TEACHERS & NON-TEACHING STAFF FRONT LINERS DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

by:
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After consultations and internal discussions, Department of Education (DepEd) has reached a decision to set the opening of School Year (SY) 2020-2021 on August 24, 2020. The teachers and non-teaching staff will be front liners whenever the school started. Are they secure and safe while rendering their service? This question bothers me for so many COVID cases where lives of front liners were sacrificed despite of their heroic deeds. Since were finally opening classes and to ensure the safe return to schools and DepEd offices I would like go to share the the General Health and Safety Protocols issued by DepEd stated in DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2020. To give clear understanding of the protocols, read as follows.

1. Practice respiratory etiquette and other protective measures.
   a. Practice physical distancing (at least 1 meter apart) at all times.
   b. Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub/disinfectants or by proper handwashing with soap and water.
   c. When sneezing/coughing, use tissue or inner portion of elbow to cover nose and mouth, and be sure that proper distance is maintained. Do not cover the mouth with the hand.
   d. Observe proper use of facemasks at all times. Both nose and mouth must be covered.
   i. Those with no symptoms may use cloth/washable face masks, ear loop masks, indigenous, reusable, do-it-yourself masks, or face shields, handkerchiefs, or such other
protective equipment or any combination thereof, which can effectively lessen the transmission of COVID-19.

ii. Surgical masks—to be stored in the office clinic and available at the office entrances, shall be reserved for symptomatic individuals and health care providers. Individuals who will manifest symptoms shall immediately be provided with a surgical mask and brought to the clinic for checking/monitoring/advice; e.g., send home, refer to a hospital/appropriate health authority, etc. e. Practice proper disposal of tissue and masks after use.

2. Prior to returning to work, all personnel shall be provided, through available platforms (e.g., e-mail, text messaging, teleconferencing platform), relevant and adequate information on respiratory etiquette and other protective measures that shall be observed in the workplace. It shall be reiterated that the same measures are expected to be practiced in other public places, including when they travel to and from work, and if applicable, even at home.

3. The office shall ensure that all personnel have access to cloth/washable face masks, ear loop masks, indigenous, reusable, do-it-yourself masks, or face shields, handkerchiefs, or such other protective equipment or any combination thereof, which can effectively lessen the transmission of COVID-19.

4. The office shall ensure availability of hand soaps/hand- sanitizers/alcohol-based solutions/other disinfectants in restrooms, entrances, etc. by doing routine monitoring and replacement/replenishment if needed.

5. The office shall ensure routine cleaning/disinfection of frequently touched surfaces and objects (tables, doorknobs, desks, workstations) using bleach solution at least twice a day, as well as the routine cleaning and the replacement of disinfectant solutions in foot baths. More intensive cleaning and disinfection shall be done on weekends.
Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes on the protection of all DepEd personnel, hoping to prevent further COVID cases. Following these protocols can help keep students, teachers, and staff safe at school and help stop the spread of this disease. These general health and safety protocols should be observed in DepEd offices.

References:

DepEd ORDER No. 14 s. 2020 (GUIDELINES ON THE REQUIRED HEALTH STANDARDS IN BASIC EDUCATION OFFICES AND SCHOOLS)