Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

11 November 2020

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR
No. 2020- 0367

FOR : **ALL REGIONAL DIRECTORS, HEAD OF HOSPITALS AND OTHER HEALTH FACILITIES, CHIEFS OF THE HEALTH FACILITIES AND REGULATORY BUREAU AND THE CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT (CHD) – REGULATION, LICENSING AND ENFORCEMENT DIVISION (RLED), MINISTER OF HEALTH – BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (MOH-BARMM), REGULATORY OFFICERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED**

SUBJECT : **Reiteration and Clarification of Department Memorandum (DM) No. 2020-0324 titled Mandatory Notification of Remote Collection Activity of COVID-19 Testing Laboratories**

The increase demand for testing for SARS-CoV-2 necessitated easier access to COVID-19 testing laboratories. Considering the current pandemic situation, the Department of Health (DOH) issued Department Memorandum (DM) No. 2020-0324 titled "Mandatory Notification of Remote Collection Activity of COVID-19 Testing Laboratories," last July 8, 2020, in lieu of securing remote collection permit. This is to ensure accountability of the DOH-licensed COVID-19 Testing Laboratories and to prevent laboratories doing tests beyond their maximum capacity, thus minimizing backlogs.

Corollary to this, the Department Circular (DC) No. 2020-0319 titled "Guidelines for the Remote Specimen Collection for SARS-CoV- 2 Detection Conducted by the COVID-19 Testing Laboratories," was issued as procedural guidelines for the remote collection activity.

However, several queries have been received by the DOH - Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau (HFRSB) regarding the implementation of the abovementioned issuances. To address the issues raised, the following are the responses to the frequently asked questions:

1. *Who will notify HFSRB for the conduct of remote collection activity?*
   ONLY the COVID-19 testing laboratory shall notify HFSRB prior to the conduct of the remote collection activity, pursuant to the provisions of DM No. 2020-0324, and **NOT** the party which has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) / Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the licensed COVID-19 testing laboratories.

2. *When will the mandatory notification be required?*
   The COVID-19 testing laboratory shall notify HFSRB for every remote collection activity, and the notification letter shall be submitted at least three (3) days prior to the activity. In the event that the remote collection activity will be done repeatedly in the same place for a given period of time, one (1) notification letter indicating the duration of the remote collection activity and number of requested tests will suffice.

3. *What shall be the content of the notification letter?*

The notification letter for the mandatory notification for the conduct of remote collection activity of COVID-19 testing laboratories shall indicate the following:

a. The proposed date and time of the remote collection activity;
b. The complete address where the remote collection activity will be conducted;
c. The requesting party;
d. The target number of tests;
e. As an attachment, a copy of the notarized MOA/MOU between the requesting party and the COVID-19 Testing Laboratory.

4. *What should be indicated in the MOA/MOU?*

The MOA/MOU between the COVID-19 testing laboratory and requesting party should explicitly state as who will collect the specimen, the number of tests to be done and the exact date and place of the collection. The MOA/MOU shall also indicate the authorized personnel who will conduct specimen collection/swabbing and their corresponding training and qualifications.

5. *Who will do the specimen collection?*

Specimen collection, through swabbing, shall be done preferably by the staff of the COVID-19 testing laboratory, or by the authorized designated personnel from the requesting party. Those swabbers should have undergone Nasopharyngeal and Oropharyngeal Swabs (NPS/OPS) training from the Research for Tropical Medicine (RITM) or from other recognized training providers of the DOH as stipulated in the DC No. 2020-0319.

6. *Who will be held accountable for the remote collection activity?*

The licensed COVID-19 testing laboratory shall be responsible and accountable for the entire remote collection activity, from specimen collection, handling and transport.

For information and guidance.

By Authority of the Secretary of Health:

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