



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DOH - DILG - DOJ - DOT - DSWD - OCD - DFA - DOTR - DOLE - PNP - PCG- PPA
**BICOL INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE
MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

PROLIFERATION OF UNVERIFIED NEWS ON COVID 19

Resolution No. 4

**STERN WARNING ON PUBLICIZING COVID 19 NEWS OR UPDATES WHICH CAME
FROM ILLEGITIMATE, QUESTIONABLE, UNRELIABLE AND
UNAUTHORIZED SOURCES**

WHEREAS, the Office of the President, through Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated March 16, 2020, imposed guidelines for the enhanced community quarantine over entire Luzon and management of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) situation effective from midnight of March 17, 2020 to midnight of April 14, 2020, adopting the recommendations of IATF-EID;

WHEREAS, the Department of Health through Undersecretary Gerardo Bayugo issued an Order dated March 14, 2020 directing the Regional Health Cluster of RDRRMC to function as the Regional Inter Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, to address the COVID 19 issues, to implement the directives of the National IATF-EID and monitor the implementation of such;

WHEREAS, Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated March 16, 2020 states that the IATF, through the DOH, is directed to disseminate information to the public on the steps and measures to be undertaken relative to the COVID 19 situation, during the period of Enhanced Community Quarantine for entire Luzon;

WHEREAS, reports have been received that certain local chief executives have publicized COVID 19 data or information which are unverified;

WHEREAS, this unfounded proliferation of fake news unnecessarily creates panic among the public;

NOW THEREFORE, the undersigned members-agencies of the Bicol Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, by virtue of the powers vested upon it by applicable laws and issuances, such as but not limited to Executive Order No. 168 Series of 2014 and Memorandum from the Executive Secretary dated March 13, 2020, do hereby issue these warning to alleviate public anxiety and impose uniformity in risk communication;



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DOH - DILG - DOJ - DOT - DSWD - OCD - DFA - DOTr - DOLE - PNP - PCG- PPA
**BICOL INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE
MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

1. The sole valid source of COVID 19 information and updates is the Department of Health through Memorandum Circular 2020-0006 "Providing for the Reporting and Information Dissemination Protocol in Response to the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Health Event and Department Memorandum 2020-0110 "Directive to all Public and Private Hospitals and Healthcare Facilities on Reporting Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

As specified in the MCs, the **Secretary of Health** or his **designated representative** shall be the first to announce updates on confirmed cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Persons Under Investigations (PUIs) and Persons Under Monitoring (PUMs). After the official announcement it will be followed by announcements by CHDs, Provincial LGUs and City/Municipal LGUs.

2. Local chief executives¹ must adhere to DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2020-023 (Amended Guide to Action Against the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory Disease) dated February 6, 2020 which provides that *any action by the local chief executives should be anchored on, and cognizant of, the plans and recommendations of, and in coordination with, health authorities in order to ensure coherence of actions.*² In this regard, *all information to be relayed by the local chief executives should be based on, and coming from, the Department of Health (DOH) and other competent government agencies to ensure its accuracy, and in order to avoid undue public anxiety and panic;*³

In holding press conferences or media briefings, the same must be *accompanied by local DOH officials or respectable resource persons and other key personalities to provide accurate, relevant and timely updates on the issue and to dispel rumors, mal-information (fake news), misinformation and disinformation about the virus and accompanying concerns.*⁴

The same was already provided for in the DOH Memorandum, to wit:

Furthermore, prior to the conduct of the Local Government Unit's (LGU) press briefing, concerned LGUs is highly advised to coordinate with the DOH CHD Bicol for uniformity of messaging and validation of cases. In addition, in the event that LGUs will have a confirmed COVID-19 case in their area, they shall use the case number indicated in the Press Releases (i.e PH1, PH2, PH3. etc.) to ensure

¹ Section 3.1, DILG MC 2020-023, dated February 6, 2020.

² Section 4.1, *Ibid.*

³ Section 4.2, *Id.*

⁴ Section 5.1.1.4., *Id.*



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DOH - DILG - DOJ - DOT - DSWD - OCD - DFA - DOTr - DOLE - PNP - PCG- PPA
**BICOL INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE
MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

consistency and avoid confusion among the public as to the current number of cases.

Moreover, LGUs are enjoined to include the presence of DOH Regional Director to any press conference it shall host, as required by DOH Memorandum Circular 2020-0016 dated February 9, 2020.

3. The general public is sternly warned of posting or spreading, through writings, electronic means, and others, unverified and untrue information or update on COVID 19 when its authenticity was not assured prior to publicizing them. The same carries penal and civil sanctions.

