

## News Release

January 8, 2021

# POEA issues guidelines to ensure protection of deployed OFWs during pandemic

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) has issued the interim guidelines on the recruitment, deployment, and employment of landbased overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to further ensure their protection during the public health emergency brought by COVID-19 pandemic.

In Memorandum Circular No. 1, Series of 2021, the POEA stated the responsibilities of the OFWs, licensed Philippine recruitment agencies and their principals/employers on the overseas employment of the worker, which must be in compliance with all the health and safety protocols of the Philippine government and country of destination.

As such, licensed Philippine recruitment agencies and their principals must ensure the completeness of the necessary documents and clearances of their workers, such as their verified employment contract, valid medical clearance for COVID-19, and their declaration of understanding the risks of working abroad amid the pandemic.

The recruitment agencies must coordinate with the concerned government agencies and LGUs to ease the deployment their processed OFWs, as well as provide free COVID-19 testing to its workers prior to their deployment.

It is also the responsibility of the recruitment agencies to guarantee the overall welfare, safety, and benefits of their processed OFWs in both the workplace and in the accomodation of the workers.

Likewise, the recruitment agencies must coordinate with relevant health facilities in case of medical assistance and treatment of OFWs who may test positive for COVID-19.

Further, all OFWs are required to undergo mandatory quarantine upon arrival at their jobsite in accordance to the health protocols of their county of destination.

The cost of quarantine of the workers at the jobsite must be shouldered by the Philippine recruitment agency or the principal/employer, including their accommodation, food, and COVID-19 testing and cost of medical treatment if tested positive..

On the other hand, OFWs are not to be paid their salary while on quarantine, unless they were required by the employer or mandated by the government of host country to work during quarantine.

The employer of the OFWs, except for domestic workers, may implement alternative work arrangements to further ensure the safety and tenure of workers and avoid any job displacement.

The said interim guidelines will be implemented until September 2021, as declared under the Presidential Proclamation No. 1021, Series of 2020, and will take effect after 15 days after publication in a newspaper of general circulation and filing with the National Administrative Register. ###