

## QC issues guidelines for community pantries

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The **Quezon City government** has approved the guidelines for the establishment of community pantries to ensure that social distancing and other health protocols are followed.

While no permit or clearance shall be required for a community pantry to operate, **Mayor Joy Belmonte** yesterday encouraged persons or groups to give a written notice and coordinate with the barangay if they intend to set up and operate one.

“The city wholeheartedly supports such endeavors, as they promote the spirit of civic-mindedness or bayanihan and help ease the economic difficulties related to the pandemic. Further, community pantries may be deemed humanitarian activities providing essential goods, which are allowed under quarantine guidelines,” read the guidelines.

The guidelines were finalized during a meeting between local officials and Maginhawa community pantry organizer Ana Patricia Non on Friday.

Under the guidelines, the pantry organizers and the barangay may coordinate regarding reasonable crowd control measures, such as setting a cut-off time for persons in a queue, limiting the number of persons served in a day or for certain time periods and using marshals to enforce health protocols and prevent overcrowding.

Attendants and staff of the community pantry must wear face masks and face shields and encourage patrons to at least wear face masks before they can get free commodities.

“The community pantry should avoid blocking any road or sidewalk,” read the guidelines. “In this regard, the pantry may coordinate with the barangay to minimize disruption to traffic. Also, the barangay and pantry may coordinate to relocate the pantry to an alternative venue to better serve its beneficiaries, or to accommodate a greater number of persons.”

A one-meter distance among patrons must be enforced, with patrons prohibited from unnecessarily touching or handling items on display to avoid the spread of the virus.

Eating or drinking is prohibited in the vicinity of the community pantry.

Pantry operators were also asked to maintain cleanliness in their immediate vicinity by properly disposing of cartons, plastic bags, ecobags or other containers, food scraps and waste.

Addressing incidents of people taking more than their fair share, the guidelines stated that community pantries “are encouraged to adopt a system to mitigate abuse or hoarding. For example, the pantries have the option to impose item limits per person or household; provide service only to bona fide local residents; use a points system, stubs or coupons to apportion goods; or limit the use of sacks or containers.”

The guidelines maintained that law enforcers shall refrain from intervening except in cases of manifest breach of health or safety protocols.

Belmonte earlier said at least 70 community pantries have been established in the city, replicating the initiative started by Non.