



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

March 18, 2020

DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

No. 2020- 0124

TO: ALL UNDERSECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES; DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS, SERVICES AND CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT; MINISTER OF HEALTH – BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO; EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS AND NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL; DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PHILIPPINES INSTITUTE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE; 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 ALL OTHERS CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Interim Guidelines on Ensuring Blood Safety and Adequacy for COVID-19 Response

I. BACKGROUND

Due to an increasing number of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases spreading to various territories and with confirmed human-to-human transmission, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020 and as a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

The Department of Health (DOH) shall ensure that patients with confirmed cases of COVID-19 have access to safe blood, which is an essential life-saving resource. Although there have been no reported COVID-19 transmission by blood or other substance of human origin, it shall also ensure the implementation of preventive measures in the transmission of COVID-19 during the conduct of a community-based mobile blood donation.

Mobile blood donation is an essential activity to maintain adequate supply of safe blood. The need for community-based donation is preferred over other volunteer blood donors to go to a health facility which may predispose or expose them to a higher risk of getting an infection. Thus, this guideline is hereby issued to ensure blood safety and adequacy for COVID-19 response in close coordination and collaboration with all its partners.

II. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES

The following shall be done in the conduct of a community-based mobile blood donation:

A. Conduct of Community-based Mobile Blood Donation

Intensify information dissemination and communication with partners and/or organizers that the conduct of a community-based mobile blood donation is an essential

activity which shall be exempted from any restriction in the conduct of mass gatherings.

1. The entire activity shall strictly observe social distancing measures and shall be finished within four (4) hours.
2. The activity shall be limited to a maximum of 50 donors. In cases where the organizer targeted more than 50 donors, they shall be advised to split and schedule another mobile blood donation.
3. Invitation shall be extended only for donors who are healthy and residents of the area
4. The following people shall not be allowed in the venue of the blood donation activity:
 - a. elderly
 - b. patients with co-morbidities
 - c. pregnant women
 - d. patients with fever and severe respiratory symptoms

B. Blood Donor Screening

Effective screening strategies will be in place through additional series of interview questions related to COVID-19 on top of the existing Donor History Questionnaire (DHQ) as stated in Annex A. A stringent deferral criteria will also be used to determine the qualification of the volunteer blood donor in order to ensure the safety of both the donor and the recipient.

1. Deferral Criteria

The following volunteer blood donors shall not be allowed to donate blood:

- a. Volunteer Blood Donors with history of travel to any countries with COVID-19 local transmission in the last 28 days; (Please refer to WHO daily updated list of countries: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>)
- b. Those who had close contact with a Person Under Investigation (PUI) / Person Under Monitoring (PUM), or with a confirmed COVID-19 case in the last 28 days;
- c. Those who had close interaction with patients without severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) and COVID-19 that cannot be ruled-out; and,
- d. Those who had respiratory tract infection symptoms (e.g. cough and colds) in the last 14 days.

2. Referral

- a. In case a volunteer blood donor is identified with possible exposure to COVID-19, he/she shall be immediately isolated from the mobile blood donation area. The personnel in charge of blood donor screening shall advise the volunteer blood donor using the current algorithm for triage of patients with possible COVID-19 infection in health care facilities.
- b. The Personnel in charge of volunteer blood donor screening, Mobile Blood Donation Team / Blood Center / Blood Bank Head, shall immediately notify the Regional Blood Program Coordinator (RBPC) for information and proper referral of PUI or PUM.

3. Advocacy

- a. Donor Recruitment Officer (DRO) shall conduct health education on COVID-19 during Volunteer Blood Donor Recruitment Campaign or Pep Talk. This shall help the potential volunteer blood donors to assess one's self and practice self-deferral in case with possible infection or exposure to COVID-19.
- b. DRO shall intensify Volunteer Blood Donor Recruitment Campaign and target a higher population of potential volunteer blood donors from both public and private entities such as but not limited to Universities, Religious Groups, Offices, and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), to compensate for the possible decrease in eligible volunteer blood donors from current partner agencies.


C. Blood Collection

1. Blood collecting procedures shall strictly follow the Protocol on Handling Volunteer Blood Donors during Mobile Blood Donations (MBD) and Facility-based Blood Collection to Prevent Spread of COVID-19 (Annex B) in addition to established standard and safety measures issued by DOH and other recognized institutions;
2. In case of transfusion to immunocompromised patients or if in the future, evidence would indicate risk, blood and blood products additional margin of safety may be implemented through pathogen reduction where microorganism in the blood and blood products can be deactivated
3. During sustained local transmission, the National Council for Blood Services (NCBS) Technical Committee shall convene to formulate recommendations and to address the immediate concerns on Blood Service Facilities related to COVID-19 following their functions based on Department Personnel Order No. 2005-2126 Re: Creation of Committees under the National Council for Blood Services pursuant to A.O. 2005-0002;

D. Ensuring Safety of Health Personnel during conduct of Mobile Blood Donation Activities

1. Current guidelines on preventive measures (e.g. hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, proper wearing of mask/PPEs, social distancing) shall be strictly observed.
2. All Regional Blood Program Coordinators, Head of Blood Service Facilities and Donor Recruitment Officers shall ensure dissemination and strict implementation of these guidelines.

For strict compliance.


FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary of Health

Annex A. Questions that should be included during the screening of Volunteer Blood Donors in addition to the existing standard Donor History Questionnaire (DHQ)

The following questions shall be included during the screening of Volunteer Blood Donors in addition to the existing standard Donor History Questionnaire (DHQ):

1. In the past 28 days, have you travelled outside the Philippines? If yes, indicate the country(ies).
2. In the past 28 days, have you ever had close contact (lived with, worked with, travelled with, or cared for) a confirmed COVID-19 patient, or of a person who travelled to countries with COVID-19 local transmission?
3. Have you ever had close contact with a person exhibiting symptoms of acute respiratory illness?

