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DEPARTMENT ORDER NO. 233
Series of 2022

**GUIDELINES ON PROVISION OF FREE COVID-19 TESTING FOR NEWLY-HIRED
JOBSEEKERS**

It is the policy of the State to afford full protection to labor, promote full employment, and guarantee that no person shall be denied access to equal employment opportunities.

To attain this policy amidst the current National State of Public Health Emergency brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and aid in the realization of one of the National Employment Recovery Strategy (NERS)¹ outcomes which is to facilitate labor market access, this Department Order is hereby issued providing guidelines for the implementation of free COVID-19 testing for newly hired jobseekers as provided under Republic Act No. 11639 or the FY 2022 General Appropriations Act (GAA) on Page 1130, Volume I-A.

ARTICLE I
General Provisions

Section 1. Policy Objective. This Order is issued to provide guidelines on the one-time grant of free COVID-19 testing for qualified newly-hired jobseekers required to secure a negative RT-PCR result among the pre-employment requirements.

Section 2. Definition of Terms. The following terms, as used in this Order, shall mean or be understood as follows:

- a. **Beneficiary** – shall refer to qualified newly-hired jobseekers.
- b. **Newly hired jobseekers** – shall refer to jobseekers qualified by any employer for domestic or foreign employment and complying with the pre-employment requirements.
- c. **Persons of Concern** – shall refer to a population of persons recognized by the Department of Justice (DOJ) as refugees, returnees, stateless people, internally displaced, and asylum-seekers.
- d. **Reverse-Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR)** - is a qualitative detection of nucleic acid from SARS CoV-2 in nasal or pharyngeal samples, sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage fluid, and other bodily

¹ Executive Order No. 140 series of 2021, Adopting the National Employment Recovery Strategy (NERS) 2021-2022 and Reinforcing Job-Generating Programs Through the NERS Task Force

fluids, including feces and blood collected from suspect cases² and is the recommended test to confirm COVID-19 infection³.

- e. **Testing Centers** – shall refer to DOLE's partner DOH-Accredited facility that has license to operate as a COVID-19 testing center.

ARTICLE II

Program Coverage

Section 1. *Qualified Beneficiaries.* Newly hired jobseekers across all sectors complying with the pre-employment requirements are qualified to avail the testing subsidy under this Order, subject to compliance of the requirements as set forth in this issuance.

Section 2. *Priority List.* The following preference shall be followed in granting the subsidy:

- a. Newly hired jobseekers in private domestic establishments;
- b. Agency-hired overseas worker set for deployment; and
- c. Newly appointed employee in any branch or instrumentality of the government.

Section 3. *Period of Coverage.* The program shall cover jobseekers hired after the effectivity of this Order, and jobseekers employed beginning February 01, 2022 yet to assume position due to lack of negative RT-PCR test result.

Section 4. *Exclusion.* Foreign nationals, except Persons of Concern (POCs), are excluded from the program.

ARTICLE III

Program Implementation

Section 1. *Procedural Guidelines.* The following shall be observed for the grant of free RT-PCR test:

a. ***Eligibility Requirement***

Any newly hired jobseekers included in the priority list required to secure a negative RT-PCR result among the pre-employment requirements.

b. ***Documentary Requirements***

The following documentary requirements must be provided by the applicant jobseeker:

- i. Photocopy of any valid government-issued ID;
- ii. Duly accomplished subsidy application form; and
- iii. Certificate of engagement, acceptance, or appointment as the case may be, duly signed by the following:

² Philippine Society for Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, 2020

³ Department of Health, 2020, SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR Test Kits for the Diagnosis of COVID-19 Cases Rapid Review

1. establishment owner, general manager, or human resource manager, in case of private domestic establishments and recruitment agencies deploying workers overseas; or
2. Head of Agency's Human Resource Office or the Head of the Agency where the item is, in case of government branch or instrumentality.

c. Application Procedure

- i. Newly hired jobseekers shall submit the complete documentary requirements to the nearest DOLE Field Office.
- ii. The concerned DOLE Field Office shall evaluate the application within three (3) working days from receipt thereof, and endorse the pre-evaluated applications to the concerned Regional Office for final approval/denial.
- iii. The concerned DOLE Regional Office shall notify the applicant within five (5) working days whether the application is approved or denied through electronic mail/SMS.

If approved, the electronic mail shall include the information that the beneficiary shall present to the testing center (i.e. reference number, date and time, and place of vaccination).

ARTICLE IV

Program Management

Section 1. DOLE Regional Office. The DOLE Regional Offices, through the Regional Directors, shall perform the following:

- a. Identify DOH-Accredited testing centers within the region where beneficiaries of the program can take their RT-PCR test;
- b. Undertake the necessary procurement procedures in accordance with Republic Act No. 9184 and execute the Memorandum of Agreement with the selected testing centers;
- c. Review the pre-evaluated applications by the Field Offices under its jurisdiction;
- d. Notify the applicants via electronic mail or SMS whether the application is approved or denied;
- e. Transmit to the partner testing centers the details of the approved jobseekers at least twenty-four (24) hours before the date of the RT-PCR test;
- f. Prepare and facilitate the payment for the partner testing centers;
- g. Conduct advocacy campaigns and information dissemination activities;
- h. Prepare and submit monitoring reports to the Bureau of Local Employment; and
- i. Ensure timely delivery of services to beneficiaries.

Section 2. DOLE Field/Satellite Office. The DOLE Field/Satellite Office shall:

- a. Receive applications with complete documentary requirements;
- b. Conduct preliminary evaluation of received applications; and

- c. Endorse pre-evaluated applications to the concerned DOLE Regional Office for further review or for final approval/denial, whichever is applicable.

ARTICLE V

Program Monitoring

To ensure that the program objectives are met and the beneficiaries are assisted, the DOLE Regional Office shall prepare and submit necessary weekly monitoring reports to the Bureau of Local Employment for consolidation and evaluation. The latter shall then submit the reports to the Office of the Secretary through the Undersecretary of the Employment and General Administration Cluster.

ARTICLE VI

Budget

The DOLE shall allocate and utilize funds amounting to Php 100 Million to be sourced from the 2022 General Appropriations Act (GAA) budget.

ARTICLE VII

Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1. *Separability Clause.* If. Any portion or provision of this Order is declared void or unconstitutional, the remaining portions or provisions thereof shall not be affected by such declaration.

Section 2. *Effectivity.* This Department Order shall take effect immediately after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least one (1) newspaper of general circulation.

Approved this 31st of March, 2022.


SILVESTRE H. BELLO III

Secretary

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Dept. of Labor & Employment
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