



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

24 August 2020

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR

No. 2020 - 0321


FOR : ALL UNDERSECRETARIES, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES; DIRECTORS OF BUREAUS, REGIONAL OFFICES AND SERVICES; EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF SPECIALTY HOSPITALS; POPULATION COMMISSION AND NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL; CHIEFS OF MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS, SANITARIA AND INSTITUTES; PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION; DIRECTORS OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL AIDS COUNCIL AND TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION CENTERS; AND OTHERS CONCERNED

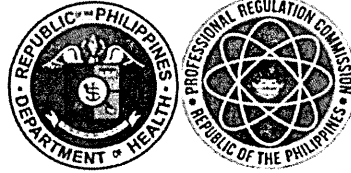
SUBJECT : Adoption of the DOH-PRC Joint Administrative Order No. 2020-01 (PRC-docketed) - "Guidelines on the Certification of Primary Care Workers for Universal Health Care" for Docketing of This Department's Records Section and Publication

Attached for your information and guidance is a copy of the **DOH-PRC Joint Administrative Order No. 2020-01 (PRC-docketed) - "Guidelines on the Certification of Primary Care Workers for Universal Health Care"** which was signed and adopted by the respective heads of agencies on 15 July 2020 and shall take effect effect fifteen (15) days after the date of its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation, with Three (3) certified copies to be filed with the U.P. Law Center pursuant to Section 3, Chapter 2, Book VII of Executive Order No. 292, Series of 1987 through This Department and Commission's records officer or its equivalent functionary."

Dissemination of the information to all concerned is requested.

By the Authority of the Secretary of Health:


MARIO C. VILLAVERDE, MD, MPH, MPM, CESO I
Undersecretary of Health
Health Policy and Systems Development Team (HPSDT)



Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION

July 15, 2020

JOINT ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
No. 2020 - 01

SUBJECT: Guidelines on the Certification of Primary Care Workers for Universal Health Care

I. RATIONALE

It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of all Filipinos and instill health consciousness among them. Towards this end, Republic Act No. 11223, otherwise known as the “Universal Health Care (UHC) Act” was enacted to enforce an integrated and comprehensive approach to ensure that all Filipinos are provided with quality and cost-effective health services.

In order to implement the provision of Section 6 of the UHC Act on the access to Primary Care Providers and creation of Primary Care Provider networks, Section 25d mandated the Department of Health (DOH) and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to reorient health professional certification and regulation towards producing health workers with competencies in the provision of primary care services. Sec. 25.11 of the IRR of the UHC Act likewise states that DOH and PRC shall issue guidelines for the eligibility requirements, standard competencies, training mechanisms, and post-graduate certification process for primary care workers.

The DOH, by virtue of Article XIII Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines, has the legal mandate to undertake appropriate manpower development and research activities that are responsive to the country’s health needs and problems. It also serves as a technical oversight agency in charge of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of health programs, projects, research, training and services. On the other hand, the PRC was mandated by Republic Act No. 8981, otherwise known as the “PRC Modernization Act of 2000”, to review, revise, and approve resolutions embodying policies promulgated by the Professional Regulatory Boards (PRBs) in the exercise of their powers and functions or in implementing the laws regulating their respective professions and other official actions on non-ministerial matters within their respective jurisdictions (Section 7c).

Sec. 41.9 of the UHC Act of the states that: “Within ten (10) years from effectivity of the Act, only those who have been certified by the DOH and PRC to be capable of providing primary care will be eligible to be a primary care provider”. Thus, there is a need to formulate policy mechanisms and procedural guidelines for qualifying assessments and certification of primary care workers in the delivery of primary care services for UHC.

II. OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide the procedure for assessment of primary care workers in the delivery of primary care services.
2. Establish roles and responsibilities of DOH and PRC in certifying primary care workers

III. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

This Order shall apply to all health professionals registered and licensed by the PRC who are practicing in primary care facilities.

This Order shall establish the coordination between DOH and PRC, as provided by the UHC Act, on the certification of primary care workers to guarantee efficient and quality services in primary care facilities.

