



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

OCA CIRCULAR NO. 198-2022

TO: ALL CONCERNED JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL OF THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL COURTS, AS WELL AS COURT USERS, IN AREAS PLACED UNDER ALERT LEVELS 1 AND 2

COURT OPERATIONS FROM 1 AUGUST 2022
SUBJECT: UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS OF THE COURT

Taking into account the official statement from the Department of Health (DOH) last 30 July 2022 on COVID-19 Alert Levels from 1 to 15 August 2022, and as authorized by Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, in accordance with the guidelines on court operations provided in OCA Circular No. 41-2022 dated 28 February 2022, as well as relevant subsequent circulars from the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), the **court operations** in the hereunder listed provinces, highly urbanized cities, independent component cities, component cities and municipalities categorized under Alert Level 1 during the afore-said period, shall be as follows:

AREAS UNDER ALERT LEVEL 1
LUZON
Metro Manila or National Capital Region Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR): Abra, Apayao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Baguio City; Region 1: Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan, Dagupan City; Region 2: Batanes, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, City of Santiago; Region 3: Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Angeles City, Olongapo City; Region 4A: Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Lucena City; Region 4B: Marinduque, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, Puerto Princesa City; and Region 5: Albay, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Naga City.
VISAYAS
Region 6: Aklan, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo Province, Bacolod City, Iloilo City; Region 7: Siquijor, Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, Mandaue City; and Region 8: Biliran, Eastern Samar, Southern Leyte, Ormoc City, Tacloban City.
MINDANAO
Region 9: Zamboanga City; Region 10: Bukidnon, Camiguin, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Cagayan de Oro City, Iligan City; Region 11: Davao Oriental, Davao City; Region 12: South Cotabato, General Santos City; Region 13 (CARAGA): Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Sur, Butuan City; and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM): Cotabato City

COURT OPERATION GUIDELINES (Alert Level 1)
<input type="checkbox"/> Courts and judicial offices are FULLY OPERATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> Full on-site ¹ staff complement to report for work
<input type="checkbox"/> For Judges without court space or facilities of their own, but they already have their own personnel, maintain a skeleton workforce of at least 75%
<input type="checkbox"/> Night courts are allowed to operate in stations where these have been organized or required
<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Judges may conduct jail visitations as provided for in OCA Circular No. 107-2013 dated 30 August 2013

For courts in the herein listed areas that remain under Alert Level 2 until 15 August 2022, their **operations** shall be governed by the guidelines as provided as well in OCA Circular No. 41-2022, together with the relevant subsequent OCA circulars that were issued:

AREAS STILL UNDER ALERT LEVEL 2
LUZON
CAR: Benguet, Ifugao; Region 4A: Quezon Province; Region 4B: Occidental Mindoro, Palawan; and, Region 5: Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Masbate.
VISAYAS
Region 6: Antique, Negros Occidental; Region 7: Bohol, Cebu Province, Negros Oriental; and, Region 8: Leyte, Northern Samar, Western Samar.
MINDANAO
Region 9: Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, City of Isabela; Region 10: Lanao del Norte; Region 11: Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental; Region 12: North Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat; Region 13 (CARAGA): Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte; and, BARMM: Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi.

COURT OPERATION GUIDELINES (Alert Level 2)
<input type="checkbox"/> Courts and judicial offices are PHYSICALLY OPEN
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a skeleton workforce of at least 80% ²
<input type="checkbox"/> For Judges without court space or facilities of their own, but they already have their own personnel, maintain a skeleton workforce of at least 50% to at most 75%
<input type="checkbox"/> Night courts, if required or organized, are not yet allowed to operate

To be clear, and unless otherwise permitted by the OCA under exceptional circumstances, the conduct of fully-remote videoconferencing hearings, regardless of the location of the Judges in the country, is no longer permitted at this time. Again, priority will be given to in-court or face-to-face hearings and the conduct of videoconferencing hearings in the courtrooms should continue, both instances subject only to valid requests to deviate therefrom with prior clearance from the OCA.

