DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

12 October 2021

JOINT MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR
No. 2021-003

SUBJECT: Interim Guidelines on the Voluntary Participation of Postgraduate/Undergraduate Interns, Clinical Clerks, and Fourth-Year Nursing Students in the COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program

I. RATIONALE

As the country continuously steps up its efforts to transition to a new normal amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Government, through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, launched the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program.

The Program aims to fully vaccinate at least 77 million Filipinos within the year 2021 following the prioritization framework of the country as adopted from the World Health Organization Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (WHO SAGE) on Immunization Values Framework and as recommended by the interim National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (iNITAG). In this regard, the Department of Health (DOH) is ramping up the vaccination roll-out with the steady arrival of more COVID-19 vaccines in the country to cover the target population. Subsequently, with the expansion of the vaccination activities, more Human Resources for Health (HRH) are needed to participate as part of the vaccination workforce.

In view of the foregoing, this policy shall provide guidance to the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), hospitals with National Internship Program and all governance levels participating in the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program - the National Vaccination Operations Center (NVOC), Regional Vaccination Operations Centers (RVOCs), Local Vaccination Operations Centers (LVOCs), Implementing Units, and Vaccination Sites with regard to the participation of postgraduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students in the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program.
II. OBJECTIVES

This Memorandum Circular aims to provide guidance on the voluntary participation of post-graduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students in the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program.

III. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This Memorandum Circular covers all public (state and local universities and colleges) and private HEIs with nursing and/or medical schools/colleges, and hospitals with National Internship Program (NIP); all post-graduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks and fourth-year nursing students volunteering as health screeners, vaccinators, and pre/post vaccination monitors under the supervision of licensed physicians and nurses.

This policy shall provide guidance to all governance levels participating in the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program - the National Vaccination Operations Center (NVOC), Regional Vaccination Operations Centers (RVOCs), Local Vaccination Operations Centers (LVOCs).

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Clinical Clerkship - is the fourth year of basic medical education completed through a 12-month rotation conducted mainly in the base hospital’s clinical, ambulatory, and community facilities. Medical students in this phase are called clinical clerks.

B. Local Vaccination Operations Center (LVOC) - is the inter-agency governance structure in the Local Government Unit (LGU) managing the COVID-19 vaccination operations within the area of jurisdiction.

C. Fully vaccinated for COVID-19 - an individual who has:
   a) Received the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine requiring two-dose series more than or equal to two (2) weeks prior, or
   b) Received a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine more than or equal to two (2) weeks prior, AND
   c) Received COVID-19 vaccines with Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) issued by the Philippine Food and Drug Administration or Emergency Use Listing of the World Health Organization.

D. Postgraduate Internship (PGI) - is the one-year clinical training of medical graduates of a four-year Doctor of Medicine course. This is conducted in a hospital accredited by the Association of Philippine Medical Colleges (APMC) for clinical internship. There are 78 accredited hospitals.
E. Related Learning Experience (RLE) - are teaching-learning opportunities in the BS Nursing program designed to develop the competencies of students utilizing processes in various health situations that can be sourced from, but not limited to lying-in clinics, schools, industrial establishments, communities, out-patient clinics, and general and specialty hospitals.

F. Undergraduate Internship - is the fifth year of a five-year Doctor of Medicine course. This is conducted in the base hospital of the medical school following the medical school’s curriculum. There are only five (5) medical schools with undergraduate internship programs, these are: University of the Philippines (UP) Manila and School of Health Sciences (in Leyte), St. Luke’s College of Medicine, Ateneo de Manila, and Ateneo de Zamboanga.

G. Volunteers - are post-graduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students volunteering as part of the vaccination workforce of the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program.

V. GENERAL GUIDELINES

A. The LGUs/LVOCs shall map out the HRH needed for their daily vaccination roll-out following the Philippine National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccines on the required number of personnel in the vaccination workforce. If HRH augmentation is necessary, they may engage the participation of postgraduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and/or fourth-year nursing students through the HEIs and/or hospitals with National Internship Program.

B. The participation of postgraduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students in the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program as part of the vaccination workforce shall be voluntary in nature.

C. Voluntary participation of clinical clerks, postgraduate/undergraduate interns, and fourth-year nursing students in vaccination sites shall be implemented regardless of the area’s risk classification as categorized by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), provided that these vaccination sites shall be endorsed and approved by the HEIs.
VI. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

A. Engagement of HEIs

1. The LGU/LVOCs shall initiate engagement of HEIs and hospitals preferably within their areas of jurisdiction after determination of needed additional HRH for vaccination.

