

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Second Regular Session)

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE BILL No. 10380



Introduced by REPRESENTATIVES LANI MERCADO-REVILLA,
BRYAN B. REVILLA AND RAMON JOLO B. REVILLA III

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE "UNANG YAKAP", ADOPTING THE PROTOCOL ON
ESSENTIAL INTRAPARTUM NEWBORN CARE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Grave reports on newborn deaths prompted the Department of Health (DOH) to adopt policies and protocol on essential newborn care. In 2009, DOH launched the Unang Yakap or the Essential Intrapartum Newborn Care (EINC) protocol, through Administrative Order No. 2009-0025 ¹ as a newborn-saving concept that was fully supported by the World Health Organization.

The Unang Yakap protocol, as described by DOH, is a series of time-bound and evidence-based interventions designed to care for newborn babies and their mothers. By following this protocol, the potential for newborn deaths to decrease by at least half is significant. It emphasizes early essential newborn care with four core steps, namely: immediate drying and thorough drying of newborn, skin-to-skin contact with mother, properly timed cord clamping and non-separation from mother to initiate breastfeeding. These interventions are crucial in ensuring the health and well-being of

¹ <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/10/49220>

both the newborn and the mother. DOH saw the Unang Yakap protocol as the most effective and non-costly way to save newborn lives.²

However, without teeth to make compliance mandatory, the adoption of the Unang Yakap protocol as part of standard newborn care procedure in medical and birthing facilities is only viewed as recommendatory, and therefore, optional.

Thus, more than a decade since the protocol's adoption, we still see thousands of newborns dying from otherwise preventable causes. Current figures show that of the more than 60,000 Filipino children dying annually before their fifth birthday due to complications of premature birth, intra-partum complications, and infectious disease, almost 60% account for newborns. These numbers obviously point to a need to improve health and nutrition outcomes for both mothers and babies.³

Strengthening and institutionalizing the Unang Yakap protocol aims to save thousands of newborn lives. It is essential to underscore that newborns need to be with their mothers to start breastfeeding within the first hour of life. Having the babies and their mothers placed in immediate skin-to-skin contact helps the babies adjust to life outside the womb. It keeps them warm, prevents their exposure to surfaces in health facilities that may carry diseases, and helps establish breastfeeding. Through their mothers' breastmilk, babies receive antibodies from their mothers that protect them from potentially deadly infections like pneumonia, diarrhea and sepsis. Unang Yakap and exclusive breastfeeding are, in fact, vital to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures.⁴

By strictly implementing the Unang Yakap Protocol in all health and birthing facilities, the risk of complications and infections causing death or serious illness for either the mother or the newborn will be significantly reduced. Improving access to

² Unang yakap and breastfeeding are life-saving for babies in the Philippines. Unicef Philippines. [Unang yakap and breastfeeding are life-saving for babies in the Philippines \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/unang-yakap-and-breastfeeding-are-life-saving-for-babies-in-the-philippines)

³ A child or youth died once every 4.4 seconds in 2021 – UN report. January 13, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/child-or-youth-died-once-every-44-seconds-2021-un-report>

⁴ Unang yakap and breastfeeding are life-saving for babies in the Philippines. Unicef Philippines. [Unang yakap and breastfeeding are life-saving for babies in the Philippines \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/unang-yakap-and-breastfeeding-are-life-saving-for-babies-in-the-philippines)

quality maternal and child health and nutrition services ensures that children not only survive in the first 1,000 days of their lives, but also thrive.⁵

Immediate passage of this measure is earnestly sought.



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REP. BRYAN B. REVILLA

Representative
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⁵ A child or youth died once every 4.4 seconds in 2021 – UN report. January 13, 2023.
<https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/child-or-youth-died-once-every-44-seconds-2021-un-report>

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**AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE “UNANG YAKAP”, ADOPTING THE PROTOCOL ON
ESSENTIAL INTRAPARTUM NEWBORN CARE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Unang Yakap Act of
2024.”

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the state to adopt measures
that will ensure the provision of globally-accepted evidence-based essential
intrapartum newborn care that focuses on the first week of the newborn’s life.

