

# Bus services for Southern Philippines Medical Center's frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 quarantine

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been having a negative impact on the availability of our public transportation. As the national government imposed enhanced community quarantines (March 16, 2020 in Luzon and April 24, 2020 in Visayas and Mindanao) and subsequent modifications of quarantine measures, the operation of public transportations had to be halted, and then modified to partial availability. Because of these drastic changes, it has been difficult for health care workers to commute to and from their respective workplaces.

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On top of this inconvenience in transportation, some health care workers also experienced discrimination from the public. During the ECQ, instances of physical assault against frontliners and hospital employees were rampant locally. Employees of the Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC) were also not spared from different forms of discrimination. We have heard that some of our employees—while wearing white uniforms, scrub suits or any uniform with SPMC logo—were refused access to public transports. Fortunately, the City Government of Davao started offering free bus services to SPMC employees. Free transportation services allowed our health care workers to commute with ease, safe from unwarranted discrimination.

I was able to get in touch with Atty. Oscar P Mata, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer of SPMC, during the time when the ECQ was declared in Davao City. He said that the City Government of Davao offered four buses initially and then added eight more

## Contributors

VC contributed to the conceptualization of this article. The author wrote the original draft, performed the subsequent revisions, approved the final version, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of this report.

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buses later to meet the needs of SPMC employees. With the number of employees being picked up and ferried to and from SPMC—I am just thankful for the commitment of the SPMC administration led by Atty. Mata for properly managing the bus services provided by the city government.

During the initial deployment of the buses, one of our employees shared to me his experience with the bus services. According to him, the buses are scheduled to depart from SPMC approximately an hour after employees clock out. The buses also have specific routes with convenient pick-up and drop-off times. He believes that these bus schedules are fit for our employees with shifting schedules. He also appreciates that the bus drivers constantly remind commuters to wear appropriate face masks and shields. The drivers also regularly request commuters to sign log sheets for contact tracing, and to maintain proper physical distance from each other.

To this day, the bus services continue to fulfill the transportation needs of SPMC employees and help them avoid delays and difficulties in getting rides. The services also help keep health workers safe from unnecessary discrimination. The initiative of the city government to provide free transportation has played a huge part in elevating the morale of the SPMC workforce amidst these trying times.

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