2. The engagement between the HEIs/hospitals and LGUs/LVOCs shall be documented through a Memorandum of Agreement which will specify the LGU counterparts on non-monetary incentives (e.g. meal, transportation), and ensuring the safety and protection of the students.

B. Identification of the Vaccination Workforce

1. The LGUs/LVOCs shall determine the need for additional workforce per vaccination site.

2. The LGUs/LVOCs shall identify the tasks of the volunteers in the vaccination sites. Post-graduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks and fourth-year nursing students may participate as any of the following:
   a) Health educators
   b) Post-vaccination monitors
   c) Health screeners (under supervision)
   d) Vaccinators (under supervision).

3. At least one (1) licensed nurse and at least one (1) licensed physician shall be present at all times at the vaccination site to serve as supervisors and shall be informed of the number of clinical clerks, post-graduate/undergraduate interns and/or fourth-year nursing students to be supervised before each vaccination day schedule.

C. Requirements for Participation

1. Post-graduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students who will voluntarily participate in the vaccination activities as part of the vaccination workforce shall submit the following documents to their respective HEI or hospital,
   a) Informed consent from the volunteer,
   b) Informed consent from parent or guardian of the volunteer,
   c) Vaccination card as proof of full vaccination against COVID-19
   d) PhilHealth membership, and
   e) Medical certification from a duly licensed physician reflecting absence/presence of comorbidity.
2. After submission of all requirements and upon thorough review and approval of the School/College Dean of the HEI or the Medical Chief of the Hospital, the HEI or hospital shall issue an endorsement to the concerned student prior to his/her participation in the vaccination activities.

3. The LGU/LVOC shall not accept volunteers without the endorsement of the HEI and/or hospital.

4. Training and Capacity Building:
   
a) All volunteers shall complete the online courses on the National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program accessible at learn.doh.gov.ph. The certificate received after completion of training shall be presented to the LGU upon enlistment as volunteer.
   
b) The HEIs/hospitals and/or the NVOC may also provide orientation or training on specific vaccine brands.

5. LGU/LVOC Orientation:
   
a) The LGU/LVOC shall provide orientation to volunteers on their vaccination protocols and processes prior to participation in the vaccination program.

D. Duration of Participation

1. The participation of post-graduate/undergraduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students shall be limited to the following:
   
a) Daily duty hours of eight (8) hours at most, and
   
b) The whole duration of the participation in the vaccination for two (2) weeks at most.

2. The scheduling and rotation assignment in the COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment and Vaccination Program shall be coordinated by the intern’s coordinator of the base hospital or the clinical clerk’s coordinator of the HEI. The list of names and rotation assignments shall be provided to the LGU/LVOC as reference.

3. Completed number of hours rendered by the volunteer for credit purposes shall be certified by the head of the vaccination team in the particular vaccination site where the volunteers rendered their services.
E. Safety of Volunteers

1. All volunteers shall be provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by the LGU/LVOC.

2. A fully filled-out health declaration form shall be required upon entry at the vaccination site. If the volunteer manifests with any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection, he/she shall be referred to the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) for isolation and treatment, based on current policies and guidelines.

3. Health safety standards shall be strictly observed by the volunteers during their tour of volunteer work.

4. All relevant information/findings/incidents noted during the volunteer’s tour of service shall be reported or disclosed to the licensed professionals on the vaccination team. The HEI/hospital shall be informed of any incident pertaining to the volunteer/s.

5. In cases where the volunteer contracts COVID-19, the LGU/LVOC shall ensure and facilitate treatment and/or isolation of the volunteer.

   a) If hospitalized, the volunteer shall be covered by PhilHealth. Any excess expenses shall be shoulder by the LGU/LVOC. The volunteer may be admitted in a government hospital or a private hospital with an existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Center for Health Development (CHD).

   b) For those not needing hospitalization, the LGU/LVOC shall ensure proper coordination with a quarantine facility. Home-isolation shall also be allowed, provided that quarantine/isolation requirements are followed based on the guidelines set forth in Department Memorandum 2020-0512 entitled “Revised Omnibus Interim Guidelines on Prevention, Detection Isolation, Treatment, and Reintegration Strategies for COVID-19”.

