discharge from isolation as part of the clinical care pathway of a COVID-19 infected person provides: ¹⁰

These criteria apply to all COVID-19 cases regardless of isolation location or disease severity.

Criteria for discharging patients from isolation (i.e., discontinuing transmission-based precautions) without requiring retesting:

- For symptomatic patients: 10 days after symptom onset, plus at least 3 additional days without symptoms (including without fever and without respiratory symptoms)
- For asymptomatic cases: 10 days after positive test for SARS-CoV-2

Ex. If a patient had symptoms for two days, then the patient could be released from isolation after 10 days + 3 = 13 days from date of symptom onset; for a patient with symptoms for 14 days, the patient can be discharged (14 days + 3 days =) 17 days after date of symptom onset; for a patient with symptoms for 30 days, the patient can be discharged (30+3=) 33 days after symptom onset).

**Countries may choose to continue to use testing as part of the release criteria. If so, the initial recommendation of two negative PCR tests at least 24 hours apart can be used.*

Thus, in addition to the DOH and WHO guidelines provided above, the employee may return to work after the following conditions are met:

¹⁰ <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/criteria-for-releasing-covid-19-patients-from-isolation>

1. Consent given by the respective ASG or Service Unit Director.
2. Consent given by the Committee after it receives recommendations from a medical expert.
The recommendation from the medical expert may come from the OSG service provider or any licensed medical doctor.

Q38: What are the requirements before COVID-19 Contact persons may return to work?

WHO recommends that contacts of patients with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 be quarantined for 14 days from the last time they were exposed to the patient.¹¹ In this case, the Committee recommends that the COVID-19 Contact person be allowed to return to work to return after the following conditions are met:

1. Consent given by the respective ASG or Service Unit Director.
2. The completion of a proper WFH arrangement. An employee should not report to the office for 14 days from the date of contact.

WORK ARRANGEMENT/LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Q39: An employee experiences symptom while working from home. The following day, the said employee is required to report to office as part of the skeleton force, what should the employee do?

The employee should:

¹¹ World Health Organization, Interim Guidance for Considerations for quarantine of individuals in the context of containment for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dated March 19, 2020.

1. Report the symptoms to the ASG or the Service Unit Director.
2. Accomplish the HDF and submit it to division/service's point person.
3. The employee and ASG or the Service Unit Director will agree on the work arrangement of the subject employee.
4. The employee must collect and prepare copies of relevant medical evidence to be submitted to the ASG or the Service Unit Director. Medical evidence is any medical document issued by a licensed medical practitioner.
5. The ASG or the Service Unit Director shall decide on the work arrangement of the employee and inform the latter.
6. The ASG or the Service Unit Director shall submit copies of the employee's HDF and medical evidence to the Committee. The Committee will submit the documents to the medical expert and advice the ASG or Service Unit Director regarding the employee's proper treatment.

Q40: Is the employee required to file for a Leave of Absence if required to work from home while waiting for the doctor's evaluation?

The employee is not required to file for a Leave of Absence under a WFH arrangement.

Pursuant to Office Order No. C-829-20, employees with valid reasons are directed to submit their work from home requests to margaritachua.osg@gmail.com and secretariat.osg@gmail.com.

Q41: How can an employee easily determine if they are considered absent or not?

The employee must coordinate with his ASG or Service Unit Director if the employee is considered as work from home, skeleton force, or under quarantine.

The rules are as follows:

A. Skeleton Force

If the ASG or Service Unit Director decides that the employee must report to the office as part of the SF, the following rules apply:

1. The employee is considered absent if he refuses to obey the directive of the ASG or Service Unit Director.
2. The days that the employee is not part of the SF, the employee is considered WFH.
3. To avoid absences, the employee must file a leave of absence if the employee does not want to report to the office as part of the skeletal force.

B. Work From Home (WFH)

If the ASG or Service Unit Director decides that the employee should be on a WFH arrangement for safety purposes, the employee is not considered absent. The employee is not required to file for a leave of absence.

