

## Belmonte orders tighter security in QC schools

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FOLLOWING the fatal stabbing of a senior high school student by his classmate, Quezon City Mayor Maria Josefina “Joy” Belmonte ordered stricter security measures in all public schools. Belmonte issued the order after she met with key officials of various city departments and stakeholders, including the Quezon City Police District (QCPD), Social Services and Development Department (SSDD), Schools Division Office (SDO), Education Affairs Unit (EAU), Office of the Assistant City Administrator for Operations, QC Public School Teachers Association, QC Parent-Teachers Association, Northcom Security and Investigation Agency, and barangay officials. “While we consider this an isolated case, the incident underscored the need to come up with additional security interventions in our public learning institutions,” she said in a statement. She believes that random security checks must be done in schools as part of the security measures to help guarantee the safety of teachers and learners.

“We need to beef up the security in our schools so that what happened at the Culiati High School will no longer be repeated,” Belmonte pointed out.

The mayor was referring to the January 20 incident involving a male Grade 7 student who was stabbed dead by his classmate in a fit of jealousy.

The DPOS will ensure that public schools have contingency and crisis management plans that are being properly and regularly observed.

The city government said several preemptive measures will be put in place such as additional closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in schools, values formation programs, and the hiring of additional guidance counselors for public schools.

The city chief executive also ordered barangay officials to propose and fund programs for out-of-school youth (OSY), as most cases involving children in conflict with the law (CICL) in the city are committed by OSY.

Based on data submitted by the QCPD, most cases involving CICL last year were for rape and theft. The report also indicated that 87.5 percent of the crimes were committed by CICL in the age bracket of 15 to 17.

The implementation of capacity building training for leaders and the creation of a unified referral system on handling CICL cases were recommended during the meeting.

Belmonte said the unified referral system contains guidelines on what cases involving CICL should be referred to a particular office of the city government or the QCPD.

It also contains the process and interventions that should be implemented in dealing with cases involving CICL and their families, including social services, education and developmental activities, spiritual enrichment, and monitoring, she added.

The city government earlier expanded the capacity of the Molave Youth Home or Bahay Pag-asa as a residential care facility for children in conflict with the law whose cases are pending before the city courts.

The facility can now accommodate up to 340 CICL, the local government said.