¹ Sec. 6, *Guidelines on the Nationwide Implementation of Alert Level System for COVID-19 Response (as of 14 December 2021)*

² Id., Sec. 5(4)

Likewise, and until further notice, flag raising/lowering ceremonies by all courts are not allowed during the herein covered period.

Incidentally, it is the concerned Judges with 80% working capacity in areas under Alert Level 2, or 50% to 75% working capacity for those Judges without court space or facilities yet depending on the Alert Level in their areas, who will determine the number and schedule of their staff who will be required to report for work on-site in their respective courts.

Although Antique, Leyte, Zamboanga Sibugay, Davao del Norte, Sarangani, Surigao del Norte, and Lanao del Sur are under Alert Level 2, and without prejudice to those cities and municipalities already under Alert Level 1 or considered de-escalated pursuant to Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) Resolution Nos. 165-G dated 8 April 2022, 166-A dated 12 April 2022, 167-A dated 28 April 2022, 167-C dated 2 May 2022, 167-F dated 14 May 2022, 168-A dated 26 May 2022, 168-G dated 14 June 2022, and 169-A dated 27 June 2022, the following cities and municipalities have been additionally placed under Alert Level 1:

REGION	CITY/MUNICIPALITY
VISAYAS	
Region 6: Antique	<input type="checkbox"/> Barbaza
Region 7: Leyte	<input type="checkbox"/> Bato, Tabontabon
MINDANAO	
Region 9: Zamboanga Sibugay	<input type="checkbox"/> Payao
Region 11: Davao del Norte	<input type="checkbox"/> Braulio E. Dujali
Region 12: Sarangani	<input type="checkbox"/> Maitum
Region 13 (CARAGA): Surigao del Norte	<input type="checkbox"/> Pilar
BARMM Lanao del Sur	<input type="checkbox"/> Calanogas, Marogong, Tagoloan II

OCA Circular No. 198-2022 (Re: Court Operations from 1 August 2022 until further orders of the Court)

Also, all **common court operation guidelines** for areas under Alert Levels 1 and 2, **as cited in OCA Circular No. 41-2022** which includes, among others, having regular Saturday duties for all the covered stations/courts, shall continue to be in force.

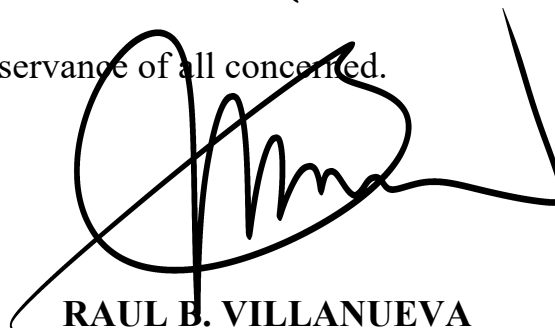
In addition, all other issuances of the Court or the OCA that are inconsistent herewith, such as OCA Circular No. 180-2022-A dated 15 July 2022, will no longer be applicable to the courts in areas under either Alert Level 1 or 2.

Further, all health and safety protocols against COVID-19 prescribed by the Court and the OCA, such as OCA Circular No. 189-2022 dated 21 July 2022³, as well as those required by the IATF and the DOH, shall be complied with whatever is the Alert Level of a particular area.

In the event that there are pressing concerns that the Judges or court personnel may have regarding their operations from 1 August 2022, the same shall be referred to the OCA for appropriate action.

For the strict compliance and observance of all concerned.

31 July 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raul B. Villanueva', is written over a large, faint circular stamp or watermark.

RAUL B. VILLANUEVA
Court Administrator

OCA Circ-court operations(alert levels 1 & 2) june 1 2022 A3

³ RE: Amended Health Guidelines on COVID-19 Cases