Towards this end, the State shall endeavor to guarantee that the quality time-
bound interventions are provided to newborns to ensure that newborn morbidity and
mortality are significantly reduced through the following:

- a. Provide guidelines to health workers and medical practitioners in
accordance with recommended international standards on evidence-based
essential intrapartum newborn care;
- b. Define the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Health (DOH),
healthcare facilities and practitioners in the implementation of the Essential
Intrapartum Newborn Care or Unang Yakap Protocol.

Sec. 3. *Purpose* – This Act shall provide guidelines for improving the quality of care for newborns around the time of childbirth and ensure that essential newborn care is given during the baby's first hour of life.

Sec. 4. *Coverage* – This Act shall include all public and private providers of health care and development partners implementing Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) strategy and to all health practitioners involved in maternal and newborn care.

Sec. 5. *Implementing Agency*. – The DOH shall be principally responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the provisions of this Act.

Together with concerned government agencies, the DOH shall identify, prepare and provide policy guidelines and technical resource assistance in relation to the inclusion of recommended international standards on essential intrapartum newborn care which are proven effective and applicable to the country. Efforts shall be exerted to generate and update information to guide the planning and implementation of Newborn Care programs and activities.

Sec. 6. *The Unang Yakap Protocol or the Essential Intrapartum Newborn Care* – The DOH shall adopt standard essential newborn care practices and guidelines that shall adhere to the quality provision of time-bound newborn care and interventions, such as:

1. Immediate and thorough drying of the newborn;
2. Facilitation of early skin-to-skin contact between mother and newborn;
3. Properly-timed cord clamping and cutting;
4. Non-separation of newborn and mother for early breastfeeding.

Non-immediate interventions shall be delayed until the newborn has initiated breastfeeding; Provided that, the newborn and the mother are not in need of immediate medical attention.

Unnecessary procedures such as, but not limited to, the following shall not be given to neonates:

1. Routine suctioning;
2. Early bathing/washing;
3. Footprinting;
4. Giving of water, formula or other prelacteals and the use of bottles or pacifiers as provided for under the Republic Act No. 10028 or the Expanded Breastfeeding Act of 2009;
5. Application of alcohol, medicine and other substances on the cord stump and bandaging the cord stump or abdomen.

Sec. 7. Continuing Education, Re-education and Training of Health Workers and Health Institutions. – The DOH, with the assistance of other government agencies, professional and non-governmental organizations, shall conduct continuing information, education, re-education, and training program for physicians, nurses, midwives, nutritionist-dietitians, community health workers, trained birth attendants and other health workers involved in maternal and newborn care, on the Unang Yakap Protocol.

Information materials shall also be given to all health workers and health institutions involved in maternal and newborn care.

Sec. 8. Information Dissemination and Educational Programs of Pregnant Women and Women of Reproductive Age. – the DOH shall continuously educate and update expectant mothers and women of reproductive age on newborn protocols and infant care and to distribute written information materials on such matters, free of charge, during the prenatal and perinatal consultations or confinements in health institutions.

Sec. 9. Sanctions. – Any healthcare or birthing facility which unjustifiably refuses or fails to comply with the provisions of this Act shall be imposed with a fine of not less than Fifty Thousand Pesos (₱50,000.00) but not more than Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱200,000.00) on the first offense.

On the second offense, a fine of not less than Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱200,000.00) but not more than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (₱500,000.00).

On the third offense, a fine of not less than Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (P500,000.00) but not more than One Million Pesos (P1,000,000.00) and the cancellation or revocation of the business permits or licenses to operate.

Heads, officials and employees of government health institutions with birthing facilities who violate this Act shall further be subject to the following administrative penalties:

1. First Offense – Reprimand;
2. Second Offense – Suspension for one (1) to thirty (30) days; and
3. Third Offense – Dismissal.

This shall be without prejudice to other liabilities applicable under the civil service law and rules.

Sec. 10. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – The DOH, in consultation with relevant government agencies, health facilities, and stakeholders, shall issue within one hundred and twenty (120) days upon its effectivity the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of and enforcement of the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 11. Separability Clause. – All laws, presidential decrees, orders, rules and regulations, or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 12. Repealing Clause. – All laws, decrees, orders, decrees, rules and regulations, and other parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Sec. 13. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,