



**Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Office of the Court Administrator**

OCA CIRCULAR NO. 05-2022A

TO: ALL CONCERNED JUDGES, COURT PERSONNEL AND COURT USERS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL COURTS IN AREAS COVERED BY MEMORANDUM ORDER NO. 10-2022¹, SUPPLEMENTAL MEMORANDUM ORDER NO. 10-2022-A² AND SUPPLEMENTAL MEMORANDUM ORDER NO. 10-2022-B³

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES FOR COURTS PHYSICALLY CLOSED UNTIL 31 JANUARY 2022 DUE TO THE RISING CASES OF COVID-19 INFECTION

As authorized by Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, and in relation to Memorandum Order No. 10-2022 dated 12 January 2022, Supplemental Memorandum Order No. 10-2022-A dated 13 January 2022 and Supplemental Memorandum Order No. 10-2022-B dated 14 January 2022 that he issued, the latter as implemented by OCA Circular No. 07-2022 dated 14 January 2022, all the courts physically closed as listed therein until 31 January 2022 shall be guided by the following:

1. Physically closed to all court users are all courts and essential judicial offices in the areas mentioned herein. However, and at the discretion of the concerned Executive Judge (EJ) or Presiding Judge (PJ), courts or judicial offices may operate on a very limited basis, upon being reached through their respective hotlines, electronic mail (email) addresses and Facebook accounts, if available, to attend only to transactions that are of urgent nature. For this purpose, the concerned EJ or PJ shall see to it that the barest minimum number of personnel will be reporting on-site and that they do not have the slightest symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

¹ Covering the National Capital Judicial Region, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Cavite, Rizal, Laguna and 14 other areas in the country (Baguio City in the Cordillera Administrative Region; Dagupan City in Region I; City of Santiago and Cagayan in Region II; Angeles City, Bataan, Olongapo City, Pampanga, and Zambales in Region III; Batangas and Lucena City in Region IV-A; Naga City in Region V; Iloilo City in Region VI; and Lapu-Lapu City in Region VII)

² Covering the following: A. For Luzon: a. Cordillera Administrative Region: Benguet, Kalinga, Abra; b. Region I: La Union, Ilocos Norte, Pangasinan; c. Region II: Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela, Quirino; d. Region III: Nueva Ecija, Tarlac; e. (Region IV-A:) Quezon Province; f. Region IV-B: Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro; g. Region V: Camarines Sur, Albay. B. For Visayas: a. Region VI: Bacolod City, Aklan, Capiz, Antique; b. Region VII: Cebu City, Mandaue City; c. (Region VIII:) Tacloban City. C. For Mindanao: a. (Region X:) Cagayan de Oro City; b. (Region XI:) Davao City; c. Region XIII (CARAGA): Butuan City, Agusan del Sur; d. (BARMM:) Cotabato City.

³ Covering the following: For Luzon: a. Cordillera Administrative Region: Ifugao, Mountain Province; b. Region 1: Ilocos Sur; c. Region 3: Aurora; d. Region 4-B: Marinduque, Romblon; e. Region 5: Camarines Norte, Catanduanes, Sorsogon. B. For Visayas: a. Region 6: Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Guimaras; b. Region 7: Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental; c. Region 8: Ormoc City, Biliran, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Southern Leyte, Western Samar. C. For Mindanao: a. Region 9: City of Isabela, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur; b. Region 10: Bukidnon, Iligan City, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental; c. Region 11: Davao del Sur, Davao del Norte; d. Region 12: General Santos City, South Cotabao; e. CARAGA: Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte, f. BARMM: Lanao del Sur.

To see to it that the good state of health and medical condition of the court personnel are properly monitored and safeguarded, the EJs or PJs, as the case may be, and for those who have not yet done so, are directed to coordinate with the local government units in their respective jurisdictions if these can provide an exhaustive antigen and/or Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) testing of the staff while the courts are physically closed. Still, the concerned Judges and court personnel may opt to have themselves tested on their own and the expenses may be reimbursed from the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) pursuant to OCA Circular No. 80-2021 dated 15 June 2021. The results of the above tests, particularly on those possibly found positive for the virus, should be reported to the OCA, through the concerned Deputy Court Administrators or Assistant Court Administrators.

