



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

April 23, 2020

**DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM**

No. 2020 - 0188

**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 the Zoning of COVID-19 Laboratories**

**I. BACKGROUND**

Cognizant of the urgency to diagnose COVID-19 in Filipinos, particularly in severe to critical patients, in PUIs who are elderly and/or with co-morbidities, and those other sub-groups identified as high risk and/or prioritized for testing, the immediate collection of specimen and testing is paramount for proper management, infection prevention and infection control.

The Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) is designated as the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) for COVID-19 testing. To augment the capacity of RITM for testing these cases, Subnational Laboratories (SNLs) and partner laboratories have been certified and licensed by the Department of Health all over the country.

The Department of Health hereby issues these interim guidelines to facilitate an organized and efficient system of testing for COVID-19.

**II. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES**

- A. Sub-national laboratories shall be defined as DOH-owned laboratories where COVID-19 testing (SARS-CoV-2 detection) is conducted on specimens from the human body (nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal specimens). RITM, the SNLs and the University of the Philippines - National Institute for Health (UP-NIH) shall receive specimens from hospitals and other disease reporting units within their assigned areas (Annex A).
- B. All DOH-licensed laboratories for COVID-19 testing shall prioritize the testing of patients and healthcare workers who have severe or critical conditions, and those who are vulnerable with mild conditions, in accordance with Department Memorandum 2020-0151, entitled “Interim Guidelines on Expanded Testing for COVID-19”.
- C. The sending of specimens outside of the assigned zoning areas is not permitted. However, if the SNL cannot receive and/or handle the capacity of testing for their assigned areas due to any circumstance (e.g. breakdown of PCR machines), specimens can be sent to the nearest DOH-licensed COVID-19 laboratory for testing, provided that it is coordinated.

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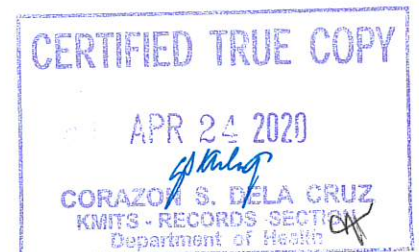
CORAZON S. DELA CRUZ  
MHIS - RECORDS SECTION  
Department of Health

- D. All certified laboratories shall report all the results to the Department of Health, Director of the Hospital/Facility, Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit, 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 entitled “Guidelines in Securing a License to Operate a COVID-10 Testing Laboratory in the Philippines.”
- E. 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.”
- F. Failure to comply with these guidelines in contravention of R.A. No. 9711 or Food and Drug Administration Act of 2009, 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.

For your reference and guidance.

By Authority of the Secretary of Health,

  
MARIA ROSARIO SINGH- VERGEIRE, MD, MPH, CESO IV  
OIC-Undersecretary of Health



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

<b>REFERRAL FACILITY</b>	<b>REFERRING REGION</b>
<b>Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center (BGHMC)</b>	Region 1- Ilocos Region
	Region 2 – Cagayan Valley
	Cordillera Administrative Region
<b>Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP)</b>	Region 3 – Central Luzon
	NCR – Pasig, Marikina, Quezon City, San Juan
	Region 4A - Rizal
<b>San Lazaro Hospital (SLH)</b>	NCR – Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela
	Region 4B – Palawan
<b>Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM)</b>	NCR – Muntinlupa, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Taguig, Pateros, Pasay, Makati
	Region 4A - Laguna, Batangas, Quezon
	Region 4B – Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon (Tablas Island, Romblon Island, Sibuyan Island)
<b>Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (VSMMC)</b>	Region 7 – Central Visayas
	Region 8 - Eastern Visayas
<b>Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC)</b>	Region 9 - Zamboanga Peninsula
	Region 10 – Northern Mindanao
	Region 11 – Davao
	Region 12 – SOCKSASRGEN
	Region CARAGA
	BARMM
<b>Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC)</b>	Region 4B – Romblon (San Jose municipality), Palawan (Cuyo, Agutaya and Magsaysay municipalities)
	Region 6 - Western Visayas
<b>Bicol Regional Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory (BRDRL)</b>	Region 5 - Bicol
<b>UP National Institute for Health, Manila (UP-NIH)</b>	NCR - Manila, Mandaluyong
	Region 4A – Cavite