



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

OCA CIRCULAR NO. 97 - 2020

- TO : ALL THE NEWLY AND ORIGINALLY APPOINTED JUDGES OF THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL COURTS, AND THE JUDGES OF THE FIRST LEVEL COURTS PROMOTED TO THE SECOND LEVEL COURTS**
- RE : COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIRED IMMERSION PROGRAM DURING THIS PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

The Court, in par. 3, A.M. No. 99 - 7 - 07 - SC,¹ provided the guidelines on the required immersion program for the newly and originally appointed judges of the first and second level courts, and the judges of the first level courts promoted to the second level courts, the pertinent provisions of which are as follows:

3. Immersion Program

A. All (1) new and original appointees; and (2) judges of the first level courts promoted to the Regional Trial Courts who have already taken their oath of office shall undergo an immersion program. Unless otherwise directed, a judge given lateral promotion or transfer need not undergo an immersion program.

B. All new and original appointees shall undergo the immersion program for one (1) month. Judges of the first level courts promoted to the Regional Trial Court shall undergo the immersion program for two (2) weeks only.

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4. Actual assumption and exercise of judicial office

A. Judges given lateral promotion or laterally transferred shall perform their judicial functions and discharge their duties and responsibilities immediately after furnishing the Office of

¹ Resolution Prescribing Guidelines for Qualifying for Judicial Office, dated and promulgated on 20 July 1999, effective 1 August 1999.

Administrative Services of the OCA with copies of their oath of office.

Should there be a judge designated as Acting Presiding Judge of the court / sala of the appointee, the said judge should cease performing his functions and discharging his duties as such Acting Presiding Judge upon actual assumption and exercise by the appointee of his judicial office.

B. Before undertaking the orientation seminar-workshop and while undergoing the immersion program, judges of the first-level courts who have been promoted to multiple-sala Regional Trial Courts shall not perform their judicial functions. They may only act on administrative matters (e.g., the conduct of inventory of pending cases, personnel management matters, etc.).

C. Before undertaking the orientation seminar-workshop and while undergoing the immersion program, judges of the first-level courts who have been promoted to single-sala Regional Trial Courts may already act on judicial matters which are urgent in nature or which need immediate action (e.g., applications for temporary restraining orders; complaints for preliminary injunction; applications for bail; petitions for the issuance of the writ of habeas corpus, etc.).

D. Before undertaking the orientation seminar-workshop and after completion of the immersion program, judges of the first-level courts who have been promoted to either single-sala or multiple-sala Regional Trial Courts may already enter upon the performance of their judicial functions and the discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

Should there be a judge designated as Acting Presiding Judge of the court / sala of the appointee, the said judge should cease performing his functions and discharging his duties as such Acting Presiding Judge upon completion by the appointee of his immersion program.

E. Before undertaking the orientation seminar-workshop and while undergoing the immersion program, new and original appointees to the Judiciary, although they have already taken their oath of office, cannot perform judicial functions. However, they may act on administrative matters.

F. Before undertaking the orientation seminar-workshop and while undergoing the immersion program, new and original appointees to multiple-sala Regional Trial Courts shall not perform their judicial functions. They may act on administrative matters only.

G. Before undertaking the orientation seminar-workshop and while undergoing the immersion program, new and original

appointees to single-sala Regional Trial Courts may already act on judicial matters urgent in nature or which may need immediate action.

Should there be a judge designated as Acting Presiding Judge of the court of the new and original appointee who has already completed the immersion program although he has not yet undertaken the orientation seminar-workshop, the said judge should cease performing his functions and discharging his duties as such Acting Presiding Judge upon completion by the appointee of his immersion program.

Considering that there have been a number of newly and originally appointed judges of the first and second level courts, and judges of the first level courts promoted to the second level courts, who have not undertaken or completed their immersion programs, and all the courts where the immersion programs shall be undertaken are presently in areas either under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ), or General Community Quarantine (GCQ), the following guidelines, upon the approval of Chief Justice Diosdado M. Peralta, to comply with the above requirements, shall be observed in undertaking and completing the immersion programs to already enable the judges to perform their judicial functions and discharge all their duties and responsibilities:

1. All newly and originally appointed judges of the first and second level courts, and judges of the first level courts promoted to the second level courts, who will undertake or complete their immersion programs in courts in GCQ areas, shall immediately do so.
2. Only judges of the first level courts promoted to the second level courts can undertake or complete their immersion programs in courts in ECQ or MECQ areas, and shall immediately do so.
3. All newly and originally appointed judges of the first and second level courts who were scheduled to undertake or were completing their immersion programs in courts in ECQ or MECQ areas shall instead undertake or complete their immersion programs in the nearest court in a GCQ area, and shall immediately do so. For this purpose, they shall get in touch with their respective Deputy Court Administrators or Assistant Court Administrators to facilitate their immersion programs.

All judges handling the actual immersion programs shall issue a certification attesting to the fact that the newly-appointed or -promoted judge observed, joined and participated in in-court hearings or hearings through videoconferencing. All the certifications issued to the newly-appointed or -promoted judges shall be submitted to their respective Executive Judges, under

whose supervision the immersion program shall be complied with, to serve as basis for the certificates of completion to be issued by the Executive Judges.

It is understood that all the newly-appointed and -promoted judges have taken their respective oaths office before undertaking their immersion programs.

FOR THE GUIDANCE OF ALL CONCERNED.

Makati City, 19 May 2020.

(original signed)
JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ
Court Administrator