

**MEMORANDUM**

**FOR : REGIONAL DIRECTOR MARIE ANGELA S. GOPALAN, CESO III  
DSWD FIELD OFFICE I**

**FROM : THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR GASSG AND  
CONCURRENT OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, LEGAL SERVICE**

**SUBJECT : RESIDENT COA CONCERNS RE: INTERNET ACCESS and  
LIMITATIONS**

**DATE : 27 MAY 2024**

This pertains to your MEMORANDUM<sup>1</sup> regarding the concern raised by the DSWD Field Office I (FO I) Resident Commission on Audit (COA) Officers on the rules and regulations governing the internet access and its associated limitations.

The Resident COA officers requested the DSWD FO I for an unlimited internet access for their office-issued equipment and personal devices. In response, the Regional ICTMS (RICTMS) of the DSWD FO I provided them with internet access that has limited access, and then informed the COA officers that further authorization is required for the use of the laptops issued by the agency.

According to the RICTMS, the Resident COA Auditors will still be able to access the internet for personal equipment, and they will be able to request for the installation of additional applications needed on the issued laptop provided, the Resident COA officers submit a letter request to DSWD FO I for this purpose.

Under the circumstances, the Resident COA officer has raised the following issues for consideration of the FO I:

1. Guidance on providing Admin Access for COA Auditors as well as delving into the possibility of securing an exemption from standard configurations for the soon to be acquired DSWD issued laptops; and
2. To request for independent internet access that operates distinctively from the Field Office's network systems.

**LS Comment**

This level recognizes the role of the COA as an independent constitutional body, and as the supreme auditing arm of the Government under the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

Meanwhile, Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1445 explicitly provides:

***Section 20. Auditing units; qualifications and assignment of heads.***

*(1) There shall be in each agency of the government an auditing unit which shall be provided by the audited agency with a suitable and sufficient office space together with supplies, equipment, furniture, and other necessary operating expenses for its proper maintenance, including expenses for travel and transportation. x x x*

<sup>1</sup> ANNEX "A"

That is, when an auditing unit in the agency of the government is established, it shall be provided with a suitable and sufficient resources including **office equipment, necessary for its operations and maintenance**. At present, it is clear that internet access is an indispensable resource and working tool in the performance of work, both in public and private sectors. Thus, the request of COA resident auditors for an independent internet access to allow them to perform their auditing functions is reasonable.

Please be informed that in the course of our review, we were furnished with a copy of the Memorandum<sup>2</sup> reply of the Information and Communications Technology Management Service (ICTMS) on your request.

This level commends the initiative of the ICTMS in harmonizing the existing DSWD issuances such as Administrative Order No. 1 series 2019<sup>3</sup> (AO No. 1 s. 2019) and Memorandum Circular No. 003, series 2024 (MC No. 003 s. 2024) or "The DSWD Cybersecurity Policy" in relation to the request of the Resident COA Auditors on the matter of providing administrator access for COA Auditors as well as delving into the possibility of securing an exemption from standard configurations for the soon to be acquired DSWD issued laptops and request for independent internet access that operates distinctively from the Field Office's network systems. We quoted the portion of ICTMS guidance as follows:

X X X

***"A. On the matter of providing administrator access for Commission on Audit (COA) Auditors and thereafter securing an exemption from standard configurations for the acquired Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) issued laptops.***

X X X

*Thus, DSWD as the personal information controller must implement appropriate security measures to ensure that all systems are secured accordingly. We believe that implementing appropriate user access control and implementing current security protocols and configurations limits if not eliminate human elements. Thus, we would also like to assure the members of the resident COA including its COS and OJT personnel that their respective actions remain unmonitored and confidential as these security measures are not privacy intrusive but rather mechanisms aimed to further protect the data from external threats actors.*

*Taking into consideration the concern of COA to easily facilitate the installation of required applications, we would like to request the COA residents to submit the list of needed applications to allow the DSWD Field Office / RICTMS to provide technical support on installing the identified applications.*

***B. On the matter of providing independent internet access that operates distinctively from the Field Office's network system.***

*While we promote connectivity to our connectivity to our network, we understand the COA's need for internet access with complete independence from DSWD network security. Therefore, we hereby*

<sup>2</sup> ANNEX "B" - Memorandum with the "Guidance on Administrator Access, Exemption from Standard Configurations; and Independent Internet Access" dated 15 March 2024

<sup>3</sup> Management Reorganization of the DSWD Central Office

*approve the use of GovNets free Wifi service for internet access provided the necessary precautions . . . x x x"*

This level understands that ICTMS need to implement the security measures in the systems for the protection of the systems in the Department. However, PD No. 1445 explicitly provided that the agency of the government should provide the auditing units a suitable and sufficient office space together with supplies, equipment, furniture, and other necessary operating expenses.

To ensure the strict enforcement of cybersecurity policies of the Department and in compliance to the Administrative Order No. 09 series of 2015<sup>4</sup> (AO No. 09 s. 2015) and MC No. 003 s. 2024, we respectfully suggest to the FO I that the Resident COA auditors be provided with a separate computer desktop or laptop and internet subscription solely for the Resident COA's use in order to ensure the uninterrupted performance of their mandate in FO I. In that way, the Resident COA will have its own access as administrator and user.

Please be informed that the foregoing legal opinion is based solely on the limited information provided, and documents submitted to this level.

For consideration.

Kindly fill out the attached Customer Feedback Form and return the same to Legal Service.

Thank you

  
**ATTY. GINA V. WENCESLAO**

MCMUG/MTML/10065

Approved by:

  
**ATTY. EDWARD JUSTINE R. ORDEN**  
Undersecretary, GASSG

<sup>4</sup> Policy on Stewardship, Acceptable Use and Security of DSWD Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Resources