Any information on those who prefer not to be tested for the virus may be submitted as well to the OCA.

2. As all in-court hearings in the covered areas are entirely suspended until 31 January 2022, Judges may conduct fully remote videoconferencing hearings regardless of their locations and without need of any prior clearance from the OCA. Aside from the urgent matters enumerated in the subject memorandum orders, the raffle of cases may also be done through videoconferencing.

There being no official policy yet on the use of electronic signatures (e-signatures), orders or rulings that may be issued/rendered by the Judges during their videoconferencing hearings should bear their original signatures affixed thereon and copies thereof may then be transmitted electronically after these have been scanned.

All Judges, during the period that the courts are physically closed until 31 January 2022, shall continue to draft and/or write orders regarding pending motions or incidents already submitted for resolution and prepare and/or pen decisions or judgments for cases already submitted for decision before them. These orders or decisions should then be released, served, or promulgated within the reglementary period as required by Supreme Court issuances, the Rules of Court or applicable laws.

3. Judges may exercise their utmost discretion to solemnize marriages which have been set already, applied for or raffled to them during the covered period, if they deem this very urgent as well, provided that all health and safety protocols, especially those provided by the IATF in its Resolution No. 155 dated 31 December 2021, are observed to see to it that all those in attendance, including any minimum required staff, are protected from possible infection for the virus.

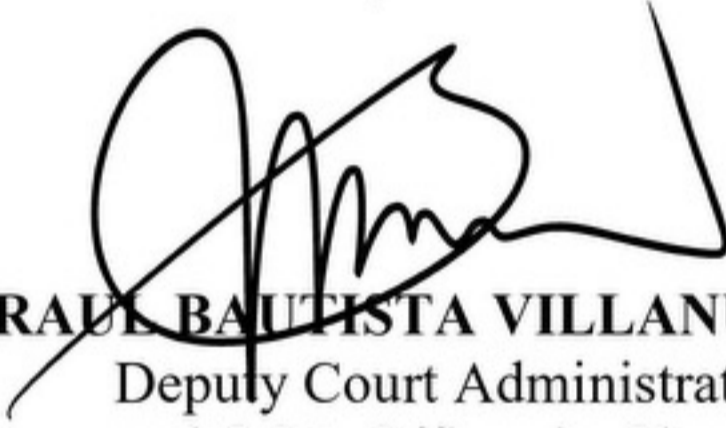
4. Civil cases, including those with prayers for extraordinary reliefs or writs, and criminal cases, together with other supporting documents, may be filed through electronic transmission or email before the proper court in the covered areas. The required proceedings for the said cases during the herein period can then be conducted through videoconferencing.

5. Pursuant to OCA Circular No. 164-2020 dated 7 October 2020⁴, filing fees for the above cases and other collections may be deposited/paid in any branch of the Land Bank of the Philippines or through bank/online transfer by the paying party upon receipt of an order of payment from the concerned judicial office or clerk of court. The order of payment should be obtained by coordinating with the said judicial office or clerk of court, through the latter's hotline, email address or Facebook account, if available, and proof of deposit/payment may be presented to the latter through electronic transmission, with the original copy thereof submitted once the courts and judicial offices are physically open.

6. Applications for bail may likewise be done with the use of electronic means and the required documents for the same may be transmitted using the platforms already available to the courts. If a cash bond will be posted, the accused or his/her representative should communicate with the concerned judicial office or clerk of court to facilitate the payment thereof in accordance with the relevant provisions of OCA Circular No. 164-2020.

7. In the event that there are pressing concerns that the Judges or court personnel may have regarding their operations until 31 January 2022, the same should be referred to the OCA for appropriate action.

16 January 2022



RAUL BAUTISTA VILLANUEVA
Deputy Court Administrator
and OCA-Officer-in-Charge

(Per Memorandum Order No. 108-2021 dated 17 November 2021)

OCA Circ-court operations(alert level 3) jan 2022 A

⁴ Re: Manner of Payment and Disposition of Legal Fees and Other Collections in the Lower Courts Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic