

QC tags workplaces as Covid hotspots

The Manila Times · 16 Mar 2021 · A8 · BY ARLIE CALALO

THE recent coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) infections in Quezon City were mostly transmitted in the workplace, according to epidemiologists.

Quoting a report by the Quezon City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (CESU), Mayor Josefina Belmonte said the infections that started in the workplace were spread in households when the infected employee goes home. Of the 722 positive cases recorded from February 28 to March 13, 104 or 14 percent occurred in workplaces. Households remained as the most common exposure setting, where 256 cases or 35 percent had occurred, the CESU report said.

“Reports showed that household transmission stems from one member of the household acquiring the virus from his workplace,” Belmonte said.

“We have instructed our departments to closely look into workplaces and check if they still adhere to our health protocols. Employers must do all they could to minimize risks among their employees, especially essential workers, so they won’t bring the virus home to their families,” she added.

The mayor over the weekend released a memorandum laying down the supplemental guidelines on the implementation of general community quarantine protocols.

Establishments were required to create a dedicated Covid-19 task force that will implement prevention, detection, contact tracing, isolation and management strategies within a company, office or store. They should also provide transportation alternatives for employees.

The guidelines also tasked workplaces to implement alternative work schedules, lessening the number of employees inside the establishment at any time, as well as to conduct frequent and thorough disinfection of high-touch objects like buttons, railings, counters and door handles.

Equipment used by multiple people, such as microphones, must be disinfected in between uses. The use of ultraviolet germicidal irradiation devices is strongly recommended.

Belmonte said persons exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms, such as fever, body aches and difficulty breathing must immediately be placed on sick leave.

On one hand, employees that were quarantined due to a positive test result or due to close contact with a positive case should have a certificate of completion of quarantine from their barangay before they may be allowed to return to work.

Establishments should also report confirmed positive Covid-19 cases among their staff or clients to the CESU via phone (02-8703-2759 or 02-8703-4398) or through email (QCSurveillance@quezoncity.gov.ph).

“The drastic increase of cases is very alarming. We want to stop the transmission as early as now so that we no longer have to implement another nationwide lockdown,” Belmonte said.

Apart from the reiteration of public safety hours, strict compliance to health protocols in workplaces, and mandatory use of the Kyusi Pass digital contact tracing app, the supplemental guidelines include the reimplementation of the liquor ban.

Following a serious outbreak in a gym, the city government also ordered the closure of all gyms, spas and internet cafes for two weeks.

Village officials were also allowed to issue quarantine passes to limit the movement of residents.