C. Quarantine

If the employee is placed under quarantine, the employee is not considered as WFH. Employees must not confuse quarantine and WFH. During quarantine, the

employee must rest and recover. The quarantine covers those imposed by the ASG/Service Unit Director or those imposed by the LGU if a person is a Confirmed COVID-19 case.

The following rules apply during quarantine:

1. The quarantine period starts on the day after the symptoms arose or a day after exposure to a COVID-19 infected person. However, a new quarantine period starts for each subsequent exposure or showing of symptoms.

Ex. Juan had a cough on Monday. The quarantine period starts on Tuesday.

Ex. Juan was exposed to a COVID-19 Confirmed person on Monday. The quarantine period starts on Tuesday.

Ex. Juan was exposed to a COVID-19 Confirmed person on Monday. The quarantine period starts on Tuesday. On Thursday Juan started showing symptoms of COVID-19. Thus, a new quarantine period will start on Friday.

Ex. Juan had a fever on Monday. The quarantine period starts on Tuesday. On Wednesday, Juan felt better and no longer has a fever. On Thursday, because he was feeling better, he went and out and met his girlfriend. On Saturday, Juan's girlfriend told him that she was COVID-19 Confirmed. A new quarantine period will start on Sunday.

2. The quarantine period typically lasts for a period of 14 days. The 14-day period will not be considered as absences.
3. During the 14-day period, the employee must continuously report his health status to his ASG or Service Unit Director.

4. The ASG or Service Unit Director shall report the employee's status to the Committee. The Committee will forward the case to the medical expert.
5. The employee will be given a directive when to return to work. The quarantine period may be lengthened or shortened depending on the circumstances.
6. If the employee refuses to return to work after the quarantine period, the employee is considered absent.

Q42: Are there situations where the standard rules on absences does not apply?

Yes, under the following circumstances:

1. When exposure to the virus was obtained in violation of the guidelines issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases on community quarantine.

To recall, the IATF has published guidelines during the quarantine period (ECQ, MECQ, GCQ, and MGCQ). One of the guidelines provided is the prohibition on mass gatherings such as but not limited to, movie screenings, concerts, sporting events, and other entertainment activities. For more information, please see the IATF guidelines.

In case the employee was EXPOSED to the virus in violation of the IATF guidelines, such as the prohibition on mass gatherings, and the ASG or Service Unit Director was compelled to place the employee on quarantine or WFH pending investigation, the following rules shall apply:

- a. The days where the employee was placed on quarantine or WFH pending investigation shall be chargeable against his leave credits, if any.
- b. The days where the employee is being treated, if required, shall be chargeable against leave credits, if any.
- c. The ASG or Service Unit Director, with the proper recommendation from the Committee, will advise when the employee may return to work.
- d. The day when the employee is given permission to return to work is not considered an absence.

Ex. On Sunday, Juan reported to his ASG or Service Unit Director that he was exposed to COVID-19 because he attended a party. For safety measures, the ASG or Service Unit Director placed Juan on quarantine until proper assessment from the medical expert. Juan was not able to report for work from Monday to Thursday. On Friday, at about 3:45 in the afternoon, the COVID-19 Committee recommended to Juan's ASG or Service Unit Director that Juan may now return to work since his test was found negative. Since permission was given in the afternoon, Juan was not able to report to work on Friday. In this case, Juan is considered absent from Monday to Thursday. Juan is present on Friday; he is considered WFH.

- e. If work suspension is declared during the quarantine or treatment period, the quarantine period or treatment period is considered as excused absence.

Ex. On Sunday, Juan reported to his ASG or Service Unit Director that he was exposed to COVID-19 because he attended a party. For safety measures, the ASG or Service Unit Director placed Juan on quarantine until proper assessment from the medical expert. Juan was not able to report for work from Monday to Thursday. On Monday, the office

announced that there will be an office lockdown due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Juan's absences during the lockdown is considered excused absence. If work resumes and yet no permission is given to Juan to return to work, the days when he is quarantined or being treated, he is considered absent.

