

Nuns, staff in 2 QC convents infected

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Quezon City has placed two convents on “special concern lockdown” after 136 nuns, residents and staff were infected with COVID-19. The outbreaks were detected at the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Barangay Immaculate Concepcion and at the Religious of the Virgin Mary Convent in Cubao. The local government is doing an inventory of all closed-setting facilities in the city.



A week after a COVID-19 outbreak in an orphanage in Quezon City, health authorities from the city government on Wednesday said 136 individuals have tested positive for the virus in two convents.

At the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Barangay Immaculate Concepcion, 22 of its 90 residents were infected, while 50 staff members and 64 nuns, or a total of 114 individuals, also tested positive for COVID-19 at the Religious of the Virgin Mary Convent (RVMC) in Cubao. The city government said it was still investigating the outbreaks and the two convents have been placed under special concern lockdown.

City health officials said none of the nuns at RVMC were vaccinated because they had their schedule canceled. The staff were fully vaccinated.

Dr. Rolando Cruz, chief of Quezon City Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance Unit (Cesu), said the city government discovered the outbreaks after receiving a surveillance report from an external testing laboratory.

Cruz said they were also investigating if any of the patients in RVMC had close contact with anyone outside of the facility.

Last week, a total of 122 people, including 99 children age 18 and below, tested positive for the virus at Gentle Hands Orphanage in Barangay Bagumbuhay.

Surge prevention

Following these incidents, the city government said Mayor Joy Belmonte has directed the Cesu to make an inventory of all closed-setting facilities in the city, including convents, nursing homes, homes for the aged and rehabilitation centers.

On the first day of the pilot implementation of granular lockdowns and the new alert level system of quarantine in Metro Manila on Thursday, the Healthcare Professionals Alliance Against COVID-19 (HPAAC) said the new classification system did not reflect the true nature of the pandemic on the ground.

The HPAAC called on the government to “acknowledge and address the inadequacies of our data reporting system that forms the basis for the alert levels.”

The HPAAC also opposed the decision to put NCR under alert level 4, which the group said entailed lighter quarantine restrictions than MECQ.

“This comes at a time when we face the worst surge of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines,” the group said.

Instead of focusing their energies on the ever-changing lexicon of quarantine classifications, the HPAAC urged the government to redirect its energies on preventing future surges.

New cases

In particular, the HPAAC said the government should enforce an integrated digital contact tracing; increased testing; appropriate compensation and recognition for health-care workers; distribution of cash aid to the poor; enhanced vaccination; better coordination between facilities and government units, and improved air circulation in all facilities. The group also made an appeal to the public to limit mobility in an effort to help healthcare workers.

On Thursday, the Department of Health (DOH) recorded 21,261 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total in the country to 2,304,192.

In its daily case bulletin, the DOH said there were now 177,946 active cases, or currently sick individuals, with the majority, or 86.1 percent, mild, 0.6 percent in critical condition and 1.4 percent severe.

Positivity rate

Meanwhile, the positivity rate remained high at 27 percent. This means that of the 74,149 individuals tested on Tuesday, more than one in four tested positive for the virus. The country’s positivity rate is well above the World Health Organization’s recommendation to keep the positivity level below 5 percent to ensure that transmission is contained.

The DOH on Thursday also said another 13,644 patients have recovered, bringing the total number of survivors to 2,090,228. However, another 277 individuals succumbed to the disease, pushing the death toll to 36,018.

The same case bulletin noted that 77 percent of all ICU beds and 73 percent of all COVID-19 ward beds in the country were occupied, while 68 percent of all isolation beds and 57 percent of all mechanical ventilators were in use.

Two labs were unable to submit their data on time on Thursday, while 174 cases previously tagged as recoveries were reclassified as deaths following final validation, the DOH said.