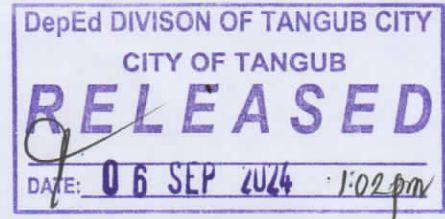




Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
 Region X
SCHOOLS DIVISION OF TANGUB CITY



04 September 2024

DIVISION MEMORANDUM
 No. 298, s. 2024

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND PROTOCOL ON COVID-19/FLU-LIKE SYMPTOM DISEASES IN DepEd OFFICES AND SCHOOLS

To: Assistant Schools Division Superintendent
 Chief Education Supervisors (CID & SGOD)
 Education Program Supervisors
 Public Schools District Supervisors
 Elementary and Secondary School Heads
 All Others Concerned

1. The Department of Education (DepEd) is committed to ensure safe educational continuity amidst the challenges of COVID-19/Flu-Like symptom. Learning opportunities must be provided to give hope and stability, contribute to the normalization of activities and facilitate development of learners and DepEd personnel bring normalcy to their lives.
2. In the provision of learning opportunities, the health and safety of learners and teaching and non-teaching personnel are the utmost importance and must be always protected.
3. To ensure the safe in schools and DepEd offices, this Office issues the enclosed DepEd Memorandum No. 015, s. 2020 **First Set of Policy Directives of the DepEd Task Force NCOV** (Enclosure No. 5) for the safety precaution and protocol and (Enclosure No. 6) guidance for school administrators to help reduce the spread of seasonal influenza/ flu-like symptom in K-12 schools and DepEd Offices.
4. Division personnel, teachers, non-teaching and learners in all public elementary and secondary schools with cough and colds are mandated to wear mask to minimize the spread of virus.
5. Immediate dissemination of this Memorandum is desired.

SHAMBAEH A. ABANTAS-USMAN, PhD, CESO VI
 Schools Division Superintendent

Reference: DepEd Memorandum No. 15, s.2020
 To be indicated in the Perpetual Index
 under the following subjects:
 HEALTH PROGRAM
 EMPLOYEE LEARNERS
 SAU/SGOD/WTM
 September 4, 2024



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Doc. Ref. Code	SDO-OSDS-F001	Rev	00
Effectivity	08.16.2024	Page	1 of 1

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND PROTOCOLS²

1. General Precautions

- a. DepEd reiterates its earlier directives for the strict observance of precautions recommended by DOH and WHO to reduce the general risk of transmission of respiratory infection, specifically, proper hand and respiratory hygiene, and safe food practices. Proper hand hygiene is needed to minimize the risk of transmission through touching any contaminated object, material or surface; the respiratory hygiene is needed to reduce the risk of spreading the virus by an infected individual; and the safe food practices is to reduce risk of exposure to or ingestion of contaminated food.
- b. The following proper hand and respiratory hygiene, and safe food practices, and related precautions are enjoined:
 - i. Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
 - ii. When coughing and sneezing, maintain distance and cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away into a closed bin immediately and wash hands;
 - iii. Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough;
 - iv. If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider;
 - v. When visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals;
 - vi. The consumption of raw or undercooked animal products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods, as per good food safety practices; and
 - vii. Within healthcare facilities, enhance standard infection prevention and control practices in hospitals, especially in emergency departments.
- c. Airflow in classrooms should be improved by opening windows and doors as much as possible.

2. When Respiratory Symptoms Occur

Wearing of medical mask is indicated for an individual exhibiting or feeling symptoms of respiratory infections. The medical mask is intended to contain respiratory secretions. Thus, it should be worn as much as possible. The

² Sourced from the Department of Health (DOH) and the website of the World Health Organization (WHO), and additionally from other reputable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) of the United States of America.

individual should also clean his or her hands immediately after contact with his or her own respiratory secretions.