2. When, after due investigation, it was found that the employee misled their respective ASG or Service Unit Director.

These rules were devised to prevent employees from abusing the new work arrangements due to COVID-19.

The rules contemplate a situation where an employee misled or tried to mislead the ASG or Service Unit Director into placing the employee on quarantine or WFH. The rules are as follows:

- a. Each situation will be assessed on a case-to-case basis.
- b. The employee will be given a chance to explain himself.
- c. A proper investigation shall be conducted to determine if the employee misled the ASG or Service Unit Director.
- d. The days when the employee was placed on quarantine or WFH arrangement, pending investigation, shall not be considered absences.
- e. If the employee was found guilty of misleading the ASG or Service Unit Director, all days where the employee was directed to be on quarantine or WFH arrangement shall be considered as absences. The

effect retroacts to the date when the employee was placed on WFH or quarantine.

- f. The ASG or Service Unit Director, in coordination with the Committee and the medical expert, will advise when the employee may return to work.
- g. The rules are without prejudice to other disciplinary sanctions that may apply.

Ex. On Sunday, Juan reported that he was exposed to COVID-19 because he had colds and his brother Pedro tested positive for COVID-19. The ASG or Service Unit Director placed Juan on quarantine and directed him to provide medical evidence to support his claim. Juan was scheduled to have a teleconference and a COVID-19 test with the doctor. Juan was quarantined for 8 working days.

On the 9th working day, the doctor assessed that Juan was fit to return to work because the test result showed that he is negative for COVID-19. Juan failed to provide any evidence (brother's positive result, medical examination, etc.) to support his claim. The ASG or Service Unit Director reported the incident to the Committee on the 10th working day. The ASG or Service Unit Director and the Committee deliberated and came to the conclusion that Juan misled the ASG or Service Unit Director.

On the 11th working day, the ASG or Service Unit Director gave permission to Juan to return to work. Juan was also informed of the findings of the Committee. Since Juan was found guilty, Juan is considered absent for 10 working days, the days when he was placed on quarantine or WFH arrangement pending investigation. The absences are without prejudice to other disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed on Juan.

- h. If work suspension is declared during the quarantine or WFH period pending investigation, the

quarantine or WFH period is considered excused absence. The excused absence is without prejudice to other disciplinary sanctions that apply if the employee is found guilty.

Q43: An employee had contact with a COVID-19 Confirmed person, but the said employee does not manifest any symptoms. Should the employee be allowed to go to the office?

The employee should not be allowed to go to the office. The employee must be placed on a proper WFH arrangement. The duration of the WFH arrangement is dependent on the date of contact. An employee should not report to the office for 14 days from the date of contact.

RT-PCR TESTING

Q44: What are the parameters before an employee can undergo the RT-PCR (swab) testing provided by the office?

An employee will only go through RT-PCR testing if it is recommended by the medical expert. Thus, every COVID-19 incident is analyzed on a case-to-case basis.

This procedure highlights the importance of:

1. HONESTLY, PROMPTLY, and ACCURATELY accomplishing the HDF.
2. Properly reporting the incident to the ASG or Service Unit Director which includes relevant details that might not be reflected in the health declaration form.

Educating oneself in all COVID-19 related matters by reading the COVID-19 Manual, COVID-19 FAQ, conducting personal research, and checking further updates.

Q45: What are the factors to considered before an employee may undergo RT-PCR Testing?

1. HDF
2. Nature of Job (Frontliners)
3. Severity of Exposure to COVID-19 (distance of contact, duration of contact, etc.)

CONTACT TRACING

Q46: What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is the process of identifying, assessing, and managing people who have been exposed to a disease to prevent onward transmission.¹²

Q47: Who has the duty to do the contact tracing?

It is the responsibility of the point person of the concerned division/service unit to conduct the contact tracing and to immediately report to the Committee.

Q48: How does the point person conduct contact tracing?

Committee Members will disseminate the contact tracing form to the respective point person of their assigned division/service. The contact tracing form may also be downloaded from the intranet.

The point person will then fill-up the contact tracing form by properly investigating the exposure of the respective members of their division/service. The point person must properly categorize the members of the division/service as confirmed, probable or suspect case. The point person will then fill-up the contact tracing sheet and submit it to the

¹² As defined in the World Health Organization Interim Guidelines dated May 10, 2020.

respective Committee member assigned to their division/service.

ISOLATION ROOM

Q49: Does the office have an isolation area for employees who suddenly manifest symptoms while within office premises?

The office has no designated isolation area as of the moment. Thus, employees are reminded to promptly report any COVID-19 symptoms to their ASG or Service Unit Director before going to the office.

OFFICE DISINFECTION

Q50: Does the office conduct disinfection?

Yes. The office continuously conducts disinfection and sanitation. However, whenever a COVID-19 incident is reported to the Committee, the Committee will coordinate with the proper administrative personnel to prioritize the place where the incident occurred.

Q51: What must be cleaned and/or disinfected?

The maintenance staff should clean and disinfect all areas of the offices such as bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like telephones and other frequently touched areas/surfaces such as door knobs, elevator buttons and light switches.

VISITORS

Q52: Are employees from other division/service unit allowed to visit another division/service unit?

Yes. However, the employee is required to fill-out the visitor sheet/logbook which must be provided by every legal division/service unit.

Visitors should remember to indicate the purpose of visit, time in and time out.

It shall be duty of the respective division/service unit to keep the visitor sheet/logbook for possible contact tracing purposes.

Q53: Are employees allowed to accept visitors such as client agencies?

Meeting through video conference is highly encouraged.

If for some reason, meeting through video conference is not a viable option, the person may be allowed to enter the office subject to the following conditions:

1. The employee must inform his/her ASG or Service Unit Director.
2. The employee must prepare the names and contact details of the visitors.
3. The employee must require the visitor to accomplish the HDF a day before the scheduled visit.
4. The names, contact details, schedule of the visit (date and time) and HDF must be submitted to the Committee

a day before the scheduled visit to give the Committee sufficient time to determine if it is safe to allow the visitor to enter the office premises.

All divisions and services are reminded to observe strict social distancing policies during the visit.

LOCKDOWN

Q54: Are employees allowed to go to the office during lockdown?

As a general rule, No. An employee is not allowed to go to the office except when authorized by the Committee.

The said employee must inform the ASG or Service Unit Director of the intended visit to the office. It shall be the duty of the ASG or Service Unit Director to assess if the employee's reason for going to the office is justified. If justified, the ASG or Service Unit Director will inform the Committee. The Committee will approve the employee's request to visit the office during lockdown.

Q55: What should the employee do if there are pleadings that must be filed during the lockdown?

The employee may resort to e-filing as allowed by the Rules of Court and Supreme Court issuances.

HEARINGS

Q56: What should the lawyer do if he has an out of town hearing?

The lawyer may file a motion to reset the hearing, motion to conduct hearing through videoconference or deputize the case.

The ASG and the lawyer concerned are in the best position to assess the circumstances of the case taking into consideration the health and safety of the lawyer.

Q57: A lawyer has a scheduled hearing. The presence of the representative from client agency is needed during the hearing. However, such representative has exposure to a COVID-19-infected person but is asymptomatic. What should the lawyer do?

The lawyer should inform his/her ASG or Service Unit Director about the circumstances so that a motion to reset may be filed, if necessary. If the presence of the representative of the client agency is dispensable, the lawyer should attend the hearing.

COMMUNICATIONS

Q58: How does the ASG/Service head report to the committee? How does the committee respond?

A committee member shall continuously communicate with the assigned division/service unit on COVID-19-related matters.

The form/means of communication is subject to the internal arrangement of the respective division/service and the committee member assigned to handle the respective division/service. Thus, it can be done through email, SMS or any reasonable means of communication acceptable to the committee member.

----- ∞ -----