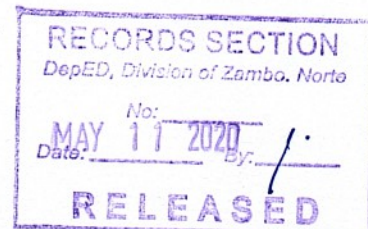




Republic of the Philippines
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Division Memorandum

No: 1309, s. 2020

To: Public Schools District Supervisor
Elementary and Secondary School Heads
Cluster Head Nurses
District/School Nurses
All Others Concerned

From:  **MA. LIZA R. TABILON EdD, CESO V**
Schools Division Superintendent

Subject: **STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF TOBACCO CONTROL POLICIES
INCLUDING SMOKE-FREE AND VAPE-FREE POLICIES
DURING THE GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE PERIOD**

Date: May 4, 2020

1. Relative to DepEd Task Force COVID-19 Memorandum No. 39 dated April 30, 2020, all concerned are enjoined to ensure the strict enforcement of tobacco control policies that govern DepEd.
2. Attention is invited to paragraph 3 thereof which may be cited by schools in communicating this matter to their respective local chief executives (see annex A). The letter can be modified depending on the context of the LGU. For example, some LGUs may have already implemented a Liquor Ban, and this can be cited in the letter as a good health measure to command.
3. For strict compliance and immediate dissemination.

NAF/StrictEnforcementofTobaccoControl/SGOD-SHNS/DM015-2020/05042020



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Annex A - Letter Template for Local Government Units (LGUs)

This template may be modified depending on the context of the LGU. For example, some LGUs may have already implemented a Liquor Ban and this can be cited in the letter as a good health measure to commend. The soft copy of the template can be downloaded from bit.ly/dearLGUbantobaccousing official DepEd email accounts.

* * *

Date

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Position/Title
 Office
 Address

Dear **XX. XXXXX**:

We wish to commend the efforts of the local government of <insert name of the province/city/municipality> in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. We recognize that this crisis is unprecedented, and we appreciate how the local government exerts its best effort to help protect the health and the welfare of its constituents.

We at the Department of Education remain committed to cooperating fully with the local government and to contributing to the overall government response.

We are writing this letter to recommend what we believe is an effective health measure that can reinforce all our other efforts in ensuring the health of all, especially the vulnerable, during this health emergency.

Specifically, we hope that the local government considers **a temporary ban on the sale of cigarettes and Electronic Nicotine and Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS/ENNDS)**—commonly known as vape or e-cigarette—while <insert name of the province/city/municipality> remains under community quarantine. Several local government units have implemented such ban through an Executive Order by their respective local chief executives (LCEs). We at DepEd recommend that the same be done in our [province/city/municipality] for the following reasons:

- 1. Implementing the ban will help lessen people’s vulnerability to severe symptoms of COVID-19**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has repeatedly emphasized that



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“smokers likely face more severe symptoms if infected by COVID-19, leading to hospitalizations and premature deaths.”ⁱ Our own Department of Health (DOH) has echoed the same message, adding that quitting smoking will be beneficial even to the family or those who live with persons who smoke, as exposure to secondhand smoke puts them at risk, too.ⁱⁱ

The LCE of Masantol, Pampanga has cited this reason when he signed the Executive Order which temporarily bans the selling and smoking of cigarettes in the municipality.ⁱⁱⁱ

In the United States, the New York chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians has called for “an immediate ban on the sale of all tobacco and vaping/e-cigarette products [during the pandemic period],” adding that “since smoking has been a demonstrated risk factor for COVID-19 disease progression, which leads to increased use of medical services, especially ventilators, our hope is that by reducing the number of smokers, we can further reduce the stress/demand on the already limited supply of medical resources, particularly ventilators.”^{iv}

2. Implementing the ban will help people, especially the poor, use their money to purchase essential products instead

Aside from citing health reasons, the LCE of General Luna, Quezon also said that many of his constituents still gave priority in buying cigarettes instead of basic necessities like food, prompting him to issue the Executive Order which disallows the sale and purchase of cigarettes in the town for the duration of the enhanced community quarantine.^v

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, several studies have already shown that “given a fixed household budget, spending on tobacco use may divert household economic resources from essential items, such as food, education, and healthcare, which are indispensable components of human development, particularly for young children.”^{vi} The poor are particularly vulnerable, as “tobacco increases the poverty of individuals and families.”^{vii}

With PhP 110.00 for a pack of cigarettes,^{viii} an individual could have already purchased 2-3 kg of rice instead.^{ix}

Based on the 2015 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), the average monthly expenditure for cigarettes was PhP 678.40.^x Today, that is equivalent to more than 10% of the minimum subsidy amount that could



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be received by a family beneficiary under the Emergency Subsidy Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development^{xi} and is enough to purchase 12.8-20.6 kg of rice.^{xii}

3. Implementing the ban will help instill discipline during the community quarantine

The LCE of San Antonio, Nueva Ecija observed that one of the reasons many people still went out of their homes while their municipality was under community quarantine was to obtain tobacco products. This prompted him to issue the Executive Order that prohibits, among other similar acts, selling of tobacco including vape and e-cigarettes in any place within the municipality.^{xiii}

4. Implementing the ban will help further protect our learners from accessing tobacco products

Even with an existing law that prohibits the access of minors to tobacco products,^{xiv} young people are still able to purchase tobacco products from stores and are not prevented from buying because of their age.^{xv}

We at DepEd have always been supportive of policies that will help reinforce our learners' health-promoting choices, complementing what they are taught in school.^{xvi}

On the part of DepEd, a temporary ban on the sale of tobacco products while our learners are at home will strengthen government efforts to restrict their access to these harmful products. The law also prohibits the sale of tobacco products within 100 meters from any point of the perimeter of schools, being frequented by minors.^{xvii} Now that our learners are at home, the [province-/city-municipality-]wide ban will help to continue to protect them from being initiated to tobacco use.

This is also consistent with this year's theme of the World No Tobacco Day, as announced by the WHO: Protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use.^{xviii}

5. Implementing the ban will help smokers quit smoking and prevent non-smokers from getting into the addiction

In 2015, 7 in 10 current tobacco smokers were interested or planned to quit smoking tobacco.^{xix} This is in consonance with international surveys which "show that most smokers want to quit but cannot; they also regret



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having started.^{xx}

Understanding that stress can significantly increase cigarette craving but does not necessarily increase smoking,^{xxi} implementing the ban can encourage individuals, families, and the community to be more creative in exploring non-harmful and healthy ways to cope with stress during the COVID-19 outbreak.^{xxii} The National Center for Mental Health has a crisis hotline for individuals needing mental health and psychosocial support services (<https://www.facebook.com/ncmhcrisishotline>).

Those who will manifest withdrawal symptoms can be assisted by health professionals through the cessation clinics set up by the local government^{xxiii} or through the assistance of the DOH Quitline (<https://www.facebook.com/DOHQuitlineofficial/>).

Awaiting the decision of the honorable [governor/mayor] to order the recommended temporary ban, we at least request that the local government strictly enforce the existing law that prohibits the sale of tobacco products and ENDS/ENNDS within 100 meters from any point of the perimeter of schools and other places frequented by minors, and the sale of tobacco products and ENDS/ENNDS to minors everywhere.^{xxiv}

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

XXXX X. XXXXXXX

Principal/SDS

School/SDO



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