3. Wearing of Medical Mask

- a. Wearing of medical mask is indicated for an individual exhibiting or feeling symptoms of respiratory infections, in order to contain respiratory secretions.
- b. WHO, in its advice on the use of masks, states that a medical mask is not required for non-sick persons. However, in crowded places where one is unsure of any possible exposure, masks may be resorted to.
- c. In using masks, best practices should be followed on how to wear, remove, and dispose of them and on hand hygiene action after removal. WHO provides guidelines in the use of masks:
 - i. If medical masks are worn, appropriate use and disposal are essential to ensure they are effective and to avoid any increase in risk of transmission associated with the incorrect use and disposal of masks.
 - ii. The following information on correct use of medical masks derives from the practices in health-care settings:
 - (1) place mask carefully to cover mouth and nose, and tie securely to minimize any gaps between the face and the mask;
 - (2) while in use, avoid touching the mask;
 - (3) remove the mask by using appropriate technique (i.e. do not touch the front but remove the lace from behind);
 - (4) after removal or whenever you inadvertently touch a used mask, clean hands by using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water if visibly soiled
 - (5) replace masks with a new clean, dry mask as soon as they become damp/humid;
 - (6) do not re-use single-use masks;
 - (7) discard single-use masks after each use and dispose of them immediately upon removal.
 - (8) Cloth (e.g. cotton or gauze) masks are not recommended under any circumstance.

**GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS TO HELP REDUCE THE SPREAD
OF SEASONAL INFLUENZA IN K-12 SCHOOLS**

Public and private schools shall be guided by the following recommendations adopted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/guidance.htm>:

- a. Encourage learners, parents, and staff to take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.
 - i. Encourage learners and staff to stay home when sick.
 - ii. Teach learners, parents, and staff the importance of staying home when sick until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever* or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
 - iii. Review school policies, and consider revising those that make it difficult for learners and staff to stay home when sick or when caring for others who are sick.
 - a. Implement flexible sick leave policies for learners and staff.
 - b. Avoid the use of perfect attendance awards.
 - c. Cross-train staff so that others can cover for co-workers who need to stay home.
- b. Encourage respiratory etiquette among learners and staff through education and the provision of supplies.
 - i. Teach learners and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their bent arm. If they use a tissue, they should put the used tissue in a trash can and wash their hands.
 - ii. Provide adequate supplies within easy reach, including tissues and no-touch trash cans.
 - iii. Encourage hand hygiene among learners and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and the provision of supplies. Teach learners and staff to wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, dry hands with a paper towel, and use the paper towel to turn off the faucet. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used.
 - iv. Include handwashing time in student schedules.
 - v. Provide adequate supplies, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- c. Encourage learners and staff to keep their hands away from their nose, mouth, and eyes.

- i. Encourage routine surface cleaning through education, policy, and the provision of supplies. Routinely clean surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, and phones. Empty trash cans as needed.
- ii. Use general cleaning products that you normally use. Always follow product label directions. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- iii. Provide adequate supplies, such as general EPA-registered cleaning products, gloves, disinfecting wipes, and no-touch trash cans.
- iv. Match your cleaning activities to the types of germs you want to remove or kill.

- (1) Flu viruses are relatively fragile, so standard practices, such as cleaning with soap and water, can help remove and kill them.
- (2) Studies have shown that the flu virus can live and potentially infect a person for only 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on a surface. Therefore, special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning, including closing schools to clean every surface in the building, are not necessary or recommended to slow the spread of flu, even during a flu outbreak.
- (3) Some schools may include other cleaning and disinfecting practices in their standard procedures to address germs that are not removed or killed by soap and water alone.

d. Educate learners, parents, and staff on what to do if someone gets sick.

- i. Teach learners, parents, and staff the signs and symptoms of flu, emergency warning signs, and high-risk groups. See lists at the beginning of this document.
- ii. Those who get flu-like symptoms at school should go home and stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Those who have emergency warning signs should get immediate medical care. Those who get flu-like symptoms and are at high risk of severe flu illness should ask a health care professional if they should be examined.
- iii. Separate sick learners and staff from others until they can be picked up to go home. When feasible, identify a "sick room" through which others do not regularly pass. The sick room should be separated from areas used by well learners for routine health activities, such as picking up medications. Sick room staff should be limited in number and should not be at high risk for severe illness if they get sick.

- iv. It is suggested to designate one holding area/space/tent preferably an open space (non-aircon) with free flowing water, if unavailable, may substitute with alcohol; face mask; tissue; and trash can.
- e. Establish relationships with state and local public health officials for ongoing communication.
 - i. Follow your local flu situation through close communication with state and local health officials.
 - ii. Update emergency plans so that they are in place before an outbreak occurs.

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