

## **NAPOLCOM sets new guidelines on the filing of police benefits and scholarship grant under the “new normal”**

The National Police Commission prescribed additional guidelines on the filing of application for Death, Total Permanent Disability and Scholarship (DTS) Benefits before the NAPOLCOM Central and Regional Offices under the prevailing “new normal” condition in the entire country.

This was announced by NAPOLCOM Vice-Chairman and Executive Officer Atty. Rogelio T. Casurao after the Commission *En Banc*, chaired by DILG Secretary and NAPOLCOM Chairman Eduardo M. Año, approved NAPOLCOM Memorandum Circular No. 2020-002, dated June 22, 2020, which prescribes the guidelines on the interruption of reglementary periods in the processing of benefit claims of the uniformed members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the NAPOLCOM Scholarship Program for the children of deceased or permanently incapacitated police personnel.

“The NAPOLCOM is cognizant of the limitations on the mobility of our clientele during the existence of the community quarantine. As such, the Commission has to adapt to the “new normal” by using technology at our disposal to reconfigure our mode of service delivery to reduce the risk in face-to-face transactions while still maintaining adequate service levels,” Atty. Casurao said.

Under the new Memorandum Circular, the reglementary periods in the filing of service claims, applications, affidavits, processes, adjudications, orders, appeals and all other papers and documents in relation to the application for DTS Benefits are hereby interrupted for the period of March 17 until June 15, 2020. Likewise, the periods for the submission of reports and rendition of adjudications, decisions, resolutions and orders are also deemed interrupted during the said period.

Atty. Casurao clarified that for the duration of the aforementioned period, the proceedings may continue within such permissible and practicable periods as may be determined by the Approving Authority concerned, taking into consideration the circumstances of the parties involved, and upon strict observance of the existing guidelines and precautionary measures provided by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) in combating COVID-19.

To ensure the continuity of the “new normal,” the Commission has now authorized the filing of Applications for DTS Benefits through electronic mail (e-mail). Supporting documents/proofs required to be filed with said applications may also be submitted through e-mail, except receipts, the original of which must still be submitted. In the event that a question on authenticity or equity arises during the evaluation process, the applicant will be required to submit the original copy of the document in question.

The Approving Authority shall create an official and dedicated email address/es for the purpose, which shall be checked on an hourly basis. Upon receipt of the applications with supporting documents/proofs, the Approving Authority or its duly authorized official will reply to the sender acknowledging receipt of the documents and the total number of pages received. The Approving Authority shall also inform the sender of the document as to its conformity or non-conformity with the required requirements or solemnities. In case of non-conformity, the sender will be given 72 hours to comply with the prescribed requirements or solemnities.

These new guidelines also apply to pending applications wherein applicants shall be asked whether they want to avail of said mode of filing or submission.

In addition to the usual modes of service to parties, the Commission now permits the serving of Processes in Applications for DTS Benefits which include notices, summons, subpoenas, or such other interlocutory orders or directives, through e-mail. A party who intends to be served with the said processes through e-mail shall submit a request, under oath, to the Approving Authority or its duly authorized official. For applicants represented by counsel who intend to use the official e-mail of the latter, a copy of said counsel's entry of appearance, engagement contract or retainer agreement shall likewise be sent to the Approving Authority.

All documents to be transmitted through e-mail as well as all processes from the Approving Authority shall be in Portable Document Format (PDF). Attachments to said Applications or Processes to be sent, which are not documentary in nature, shall be photographed and converted into PDF.

All stages of proceedings requiring personal appearance or attendance of any party are also suspended. Instead, the concerned Approving Authority shall adopt video conferencing or other similar modes of communication dispensing with physical face-to-face interaction. He/She shall also ensure the appropriate recording and accessibility of the proceedings. In addition to being transcribed, the proceedings shall be copied in a compact disk (CD) or USB flash drive and said storage device shall likewise form part of the records of the application.

In cases wherein video conferencing may not be resorted to, attendees of the proceedings must observe the Minimum Health Standards prescribed by the Department of Health (DOH) aimed at the reduction of contact and transmission of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the payment by the NAPOLCOM of pension, gratuity pay and other death and disability benefits to PNP retirees and beneficiaries is currently put on hold until the Commission on Audit (COA) resolves the issue of whether the NAPOLCOM pension constitutes double compensation.

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