ANNEX B

Protocol on Handling Blood Donors during Mobile Blood Donations (MBD) and Facility-based Blood Collection to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

PROCESS	MBD Partner/agency Coordinators	Blood Service Facility STAFF	DONOR	EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS
1. Pre-Donation				
1.1. Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide and ensure venue for the pep talk and MBD with adequate space and facility ▪ Pre-screen donors based on the presented COVID-19 protocols/interim guidelines related to Blood Donation ▪ Distribute to potential donors the IEC materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Orient MBD coordinators regarding COVID-19 protocols/interim guidelines related to Blood Donation ▪ Capacitate coordinators in Pre-screening of donors based on the presented COVID-19 protocols/interim guidelines related to Blood Donation ▪ Provide of IEC material (leaflets, etc.) ▪ Coordinate with the partner agency regarding Venue/floor area: can accommodate 1 meter apart from each other ▪ Washing area/access to clean water source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Read and understand the IEC materials provided ▪ Self assessment to practice self-deferral as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEC Materials ▪ Interim Guidelines/ Protocols
1.2. Pre-donation talk/ Pep talk:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invite/recruit potential blood donors ▪ Provide venue with adequate space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide pre-donation information/basic criteria for donating ▪ Encourage self-deferral ▪ Emphasize Voluntary Non-Remunerated Blood Donation (VNRBD) ▪ Encourage potential blood donors to limit stay in the venue after a successful blood donation as safety measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice social distancing – one (1) meter away from each other 	

↑ [Signature]

ANNEX B

Protocol on Handling Blood Donors during Mobile Blood Donations (MBD) and Facility-based Blood Collection to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

PROCESS	MBD Partner/agency Coordinators	Blood Service Facility STAFF	DONOR	EQUIPMENT/ MATERIALS
2. Mobile Blood Donation (MBD) and Facility-based Blood Collection				
<p>2.1. Pre-screening (Triage) of Blood Donors <i>Include additional questions related to history of travel prior to entering the venue</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crowd control in the waiting area and entry point ▪ Identify separate area/booth for blood donor pre-screening with adequate space and ventilation ▪ Assign waiting area appropriate for social distancing (1 meter or arm length away from each other) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assign ONE DESIGNATED STAFF with alternate STAFF per MBD TEAM ▪ Wear PPE *mask ▪ Practice social distancing – one (1) meter away from each other ▪ Sanitize hands ▪ Observe cough and sneeze etiquette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Checking of temperature preferably using no-contact Thermometer ▪ Practice social distancing – one (1) meter away from each other ▪ Sanitize hands ▪ Observe cough and sneeze etiquette ▪ Avoid close conversation with each other ▪ Limit time of stay in the venue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thermal Scanner / No-contact Thermometer ▪ Alcohol Dispenser – shall be placed at all stations ▪ Washing area/ access to clean water source ▪ Color-coded waste bins - for proper waste segregation (Yellow, Black, Green)
<p>2.2. Donor Registration</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice social distancing – one (1) meter away from each other ▪ Wear face mask up to 8 hours ▪ Wash hands and/or sanitize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wash hands and/or sanitize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No contact Thermometer and Ballpens- shall always be sanitized ▪ Color-coded waste bins - for proper waste segregation (Yellow, Black, Green)

[Handwritten signature]

ANNEX 6

Protocol on Handling Blood Donors during Mobile Blood Donations (MBD) and Facility-based Blood Collection to Prevent Spread of COVID-19


PROCESS	MBD Partner/agency Coordinators	Blood Service Facility STAFF	DONOR	EQUIPMENT/ MATERIALS
<p>2.3. Physical Exam and Interview</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice social distancing – one (1) meter away from each other ▪ Wear Face Mask up to 8 hours ▪ Use Hand Gloves and replace every after donor OR hand washing every after donor encounter (20 seconds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disinfect donor’s arm before and after blood pressure taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stethoscope- shall be sanitized every after donor ▪ Sphygmomanometer cuff – shall be wash every after MBD ▪ Tubings of Sphygmomanomete- should be sanitized ▪ Color-coded waste bins - for proper waste segregation (Yellow, Black, Green)
<p>2.4. Phlebotomy</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wear face mask up to 8 hours ▪ Use hand gloves and replace every after donor OR hand washing every after donor encounter (20 seconds) ▪ Practice one donor at a time per phlebotomist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disinfect donor’s arm before and after palpating the selected phlebotomy site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blankets – only use blankets to donors with adverse reaction. <i>It is not advisable to provide blankets to donors.</i> ▪ Beds – shall be one (1) meter apart and shall be sanitized every after donor

A [signature] mce

ANNEX 6

Protocol on Handling Blood Donors during Mobile Blood Donations (MBD) and Facility-based Blood Collection to Prevent Spread of COVID-19

PROCESS	MBD Partner/agency Coordinators	Blood Service Facility STAFF	DONOR	EQUIPMENT/ MATERIALS
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linen/ easy-to-sanitize pillowcase with leatherette or plastic material- may be used ▪ Torniquet- shall be sanitized every after donor ▪ Color-coded waste bins - for proper waste segregation (Yellow, Black, Green)
<p>2.5. Post-donor care</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Basic donor care ▪ Advise donor to report development of symptoms related/same that of COVID-19 after donating blood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report development of symptoms related/same that of COVID-19 after donating blood to public health authorities <i>(COVID-19 Hotline: 8711-1001, 8711-1002)</i> 	

1 
mee