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## DOH EXPLAINS COVID-TESTING PROTOCOL PRESS RELEASE/14 APRIL 2020

The Department of Health (DOH) today clarified that assessment by a licensed health professional remains a prerequisite before one could get tested for COVID-19.

“Those who think they are infected will still need to be assessed by a health professional. They can do this in the comforts of your home through Telemedicine consultations,” Health OIC-Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire explained during the DOH’s daily Beat COVID-19 Virtual Presser.

OIC-Usec. Vergeire also stressed that those most at risk for COVID-19 will be prioritized for the expanded testing as prescribed by DOH Department Memorandum 2020-0151, and reiterated by Department Circular No. 2020-0179. She was referring to these two priority sub-groups of: (1) patients or healthcare workers with severe or critical symptoms and history of travel or exposure, and (2) patients or healthcare workers with mild symptoms, relevant history of travel or exposure, and considered vulnerable (e.g. 60 years old or older, has other illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes, or is immunocompromised).

Patients or healthcare workers who are not considered vulnerable but with mild symptoms and relevant history of travel or exposure, and those with no symptoms but have relevant history of travel or exposure will also be tested under the expanded testing scheme.

While sub-groups 1 and 2 are given priority, anyone who requests to get tested must be assessed by a licensed health professional who shall determine whether they fall into any of these prioritized groups and whether he should get tested immediately.

Upon assessment, the patient will be instructed to proceed to the most accessible health facility for testing. Otherwise, they will be advised to undergo home quarantine or proceed to a community quarantine facility.

“We want to avoid people crowding and lining up in our testing centers to demand for tests even if they do not experience any symptom,” Usec Vergeire explained, adding that if this happens, it might result to increased cases of transmission.

The DOH also recommends calling 24/7 Telemedicine Hotlines for those who wish to consult health professionals from their homes. Metro Manila residents may call **02-8424-1724** or **02-7798-8000**. Those outside of Metro Manila may use **1555** (for all networks) and the **(02) 894-COVID** hotline to seek medical advice.