F. Liabilities

1. In reference to Republic Act No. 11525 otherwise known as “COVID-19 Vaccination Program Act of 2021”, Section 8. Immunity from Liability, the volunteer shall not be held liable for any illness or injury alleged to arise from the vaccines supplied, or the manner in which the vaccines were administered,
provided that such persons acted within the instructions and guidance of the supervisor.

2. The volunteer shall keep confidential all data and information pursuant to Republic Act No. 10173 otherwise known as “Data Privacy Act of 2012”, and shall refrain from using it other than for the vaccination site activities.

3. If complaints shall be raised against the volunteer, the supervisor shall handle and facilitate resolution of such complaints.

VII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Participating HEIs shall:

1. Disseminate call for volunteers coming from their enrolled undergraduate interns, clinical clerks and/or fourth-year nursing students.

2. Facilitate and ensure proper training, orientation and briefing of all interested volunteers.

3. Collate all necessary requirements for participation of volunteers.

4. Endorse qualified volunteers to LGU/LVOC after thorough review and approval.

5. Plot schedules and rotation assignments of volunteers and endorse them to LGU/LVOC.

6. Credit work/service rendered as part of the medical internship, clinical clerkship community rotation and/or nursing Related Learning Experiences (RLE).

B. Participating Hospitals with National Internship Programs shall:

1. Disseminate call for volunteers coming from their enrolled postgraduate interns, clinical clerks and/or fourth-year nursing students.

2. Facilitate and ensure proper training, orientation and briefing of all interested volunteers.

3. Collate all necessary requirements for participation of volunteers.

4. Endorse qualified volunteers to LGU/LVOC after thorough review and approval.
5. Plot schedules and rotation assignments of volunteers and endorse them to LGU/LVOC.

6. Credit work/service rendered as part of the postgraduate/undergraduate internship community rotation.

C. Post-Graduate/Undergraduate Interns, Clinical Clerks and Fourth-year nursing students shall:

1. Conform to the voluntary nature of the assignment.

2. Submit requirements to the HEI/Hospital coordinators on application.

3. Agree and complete required training and capacity building programs prior to assignment.

4. Abide by all necessary health protocols in the vaccination sites.

D. Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall:

1. Disseminate policy to and orient CHED Regional Offices, HEIs, and hospitals with National Internship Programs.

2. Monitor the implementation of this policy. If possible, conduct on-site inspection of vaccination sites where post-graduate interns, clinical clerks, and fourth-year nursing students shall be deployed.

3. Provide data or information to DOH Health Human Resource Development Bureau (HHRDB) and NVOC as to the number of HEIs/hospitals participating and volunteers deployed.

E. Department of Health, including the DOH HHRDB, NVOC and the CHDs/RVOCs, shall:

1. Provide technical assistance and guidance to CHED, LGUs/LVOCs, HEIs/hospitals on the COVID-19 vaccination operations, efficient utilization of HRH and participation of volunteers in the vaccination activities.


3. Coordinate and assist in linking LGU/LVOCs to HEIs/hospitals.
4. Monitor implementation of this policy.

F. LGUs/LVOCs shall:

1. Identify needed additional HRH for the COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

2. Engage and link with HEIs/hospitals in the deployment of volunteers in the LGU’s/LVOC’s vaccination sites.

3. Provide orientation on the LGU’s vaccination protocols and processes prior to the deployment of volunteer/s in the vaccination sites.

4. Co-manage schedules (lengths of shifts, and days of deployment) with HEIs/hospitals.

5. Provide at least one (1) nurse and at least one (1) physician who shall serve as the supervisor at each vaccination site.

6. Provide same incentives to volunteers during their tour of duty in the vaccination site such as food, transportation and/or allowance.

7. Provide all the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to all volunteers.

8. Coordinate and duly inform concerned volunteers and the HEI/hospital with regards any potential events, exposures or infections.

9. LGU, together with the DOH, shall ensure prompt medical assistance and support in the event of exposure or infection of any volunteer.

VIII. REPEALING CLAUSE

Other related issuances not consistent with the provisions of this Joint Memorandum Circular are hereby revised, modified or rescinded accordingly. Nothing in this Joint Memorandum Circular shall be construed as a limitation or modification of existing laws, rules, and regulations.

IX. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

Should any provision of the Joint Memorandum Circular or any part thereof be declared invalid, the other provisions, insofar as they are separable from the invalid ones, shall remain in full force and effect.
X. EFFECTIVITY

This CHED-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any national newspaper of general circulation, with three (3) certified copies to be filed with the Office of the National Administrative Register (ONAR) of the UP Law Center.

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