



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
Department of Justice (DOJ)

JOINT MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR No. 2021- 01, 30 DECEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES IN HANDLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC) and OTHER GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE EMERGENCIES REPORTED THROUGH EMERGENCY 911 NATIONAL EMERGENCY HOTLINE

I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act (R.A.) 9710, otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women, and in fulfillment of the government's commitment to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling, and promoting the rights of women, Section 12 D, Rule IV of the Rules and Regulations implementing the Magna Carta of Women provides for the establishment of a VAW Desk in every barangay to ensure that violence against women cases are fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner;

WHEREAS, Republic Act 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004 provides that the State recognizes the need to protect the family and its members from violence and threats to their personal safety and security by empowering the barangays to provide necessary relief to survivors and safeguarding them from further harm through Protection Orders that facilitate the opportunity and ability of the victims-survivors to regain control of their life;

WHEREAS, under the Local Government Code of 1991 or R.A. 7160, the provision of services to women, children, youth, and other sectors is within the auspices of the city and municipality. Thus, this referral system is based in the city/municipality;

WHEREAS pursuant to R.A. 11313, otherwise known as the Safe Spaces Act, local government units bear the primary responsibility in ensuring the localization of systems and mechanisms to effectively respond to gender-based violence. This response mechanism shall include the establishment of a hotline to receive and record complaints and incidents as well as act as a referral mechanism for complainants;

WHEREAS, Section 3 of R.A. 8505 or the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act mandates the establishment, in every province and city, of a Rape Crisis Center located in a government hospital, health clinic, or in any other suitable place that will provide psychological counseling, medical and health services with medico-legal examination, free legal assistance, privacy and safety for victims;

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 56, Series of 2018, institutionalizes the Emergency 911 Hotline as the Nationwide Emergency Answering Point providing for the improvement of public safety services and existing peace and order and public safety mechanisms by providing a clear command structure for responsibility and accessibility, and by encouraging and facilitating the prompt development of a seamless nationwide communication infrastructure for emergency services;

WHEREAS, in response to Republic Act 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Education, Department of Health and Philippine Commission on Women, issued a Joint Memorandum-Circular No. 2010-2 requiring all local government units to establish a violence against women desk in every barangay;

WHEREAS, Section 4 of the RA 10821 or the Children's Emergency Relief and the Protection Act states that all LGUs shall prioritize the establishment and functionality of the barangay violence against women and children desks. The VAWC desks shall serve as one of the key reporting and referral mechanisms for cases of violence, abuse, and exploitation of children in the barangay during all phases of emergency response and recovery.

WHEREAS, there is a need to adapt modalities of interventions for GBV and VAWC as women and girls experience a distinct challenge as disasters exacerbate already existing risks of Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women and Children as confinement and worsened socio-economic situations increase risks of violence, within the household;

WHEREAS, even before the global pandemic 1 in 3 women experience sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner. 2020 data show a decrease in the reported VAWC cases due to restricted movement within communities and where victims are locked down with their perpetrators, there is a lack of communication channels and lack of easily accessible services where people can report.

WHEREAS, the establishment of a response referral system provides for an intervention that will ease reporting, expedite the investigation, and provide instant response and information on GBV and VAWC. It also raises the consciousness of the public in recognizing the dignity of women, ensuring support for victims, bringing perpetrators to justice, and making a long-term plan to prevent violence in all forms.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this circular, the following terms and phrases shall apply:

- 2.1 **Emergency**, as defined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of E.O. 56, Series of 2018, shall refer to an unforeseen or sudden occurrence that poses injury, loss of life, damage to property, and/or interference with the normal activities of a person demanding immediate action and response. For clarity an emergency shall include any act, occurrence, and/or incident of Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women and Children as defined under this Circular and existing laws on the matter.
- 2.2 **Emergency 911 National Hotline**, as defined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of E.O. 56, Series of 2018, shall refer to the Emergency 911 Public Safety Answering Center or the National Call Center with the participation of communication carriers and telecommunication companies.
- 2.3 **Emergency Telecommunicators**, as defined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of E.O. 56, Series of 2018, shall refer to phone call receivers in the 911 call centers, or those stationed in established call centers by local government units.
- 2.4 **Service Providers**, as defined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of E.O. 56, Series of 2018, shall refer to government agencies and institutions, including accredited non-governmental organizations, hospitals, and medical institutions and facilities that will provide necessary support and assistance to the Emergency 911 National Program.
- 2.5 **Immediate Emergency Responders** are personnel authorized to provide emergency response assistance (such as those from the police, law enforcement agencies, bureau of fire protection) who are responsible for responding immediately to the scene of accident or emergency to provide assistance.
- 2.6 Local **Government Units** refer to provincial, city, and municipal governments.
- 2.7 **Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC)** – refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women and their children, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in private and public life or online. It shall be understood to encompass, but not limited to, the following:
 1. Physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, and violence related to exploitation;

2. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking, prostitution, and online sexual exploitation; and
3. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. It also includes acts of violence against women as defined in Republic Act No. 9208 and 9262. Under the Magna Carta of Women, this term is used interchangeably with gender-based violence.

III. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

This Joint Memorandum Circular provides for the adoption of the Guidebook for 911 Emergency Telecommunicators in handling Violence Against Women and Children through the Emergency 911 Hotline by concerned National Government Agencies, Local Government Units, and other concerned entities. The Guidebook shall serve as a tool to help service providers with a tool to properly respond to incidents of violence against women and children and to strengthen national and local structures addressing VAWC.

The Guidelines shall cover all agencies which are part of the Emergency 911 Response System, member agencies of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children (IAC-VAWC), as well as local governments units.

IV. PURPOSE

General: To strengthen the structure and referral system of the Emergency 911 Hotline to include responding to and resolving VAWC related emergencies;

Specific: This Joint Memorandum Circular aims to:

1. Increase the capacities of the Emergency 911 Commission and National Agencies in handling VAWC cases;
2. Adopt the guidebook for Emergency 911 Telecommunicators in handling VAWC emergencies to be used by the Emergency 911 Telecommunicators;
3. Enhance the existing referral pathways to ensure that comprehensive VAWC-related services are made available and accessible to victim-survivors;
4. Empower and mobilize resources at the national and local levels in the prevention, protection, recovery, and reintegration of victims/survivors; and

5. Provide guidelines to all concerned in undertaking necessary actions in the establishment of 911 as a VAWC Hotline.

V. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND COORDINATING PROCEDURES

- A. As the Referral First Response Agency, The Emergency National Hotline Public Safety Answering Center ("National Call Center"), under the jurisdiction of the 911 Commission, which in turn is under the direction and control of the Department of Interior and Local Government ("DILG") shall be the initial point of contact of the emergency VAWC calls. Local government units may establish and run local 911 call centers within their area of jurisdiction. They shall be under the supervision of the National Call Center.
 1. The immediate intervention of the National Call Center shall include receiving calls and complaints and providing gender-sensitive and child-friendly assistance and response to emergency calls in a manner outlined by the Guidebook (Annex A).
 2. The Emergency 911 Commission, as the policy-making body of the Emergency 911 National Program, shall ensure that the Guidebook (Annex A) is adopted as a program and is part of the basic training for emergency communications of personnel and responders;
 3. VAWC emergency and distress calls received by the National Call Center shall be handled in the referral pathways identified in this JMC
- B. Immediate Emergency Responders must ensure that the first responses provided are conducted in a woman-centered, child-friendly, gender-sensitive, and survivor-sensitive manner that treats the victims-survivors with respect and dignity, informing them of their choices, and empowering them to participate in decision-making during the response.

VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

All Service Providers shall submit their respective hotlines/direct lines to the National Emergency Hotline and ensure its availability for easy coordination response. Apart from this, Service Providers shall have the following responsibilities:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Department of Interior and Local Government shall ensure the establishment and performance of the following:

1. The Emergency 911 National Hotline Public Safety Answering Center (National Call Center) shall:

- a. Function as the primary implementing office of the Emergency 911 Program, as outlined in Executive Order 56 (s. 2018);
 - b. Receive emergency VAWC calls in relation to the primary response function of the Emergency 911 Program;
 - c. Coordinate and relay calls promptly to appropriate government responders and government agencies;
 - d. Ensure that the hotline numbers are regularly updated.
2. The Barangay VAW Desk shall:
- a. Perform all duties according to protocols and procedures outlined in RA 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act) and RA 9710 (Magna Carta of Women);
 - b. Receive referrals from the National Call Center as may be necessary as part of their mandate to address VAWC cases in a gender-responsive manner; and
 - c. Record and keep a database of VAWC cases reported and referred to contain relevant information such as total number of VAWC cases referred from the National Call Center, the assistance provided to victim-survivors (i.e. securing barangay protection order, referrals);
3. The Philippine National Police (as the Primary Service Provider), through the supervision of DILG, shall:
- a. Serve as the lead agency in providing police assistance to any emergency calls referred by the Emergency 911 Hotline;
 - b. Direct referrals to and coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, the P/C/MSWDO, and health offices for assistance and support;
 - c. Assist victims-survivors in the conduct of search and rescue operations as may be needed;
 - d. Assist in the investigation and filing of complaints and provide police security, whenever necessary; and
 - e. Perform duties and functions of the Philippine National Police-Women and Children Protection Desks (PNP-WCPD) as mandated under Section 48, Rule VIII of the IRR for RA 9262.
4. The Local Government Units (LGUs) shall:

- a. Carry out their functions related to emergency response stipulated in the Local Government Code of 1991 such as frontline service response on rehabilitation and relief in post-calamities and disaster;
- b. Provide operational support and ensure the effective implementation of the response system in their respective level of governance;
- c. Include the hotline service in their GAD Plans, programs, and raise awareness on the availability and services of the hotline through public information campaigns to ensure public knowledge of the service to further prevent VAWC;
- d. Provide appropriate medical services, such as but not limited to psychosocial counseling and psychological first aid, for victim-survivors and their children through its municipal health office;
- e. Coordinate and work with the municipal and provincial health office for immediate medical response and intervention services;
- f. Provide services for the recovery and reintegration of victim-survivors of violence such as, but not limited to, operation of women centers, shelter/residential services, rape crisis centers, and other psychosocial services through the City/Municipal Social and Welfare and Development Offices;
- g. Monitor active cases through its LSWDO;
- h. Provide support and assistance to facilitate direct referrals and coordination with local law enforcement agencies for investigation; and
- i. Create advocacy campaigns to promote widespread use of the Emergency 911 Hotline, as well as their respective LGUs' local hotlines.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Social Welfare and Development shall:

- a. Provide comprehensive services for the recovery and reintegration of victim-survivors of violence such as, but not limited to, operation of women centers, shelter/residential services, rape crisis centers, and other psychosocial services through its Field Offices and City/Municipal Social and Welfare and Development Office;
- b. Be primarily involved in rescue operations, with assistance from the Philippine National Police, to provide services such as psychosocial

care, emergency psychosocial counseling, and other technical assistance in handling VAWC cases;

- c. Extend support through the provision of immediate assistance such as providing clothing and personal items, legal and paralegal assistance referral or transfer to any DSWD, LGU, or registered and licensed private care facilities for temporary shelter or protective custody for victim-survivors; and
- d. Collaborate with the LSWDO for case management.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The Department of Justice shall:

- a. Handle preliminary investigation and prosecution of relevant VAWC cases;
- b. Refer victim-survivor to other relevant agencies for other legal assistance and support services;
- c. Provide legal assistance to victim-survivors through the Public Attorney's Office;
- d. Facilitate the application and inclusion of VAW victims-survivors in the Witness Protection Program and Victim Compensation Benefits; and
- e. Support in the filing and prosecution services through the NBI.

Other National Government Agencies who are members of the Emergency 911 Commission and IAC-VAWC shall:

- a. Include activities related to the promotion of the 911 Hotline in their respective GAD Plans and the inclusion of VAWC emergencies in its response services through public information campaigns; and
- b. All members of the Emergency 911 Commission are hereby directed to provide necessary assistance for the effective implementation of this JMC.

