The Philippine Consulate General in New York wishes to share the following highlights of the teleconference conducted by the New York City (NYC) Mayor’s Office for International Affairs and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on 14 March 2020, Saturday, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on NYC’s ongoing efforts the city’s response to COVID-19:

From Containment Phase to Mitigation Phase

- NYC is no longer conducting contact tracing since it is hard to do so when the virus is suspected to be everywhere. **Everyone in NY should consider themselves exposed.**

- The city’s mitigation strategy at this time is to **flatten the pandemic’s curve**, i.e., slowing the spread of infection to help ensure that health care systems can cope with the strain of the outbreak. These measures include, but are not limited to, self-isolation or quarantine, social distancing, giving medical priority to the sickest people affected by COVID-19, among others.

- **COVID-19 testing is reserved for the severely ill.** Those who are at high-risk or more susceptible to contracting the virus are the elderly, those with weakened immune system, and those with underlying medical conditions (cancer, diabetes, respiratory conditions, etc). Should an individual experience shortness of breath, breathing difficulties, and/or accelerated flu-like symptoms, he/she should go to the hospital or visit his/her healthcare provider. **Those who are mildly or moderately sick are to stay at home and monitor their health.**

- On the question of immunity following recovery, doctors are hoping that the patient would have gained some level of immunity from COVID-19, but **it is too early to tell**. Nevertheless, when an infected person recovers, he/she needs to self-isolate for seven (7) more days or 72 hours after fever goes away, whichever is longer.
Federal law places great importance on the **confidentiality of patient information**. Thus, the decision to inform the consulates would depend on the willingness of the infected person to inform his/her respective consulate.

NYC will coordinate with correctional facilities regarding notification of concerned consulates on their respective nationals who are infected with COVID-19. In lieu of in-person visits in prisons, **phone calls and digital video visitations** are suggested instead. NYC shall also discuss COVID-19 protocols with correctional health services.

On public medical coverage: Call 311 to be linked to Health and Hospitals who will be able to assist those who need medical care, regardless of ability to pay and immigration status.

NYC will not conduct disinfection and sterilization services to workplaces and workstations. COVID-19 is the same, albeit, stronger strain as that of the flu. The use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers, disinfectants, and soap and water will mitigate the spread of the virus.

While the state of emergency allows the city to halt public transportation, NYC is committed to a working public transportation system, but **everyone should review and test business continuity plans**.

COVID-19 will be with us in some form or fashion until September 2020, **but this could change**. The goal is to flatten the curve so that everyone will not get sick at the same time and overburden the healthcare system at a peak time.

**The Consulate advises Kababayans**

The Consulate notes that NYC health authorities emphasize that the city’s responses to COVID-19 may differ from those of other cities and states. The varying outbreak severity, healthcare system capacities and local conditions dictate those responses.

The Consulate therefore recommends that kababayans get themselves informed and familiar with local conditions and the advisories issued by their local authorities, and to heed them and act accordingly.

“Social distancing” is an important buzzword at the moment, and the Consulate strongly recommends that it be consistently observed, but kababayans can still manifest care for each other safely! The Consulate requests our esteemed community Wardens to safely reach out and report on situations in their respective localities.

Maramingsalamat po!