4. In the Memorandum of the Executive Secretary dated March 16, 2020, it was specifically stated that:

Failure to abide by the foregoing guidelines and measures shall be subjected to appropriate action, both criminal and administrative, in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. For this purpose, the Department of Justice is directed to initiate appropriate charges, as may be warranted.

Said criminal and administrative actions are not limited to the following:

a) Republic Act 11332 (Mandatory Reporting of Notifiable Diseases and Health Events of Public Health Concern Act of 2019)

Section 9. Prohibited Acts. -The following shall be prohibited under this Act:

X X X

(b) Tampering of records or intentionally providing misinformation;

X X X

b) Republic Act 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012)

Section 4. Cybercrime Offenses. — The following acts constitute the offense of cybercrime punishable under this Act:



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DOH - DILG - DOJ - DOT - DSWD - OCD - DFA - DOTr - DOLE - PNP - PCG- PPA
**BICOL INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE
MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

X X X

(4) Libel. — The unlawful or prohibited acts of libel as defined in Article 355 of the Revised Penal Code, as amended, committed through a computer system or any other similar means which may be devised in the future.

X X X

Note: A libel is public and malicious imputation of a crime, or of a vice or defect, real or imaginary, or any act, omission, condition, status, or circumstance tending to cause the dishonor, discredit, or contempt of a natural or juridical person, or to blacken the memory of one who is dead.⁵

c) Revised Penal Code of the Philippines

Article 231. Open disobedience. - Any judicial or executive officer who shall openly refuse to execute the judgment, decision or order of any superior authority made within the scope of the jurisdiction of the latter and issued with all the legal formalities, shall suffer the penalties of arresto mayor in its medium period to prision correccional in its minimum period, temporary special disqualification in its maximum period and a fine not exceeding 1,000 pesos.

Article 233. Refusal of assistance. - The penalties of arresto mayor in its medium period to prision correccional in its minimum period, perpetual special disqualification and a fine not exceeding 1,000 pesos, shall be imposed upon a public officer who, upon demand from competent authority, shall fail to lend his cooperation towards the administration of justice or other public service, if such failure shall result in serious damage to the public interest, or to a third party; otherwise, arresto mayor in its medium and maximum periods and a fine not exceeding 500 pesos shall be imposed.

d) CSC Uniform Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service

- *Disclosing or misusing confidential or classified information officially known to him by reason of his office and not available to the public, to further his private interests or give undue advantage to anyone or to prejudice the public interest*

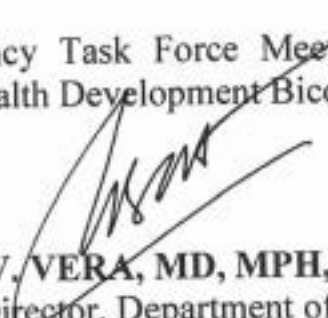
⁵ Article 353, Revised Penal Code of the Philippines.

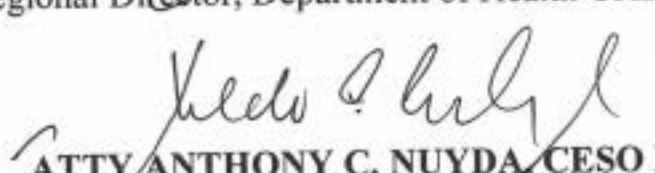



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DOH - DILG - DOJ - DOT - DSWD - OCD - DFA - DOTr - DOLE - PNP - PCG- PPA
**BICOL INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE FOR THE
MANAGEMENT OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE**


The institution of criminal actions shall not bar the filing of civil or administrative complaint against the erring public official.


APPROVED at the Inter-Agency Task Force Meeting this 26th of March, 2020, at the Department Health Center for Health Development Bicol, Legazpi City.


ERNIE V. VERA, MD, MPH, CHA, CESO IV
Regional Director, Department of Health CHD Bicol


ATTY. ANTHONY C. NUYDA, CESO III
Regional Director, Department of the Interior and Local Government RO V


DIR. CLAUDIO L. YUCOT
Regional Director, Office of the Civil Defense RO V


MGEN FERNANDO T. TRINIDAD AFP
Commander, JTF Bicolandia


PBGEN ANTHONY SANGA ALCÁÑESES
Regional Director, Philippine National Police RO V

MA. MAGNOLIA S. REQUEJO
Acting Manager, PMO Bicol, Philippine Ports Authority RO V


ATTY. MARY MAY B. DE LEOZ
Regional Director, Department of Justice RO V