VII. REFERRAL PATHWAY

- A. Service providers identified in this circular shall ensure that service delivery is harmonized and services are responsive based on the assessment of the needs and situation of the individual victim-survivor. The referral protocol shall be as follows:

1. The responder receives the emergency call in a gender-sensitive, survivor-centric manner in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the (ANNEX of Guidebook);
 2. The receiver provides psychological first-aid and conducts probing to identify the appropriate service provider needed by the client;
 3. The responder accomplishes the intake form (ANNEX C for INTAKE FORM) and conducts any of the following actions:
 - 3.1 If the call is for an emergency that would need immediate action or response, the responder relays the information to the nearest police station and transfers the call for coordination and immediate action. The local police station will update the intake form for recommendations or next steps;
 - 3.2 If the call does not necessitate immediate emergency assistance, the responder identifies, in partnership with the client, possible assistance from a menu of services identified by the IAC-VAWC and connects to the responsible agency hotline which will review the case information and assist the client.
 - 3.2.1 Upon referral, the responding agency hotline will update the form for case updates and refer to other agencies as needed until the case is resolved.
 - 3.3 If the client, after being sufficiently informed of the options of services available to her and/or her child, does not request for action other than psychological first-aid and information provided, the responder accomplishes the intake form and notes in the system that no further action is needed at the moment.
 4. Upon identification of the steps to be provided, the first responder ensures that the intake form and notes are entered into the system to ensure that the details are made available to the C/MSWDO within four (4) hours from the time of the call in accordance with the IRR of RA 9262.
- B. The Menu of services for VAWC emergencies shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:
1. Rescue operations as provided by the Philippine National Police and Department of Social Welfare and Development;
 2. Law enforcement services such as those provided by the Barangay and Philippine National Police;
 3. Legal and paralegal assistance services through the Public Attorney's Office and volunteer private firms;

4. Social services support such as shelter/residential services and other psychosocial services through the Department of Social Welfare and Development and LSWDOs;
5. Medical services, such as but not limited to medico-legal examination, provided by the P/C/M Health Office/Medical Facility/WCPU; and
6. Others as may be identified by Emergency 911 National Office.

The National Call Center, or if applicable the Local Call Center, identifies the appropriate service provider as needed by the client in relation to the Referral Pathways Mechanism (ANNEX B).

VIII. PROCEDURAL GAD PLANNING MONITORING AND REPORTING

1. Agencies and local government units, upon the effect of this circular, must prepare their annual GAD Plans to include programs in relation to the 911 Response System in the next budget cycle.
2. The agency GAD Focal Point of the identified agencies and local government units shall ensure that their annual GAD plan and budget include programs that incorporate the activities related to the 911 Emergency Response Program.
3. The budget required to implement the provisions of this circular shall be sourced from the Agency/LGU budget and shall form part of their annual GAD Plan and Budget. This may be augmented by funds from other sources such as ODAs, as well as grants and donations, and must be reported for any attribution made in the Agency/LGU annual GAD Accomplishment Report.
4. Attribution to the GAD budget of a portion or the whole of an agency program or service in relation to the operation of the emergency response system can be made and shall be annually monitored and evaluated in terms of its success in responding to VAWC.
5. Within six months from the issuance of this Circular, all members of the 911 Commission and the IAC-VAWC shall submit a report on how the agencies have adopted the guidebook in their respective programs and policies to promote awareness among victim-survivors and capacitate responders and other stakeholders about the reporting mechanism
6. Within one (1) year from the issuance of this Circular, all local government units, upon the institution of their 911 Emergency Response System, shall submit a report on the establishment and management of the guidebook to the DILG.

IX. ANNEXES

The following are the annexes identified and to be used in relation to this circular:

ANNEX A: Guidebook for 911 Emergency Telecommunicators in Handling Violence Against Women and Children

ANNEX B: DILG Guidelines in the Establishment and Management of a Referral System on Violence Against Women at the Local Government Unit Level

ANNEX C: VAWC Distress Intake Form

X. REPEALING CLAUSE

All orders and other issuances inconsistent herewith are hereby superseded, repealed, and/or modified accordingly.

XI. EFFECTIVITY

This Joint Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately and shall remain in force unless otherwise superseded or modified by subsequent policies and other issuances. ALL DILG Regional Directors are hereby directed to cause the widest dissemination of this Circular.

XII. APPROVING AUTHORITY


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Secretary

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