



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

OCA CIRCULAR NO. 181-2023

TO: ALL CONCERNED JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL OF THE FIRST AND SECOND LEVEL COURTS, AS WELL AS COURT USERS NATIONWIDE

SUBJECT: COURT OPERATIONS FROM 2 MAY 2023 UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS OF THE COURT

As authorized by Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, there being no new announcement from the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) about the alert levels in several areas in the country related to the COVID-19 situation, **court operations** from 2 May 2023 until further orders of the Supreme Court (Court) will remain the same as provided in OCA Circular No. 258-2022 dated 30 September 2022, as follows:

COURT OPERATION GUIDELINES
<input type="checkbox"/> Courts and judicial offices are FULLY OPERATIONAL, with all judicial and administrative services should be made available to court users
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a 100% workforce
<input type="checkbox"/> Flag raising/lowering ceremonies can be held
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday duty should continue
<input type="checkbox"/> Jail visitation should be conducted as provided for in OCA Circular No. 107-2013 dated 30 August 2013
<input type="checkbox"/> Night courts are permitted to operate in stations where these have been organized or required
<input type="checkbox"/> Pleadings, motions, and other court submissions may be filed or served by registered mail, through the services of duly accredited private couriers, or by transmitting them through electronic mail in accordance with the existing electronic filing guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular office hours as prescribed in OCA Circular No. 09-2015 dated 21 January 2015 shall be observed, i.e., Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. (for Judicial Regions 1 to 12) and 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. (for National Capital Judicial Region)
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal filing and follow-up of cases are allowed, subject to strict health protocols being observed.

Priority shall be given to in-court or face-to-face hearings and the conduct of videoconferencing hearings, if warranted, in court, from home or in other locations shall be subject to the provisions of OCA Circular No. 43-2022 dated 1 March 2022. Also, the raffle of cases in multi-sala stations should be in-person.

All necessary health and safety protocols against or to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as prescribed by the Court and the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), as well as those required by the IATF and the Department of Health, shall be strictly complied with and observed. Further, the wearing of face masks while inside the halls of justice is mandatory and not yet optional now.

If the IATF subsequently places a particular province, city or municipality under any alert level, such classification will not in any way affect the observance of the required court operation guidelines as provided herein, unless otherwise directed in a subsequent issuance by the Court or the OCA.

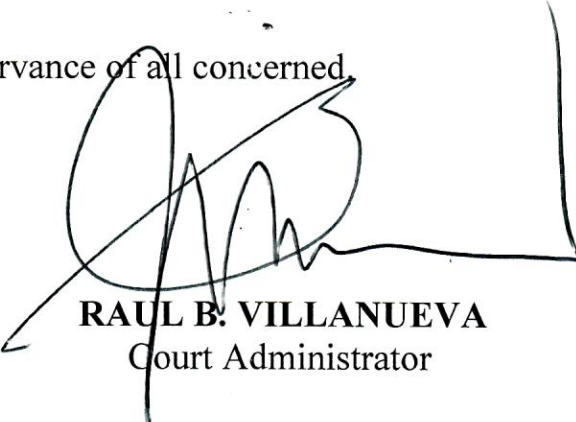
More importantly, and when addressing COVID-19 cases, the “Updated Guidelines on COVID-19 Health Protocols, Quarantine, and Amendments on the Use of Leave Credits Due to Quarantine and/or Treatment of COVID-19” per OCA Circular No. 350-2022 dated 20 December 2022¹ will govern and serve as the basis for the protocols to be followed for, in general, the quarantine of asymptomatic close contacts, the isolation of individuals with asymptomatic confirmed cases or who are symptomatic (whether suspected, probable or confirmed cases), and the treatment of leaves of absence when undergoing quarantine or isolation periods. To be clear, OCA Circular No. 350-2022 stresses that “(w)ork suspension and lockdowns in the courts with reported COVID-19 cases can no longer be declared. Disinfection, cleaning, and sanitation of the affected courts shall be undertaken on the weekend.”

In case there are pressing concerns that the Judges or court personnel may have regarding their operations from 2 May 2023 onwards, the same shall be referred to the OCA for appropriate action.

All prior issuances of the Court or the OCA that are inconsistent herewith will be deemed no longer applicable.

For the strict compliance and observance of all concerned,

1 May 2023



RAUL B. VILLANUEVA
Court Administrator

OCA Circ-courtoperations(may2023)

¹ Issued pursuant to Supreme Court Memorandum Order No. 123-2022 (Updated Quarantine and Isolation Protocols for COVID-19 Cases in the Supreme Court) dated 5 August 2022 and Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 2, s. 2022 (Amendment to the Revised Interim Guidelines on the Use of Leave Credits for Absences Due to Quarantine and/or Treatment of COVID-19) dated 18 January 2022