

QC REOPENS SHELTER FOR ABUSE VICTIMS AS CASES RISE

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The Quezon City government reopened its protection center for victims of violence on Monday amid a reported rise in domestic abuse cases as millions have been forced to stay at home due to the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The local government said the QC Protection Center, located inside the **Quezon City General Hospital** compound at Barangay Bahay Toro, would now serve walk-in clients, particularly women, children and members of the LGBT community, who had been abused or harassed. The shelter was one of several establishments forced to temporarily shut down as cities in Metro Manila raced to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Though its physical facility was no longer operating, the QC Protection Center had continued accepting inquiries and complaints through email, social media and its dedicated hotline, according to the local government.

After the emergence of unsettling reports that around 602 people—or an average of eight per day—were raped throughout the country between March 17 and May 23, **Mayor Joy Belmonte** ordered the center itself to reopen.

The Quezon City government also cited a study conducted by the International Justice Mission that said incidences of internet-based sexual exploitation of children in the country rose a stunning 250 percent to 81,723 cases in 2017.

“We need to provide vulnerable sectors of society an avenue where they can seek assistance against any form of violence and harassment, most especially now that they are frequently at home due to the modified enhanced community quarantine,” Belmonte said.

The protection center was established in 2012 as a onestop “crisis center” for victims of gender-based violence and harassment, mandated to provide free legal, medical and psychological assistance to survivors of abuse.