The Certification of community health workers and volunteers as primary care workers shall be covered under a separate policy and is not a part of this Order.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For purposes of this Order, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

1. **Certification in Primary Care (CPC)**– shall refer to a form of authorization which officially serves as proof of the health care workers' competence and shall be a requirement before performing primary care services in primary care facilities;
2. **Certification** – shall refer to the process of validation of qualifications and competencies against set standards;
3. **Competency-Based Assessment** – shall refer to the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on the nature and extent of progress towards demonstrating the performance requirements set out in a standard; determining the level of development of a candidate for certification. It is based on the actual skills and knowledge a person can demonstrate in the workplace;
4. **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** – shall refer to the inculcation of advanced knowledge, skills and ethical values in a post-licensure specialization or in an inter- or multidisciplinary field of study, for assimilation into professional practice, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning (Sec. 3(f), RA 10912 "CPD Act of 2016");
5. **Primary care** – shall refer to the initial contact, accessible, continuous, comprehensive and coordinated care that is accessible at the time of need including a range of services for all presenting conditions, and the ability to coordinate referrals to other health care providers in the health care delivery system, when necessary (Sec. 4.25, IRR of RA 11223);
6. **Primary care provider** – shall refer to a primary care facility and primary care workers:
 - 6.1. **Primary care facility** – shall refer to the institution that primarily delivers primary care services which shall be licensed/ registered by DOH (Sec. 4.26.b, IRR of RA 11223); and
 - 6.2. **Primary care worker** – shall refer to a health care worker, who may be a health professional or community health worker/ volunteer, certified by DOH to provide primary care services. (Sec. 4.26.c, IRR of RA 11223); and
7. **Primary Care Provider Network (PCPN)** – shall refer to a coordinated group of public, private or mixed primary care providers, as the foundation of the health care provider network (Sec. 17.3.a, IRR of RA 11223 and item IV (E) of DOH AO No. 2020-0019);

V. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The CPC shall be based on the competencies to deliver initial-contact, accessible, continuous, comprehensive and coordinated care.
2. The CPC shall be a pre-requisite for the accreditation and licensing of Primary Care facilities by the DOH and Philhealth, respectively.
3. The DOH and PRC shall jointly develop, implement and monitor the post-graduate certification for primary care workers. The primary care worker certification framework, assessment tools and all issuances related to this guideline shall be reviewed jointly by DOH and PRC regularly within a three-year cycle.

VI. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES/ IMPLEMENTING MECHANISMS

A. Certification of Primary Care Workers

1. Certification
 - a. A Certification in Primary Care shall be issued jointly by the DOH and PRC to all who pass the competency assessment as provided in Section 4.25 of UHC Act.
 - b. The certification shall be valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of issuance.
 - c. Renewal of the CPC shall automatically coincide with the renewal of Professional Identification Card (PIC) by the PRC and shall be required for those who will engage in primary care practice.
2. Competency-based Assessment
 - a. All licensed physicians, nurses, midwives and other health professionals shall be qualified to apply for a primary care competency assessment towards acquiring the certification as a primary care worker;
 - b. All applicants shall accomplish the self-assessment tool for primary care workers which will be made available through the DOH and PRC website;
 - c. All applicants shall provide a portfolio of evidence validated by their immediate supervisor to demonstrate the primary care competencies in the self-assessment tool. The portfolio is a collection of documents, compilation of the candidate's work, and other evidence of performance of a particular competency, eg. photos, certificates, etc.
 - d. All applicants shall undergo an on-site assessment and validation by an assessor upon submission of their application and portfolio;
 - e. A Certification in Primary Care shall be issued to those who pass the assessment
 - f. A set of learning and development interventions shall be provided for compliance, and re-assessment for certification shall be done.

The process of assessment and certification of primary care workers is illustrated under **Annex A: Certification Process for Primary Care.**

B. Assessors of Primary Care Competencies

1. Qualified assessors shall undergo an assessment of Core Assessors' competencies;
2. Qualified assessors shall undergo training of assessors to be conducted by the DOH;
3. Assessors shall receive a Certificate of Accreditation as proof of their qualification;
4. Accredited assessors from the DOH or LGU shall be designated and be allowed to perform the assessments on Official Business in accordance with existing rules of the Civil Service Commission and usual government accounting and auditing rules;
5. The DOH can partner with private institutions and organizations who can assist in the pooling of qualified assessors.
6. Accredited assessors from partner institutions shall be engaged through a Memorandum of Agreement or Contract of Service.

C. Provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

1. The Professional Regulatory Boards of Medicine, Nursing, Midwifery and other boards of health professions shall promote the conduct of CPD programs related to primary care among its professional networks;
2. The PRC shall provide appropriate CPD units to primary care courses delivered through flexible learning modalities;
3. The PRC shall require the necessary primary care CPD units in the renewal of Professional Identification Card (PIC).



VII. JOINT UNDERTAKINGS

The DOH and PRC shall jointly undertake the following upon approval of this Joint AO:

1. Develop and review policies and guidelines on the implementation and monitoring of the certification process for primary care workers.
2. Supervise the assessment and certification process, in coordination with regional offices and partner institutions;
3. Facilitate the accreditation of assessors as stipulated in the Specific Guidelines;
4. Coordinate with relevant stakeholders on the development and review of competency standards for Primary Care.
5. Sustain Primary Care Worker Certification through the renewal of PICs and primary care facility accreditation.
6. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Joint Administrative Order as may be required, and update or revise as necessary.

VIII. ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

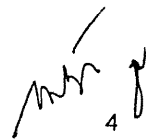
1. Organize and maintain a pool of assessors, in coordination with various agencies and institutions.
2. Develop Primary care-related CPD programs and flexible learning activities for all health workers and other relevant professions;
3. Provide capacity-building programs for assessors and partner stakeholders.
4. Maintain a database of all certified Primary Care Workers and link to facility licensing and PIC renewal.

IX. ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION

1. Accredite Primary Care CPD programs in the various health professional regulatory boards.
2. Facilitate the provision for primary care CPD units through the respective professional regulatory boards of Medicine, Nursing, Midwifery and other boards of health professions in the renewal of the PICs;
3. Develop career progression and specialization pathways in Medicine, Nursing, Midwifery and in other health professions towards Primary Care practice.

X. TRANSITORY PROVISIONS

1. For the first year of implementation until December 2021, all licensed physicians, nurses and midwives delivering primary care services and currently employed/affiliated in public and private primary care facilities shall be granted provisional certification in primary care by the DOH. The provisional certification shall be valid for three (3) years and will be issued upon completion of a Primary Care Orientation course by the DOH;
2. Within the three (3)-year transition period, DOH and PRC shall issue implementing guidelines on the conduct of various processes relative to the assessment and certification of Primary Care workers;
3. After three (3) years from the implementation of this Order, all concerned health professionals from both public and private Primary Care facilities shall be required to undergo assessment and certification for Primary Care before they can be certified by DOH and PRC, and be allowed to practice as Primary Care Workers as mandated by the UHC Act. Licensed physicians, nurses and midwives will be prioritized for the certification as Primary Care Workers and expansion to other health professions shall be allowed subject to review by the DOH and PRC.



4

4. After the ten (10)-year transitory provision (UHC Act Sec. 41.9), only those who have been certified by the DOH and PRC as capable of providing primary care will be eligible to be a primary care provider, provided that Primary Care competencies have been integrated in the scope of licensure examinations for health professionals.

XI. REPEALING CLAUSE

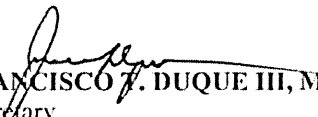
All other issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby specifically repealed, rescinded, and modified accordingly.


XII. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

In the event that any rule, section, paragraph, sentence, clause or word of this Order is declared invalid for any reason, the other provisions shall not be affected and shall remain in force and effect.

XIII. EFFECTIVITY DATE

This Order specifying the new guidelines shall take effect fifteen (15) days after the date of its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation, with Three (3) certified copies to be filed with the U.P. Law Center pursuant to Section 3, Chapter 2, Book VII of Executive Order No. 292, Series of 1987 through This Department and Commission's records officer or its equivalent functionary.


FRANCISCO F. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary
Department of Health


TEOFILO S. PILANDO, JR. *jr*
Chairperson
Professional Regulation Commission

