

SC ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR NO. 43 – 2020, August 02, 2020

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TO :

ALL LITIGANTS, JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL OF THE JUDICIARY, AND MEMBERS OF THE BAR

RE : COURT OPERATIONS FROM 3 TO 14 AUGUST 2020

Due to the reported surge in Covid-19 cases, the Court en banc has provided the following guidelines in the operation of the courts from 3 - 14 August 2020:

- Unless herein provided, ALL the courts in the National Capital Judicial Region, and those in areas under Enhanced Community Quarantine or Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine, SHALL BE PHYSICALLY CLOSED to all court users, and shall only be reached through their respective hotline numbers, email addresses and/or Facebook accounts as posted on the website of the Supreme Court. All inquiries on cases or transactions, including requests for documents and services, shall be coursed and acted upon through the said numbers, addresses, and accounts of the concerned court, or through the Judiciary Public Assistance Section of the Supreme Court in accordance with A.C. 28 - 2020.
- The raffle of cases in all courts shall proceed electronically or through videoconferencing.

SUPREME COURT

- The Court en banc and the Court's three (3) Divisions shall hold their sessions through videoconferencing.
- Upon the recommendation of the Court Administrator and the Clerk of Court en banc, the essential offices and services of the Court shall continue to operate in-court with a skeleton-staff. The Chiefs of the different Offices and Services shall ensure that every court personnel is assigned certain tasks to effectively and efficiently implement their offices' mandates even if they are working from home.

COURT OF APPEALS, SANDIGANBAYAN, COURT OF TAX APPEALS

- The Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, and Court of Tax Appeals shall continue to receive petitions and pleadings electronically, and in accordance with Paragraph 1 herein, and process the same pursuant to their respective internal rules.
- The Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, and Court of Tax Appeals shall continue to resolve and decide cases pending before them. Regular hearings shall be conducted through videoconferencing.
- The pertinent offices and services in the Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, and Court of Tax Appeals shall continue to operate in-court with a skeleton-staff, as may be directed by the respective Presiding Justices.

REGIONAL TRIAL COURTS, FAMILY COURTS, AND FIRST LEVEL COURTS

- ALL pleadings, in both civil and criminal cases, shall be filed electronically and shall be received by the courts through their respective official email addresses, as posted on the website of the Supreme Court. Pleadings and other court submissions on pending cases shall be electronically filed directly with the branch where the case is pending, if the said branch has an official email address. Otherwise, the pleadings and other court submissions on pending cases shall be filed electronically with the Office of the Clerk of Court, which shall forward the said transmissions to the branches where the cases are pending.
- ALL courts authorized to hear cases through videoconferencing may conduct hearings through videoconferencing in both criminal and civil cases upon joint motion of the parties, or upon orders of the court, without need of prior permission from the Office of the Court Administrator. In-court hearings may be conducted should the judge find them to be necessary.
- The Executive Judges shall assign a skeleton-staff to be on duty during office hours in all court stations to attend to concerns which may not be addressed online.
- For courts which are not authorized to conduct hearings through videoconferencing, in-court hearings conducted by the presiding judge, assisted by the skeleton-staff, may be limited to urgent matters and other concerns to expedite the proceedings, both in criminal and civil cases.
- Night courts and Saturday courts shall be suspended until 14 August 2020.

All previously issued circulars and their respective provisions which are not inconsistent herewith shall remain valid and in effect.

02 August 2020, Parañaque City.

(Sgd.) DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Chief Justice

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