



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR NO. 36 - 2020

- TO : ALL LITIGANTS, JUSTICES, JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL OF THE JUDICIARY, AND MEMBERS OF THE BAR
- RE : AREAS PLACED UNDER GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE FROM 1 TO 15 MAY 2020

Considering that certain areas were placed under General Community Quarantine (GCQ) from 1 to 15 May 2020 (LUZON: CAR [except Benguet]; Region I [except Pangasinan]; Region II; Region III – Aurora; Region IV-B – [except Oriental Mindoro & Occidental Mindoro]; and Region V – [except Albay & Catanduanes]; VISAYAS: Region VI – [except Aklan, Antique, Capiz & Iloilo]; Region VII – [except Cebu & Cebu City]; and, Region VIII; and MINDANAO: Regions IX, X, XI [except Davao del Norte, Davao City & Davao de Oro], XII and ARMM), all the courts in the said GCQ areas shall operate as follows during the said period:

1. All branches of courts in the GCQ areas shall be open beginning 4 May 2020, but shall function only with a skeleton-staff to assist the judge, and shall act only on urgent matters.

2. In exceptional circumstances, judges and court personnel who are more than fifty-nine (59) years of age, and those with medical conditions making them vulnerable to be easily infected by Covid-19, may report to the courts to act on urgent matters. Otherwise, they shall work from their respective residences, e.g., draft orders and decisions, do legal research, transcribe stenographic notes, etc., but no court records may be taken out of the court.

In the same manner, lawyers who are more than fifty-nine (59) years of age may attend their hearings on urgent matters, except those suffering from any illness, or those who appear sickly and weak. If available, younger lawyers should be sent instead, since their appearances anyway will be limited to urgent matters, and not for trial proper.

3. All courts in the GCQ areas shall operate from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Night courts and Saturday courts, however, shall remain suspended until 15 May 2020.

4. All hearings in the GCQ areas shall remain suspended until 15 May 2020, except hearings on urgent matters, such as those mentioned in A.C. No. 31-2020. The judges in the GCQ areas, in the exercise of their sound discretion, may set for hearing other urgent matters or concerns to expedite the proceedings or the disposition of the cases pending before their courts.

5. The on-line filing of criminal complaints and informations, posting of bail, and the submission of other urgent pleadings in the GCQ areas may be availed of until 15 May 2020. For this purpose, the hotlines, email addresses and/or other accounts of the courts in the GCQ areas posted on the website of the Supreme Court shall be utilized.

6. The filing of petitions, appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings and other court submissions that fall due up to 15 May 2020 in the GCQ areas is extended for 30 calendar days, counted from 16 May 2020, but pleadings and other court submissions may still be filed by the parties within the reglementary period on or before 15 May 2020 through electronic means, if preferred and able.

7. The raffle of newly-filed cases shall be conducted beginning 4 May 2020 in accordance with the regular schedule of raffle, and shall be attended only by the members of the Raffle Committee. The private lawyers and the general public shall be excluded during this period of public health emergency.

8. The periods for court actions with prescribed periods in the GCQ Areas are also extended for 30 calendar days counted from 16 May 2020, except court actions on urgent matters.

9. Decisions and orders drafted before and during the GCQ may be promulgated and released during this period, provided no hearings are necessary, except on urgent matters. Service of writs and other court processes on urgent matters within the GCQ areas shall proceed.

10. No actual meetings, seminars, trainings and other functions in the Judiciary within the GCQ areas shall take place during this period, except those that may be called or authorized by the Chief Justice or by the Judiciary Task Force on COVID-19.

11. Flag raising and retreat ceremonies in the GCQ areas are likewise suspended until 15 May 2020.

12. Only those with official business shall be allowed to enter the halls of justice and courtrooms in the GCQ areas during this time.

13. All those going to court in the GCQ areas during this period shall observe the following medical health standards or hygiene practices while in the premises of the halls of justice, to wit:

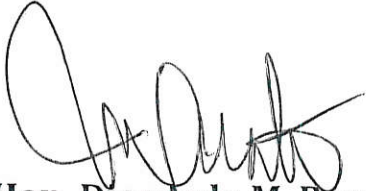
- a. obligatory temperature check;
- b. compulsory wearing of face masks;
- c. regular use of alcohol for sanitation;
- d. application of disinfectants inside the court rooms and hall of justice common areas;
- e. maintenance of social or physical distancing;
- f. proper washing of hands; and,
- g. exercise cough etiquette.

14. The Executive Judges of multi-sala stations and the Judges of single-sala courts shall coordinate with their respective local government units and/or health authorities on the proper protocols to be observed and the designation of medical or health care areas for the isolation of suspected infected individuals, and the continuous testing of those who may need it.

All previously issued circulars and their respective provisions which are not inconsistent herewith shall remain valid and in effect.

FOR THE GUIDANCE OF ALL CONCERNED.

Parañaque City, 27 April 2020



Hon. Diosdado M. Peralta
Chief Justice