

**MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR**

No. 19  
Series of 2025

**SUBJECT : ISSUANCE AND VALIDITY OF TRAVEL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATES AND CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FOR MINORS TRAVELING ABROAD**

**I. RATIONALE**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as the primary agency mandated to provide special protection to children from all forms of abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and other practices prejudicial to their development, has long-established mechanisms to safeguard the welfare of Filipino minors traveling abroad. In line with this mandate, Administrative Order No. 12, series of 2017 or the Omnibus Guidelines on Minors Traveling Abroad (MTA), was issued to consolidate prior policies and serve as a single reference regulating the travel of minors abroad. This issuance reinforced the requirement for children to secure a Certificate of Exemption (CE) or Travel Clearance Certificate (TCC) from the DSWD if they are traveling alone or with someone other than a parent or legal guardian.

To further enhance this protective mechanism in the context of digital governance, the Department issued Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 22, series of 2024, or the *Guidelines in the Implementation of Digitized Travel Clearance for Minors Traveling Abroad*, which formalized the adoption of the Harmonized Electronic Licensing and Permit System – Minors Traveling Abroad (HELPS-MTA) in the online processing of applications for Travel Clearance Certificate or Certificate of Exemption (CE), as the case may be, starting 18 February 2025.

Recognizing the need to improve the delivery of its services, this issuance aims to extend the validity period of the TCC to one (1) year and the CE with no validity period, except for minors traveling with a legal guardian, with certain conditions as outlined in this Circular.

**II. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. Certificate of Exemption (CE) – refers to the document issued by the DSWD through the MTA Online System to a minor traveling abroad who is exempt from securing a Travel Clearance Certificate.
2. Minor (as defined in RA 7610) - refers to a person below eighteen (18) years of age or one who is over eighteen (18) years of age but is unable to fully take care of himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of physical or mental disability or condition.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 3 (a) of RA 7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act.

3. Parent - refers to the natural parent, solo parent, legal guardian of a child, or one exercising parental authority over the child.<sup>2</sup>
4. Travel Clearance Certificate (TCC) – refers to the document issued by the DSWD through the MTA Online System to a minor traveling abroad unaccompanied by any of the parents or persons having parental authority and legal custody over the child.

### **III. COVERAGE**

The DSWD shall process the issuance of TCC or CE through the MTA online system, as the case may be, in the following circumstances:

#### **1. Instances where the Travel Clearance Certificate is required for Filipino minors traveling abroad:**

- i. If the parents are not married and the minor is traveling without the mother;
- ii. If the minor is traveling with a person other than his/her parent/s;
- iii. If the person who is 18 years old or over but unable to fully take care of himself/herself or protect himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition, is traveling with a person other than his/her parent/s;
- iv. If the minor aged 13 to 17 years old is traveling alone. Minors below thirteen (13) years old are prohibited from traveling alone; and
- v. If the minor who is the subject of pending domestic adoption proceedings is traveling with prospective adoptive parent/s.

#### **2. Instances where the Certificate of Exemption is required for Filipino minors traveling abroad, instead of the TCC:**

- i. If the parents are not married and the minor is traveling with the biological father, who has sole parental authority or legal custody over the minor;
- ii. When the traveling companion is the legal guardian;
- iii. Orphans of married parents and traveling with the substitute parent/s (grandparent or nearest kin); and
- iv. Orphans of non-married parents and traveling with the substitute parent/s or nearest kin on the maternal side.

The travel clearance of minors who are subject to inter-country adoption shall be processed by the National Authority of Child Care (NACC).

#### **3. Instances where a Travel Clearance Certificate or Certificate of Exemption is not required for minors traveling abroad:**

- i. If the minor is accompanied by any of the following:

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<sup>2</sup> Section 1 (c) Rules and Regulations on the Trafficking of Children (R.A. No. 7610), IRR of RA 7610, 24 January 24, 1994

- a. Either or both of the parents, if the minor is legitimate;
  - b. Biological mother, if the minor is illegitimate; or
  - c. Adoptive parent/s, if the minor is granted an Adoption Decree and Certificate of Finality.
- ii. If the minor is a holder of any of the following, in which case the exception shall apply without regard to the accompanying adult:
    - a. Valid passport issued by a foreign government;
    - b. Valid immigrant visa issued by a foreign government;
    - c. Permanent Resident Card/Visa issued by a foreign government;
    - d. Dependent visa holder of a parent working abroad; or
    - e. Dependent visa as a child of a foreign service worker, such as an Ambassador/Consul General/Attaché.

In instances where a Travel Clearance Certificate or Certificate of Exemption is required, the application shall be accompanied by the appropriate supporting documents, consistent with the requirements under MC No. 22, series of 2024.

#### **IV. VALIDITY**

1. The validity period of the TCC shall be one (1) year from the date of issuance, provided that the travel companion is the same person and the purpose of travel and country/countries of destination are the same. Accordingly, any change in the travel companion or purpose of travel shall require the applicant to file a new application.
2. The CE shall have no validity period, which can be used multiple times by applicants who are required to secure CE per the Guidelines on Departure Formalities issued by the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking, provided that the traveling companions of the minor are the following:
  - i. If the parents are not married and the minor is traveling with the biological father, who has sole parental authority or legal custody over the minor;
  - ii. Orphans of married parents and traveling with the substitute parent/s (grandparent or nearest kin); and
  - iii. Orphans of non-married parents and traveling with the substitute parent/s or nearest kin on the maternal side.
3. For minors whose traveling companion is their legal guardian, the CE shall be valid for one (1) year from the date of issuance.

#### **V. REPEALING CLAUSE**

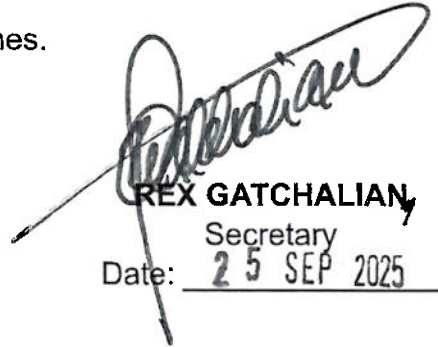
All other provisions of Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 22, series of 2024, not affected by this MC, shall remain in full force and effect.

**VI. PUBLICATION**

This issuance shall take effect immediately after publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

Let a copy of this Memorandum Circular be published in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation, and be deposited with the Office of the National Administrative Register, University of the Philippines Law Center.

Signed in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines.



**REX GATCHALIAN,**  
Secretary  
Date: 25 SEP 2025

**Certified True Copy**

  
**WILLIAM V. GARCIA, JR.**  
OIC-Division Chief  
Records and Archives Mgt. Division

**29 SEP 2025**