



## COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question *Updated December, 2020*

**During December, 2020, the Department of Correction has been actively mitigating cases of COVID-19 at Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution, James T. Vaughn Correctional Center, Howard R. Young Correctional Institution, and Sussex Correctional Institution.**

### **How is COVID-19 impacting healthcare operations in DOC facilities?**

All inmates who test positive for COVID-19 are housed in COVID-19 Treatment Centers where they receive round-the-clock care by on-site medical staff. In DOC facilities that are experiencing COVID-19 cases, sick calls submitted by inmates are reviewed daily by medical staff. Medical visits for urgent and emergency issued that require immediate attention are being held. Routine (non-urgent, non-emergency) medical visits may be temporarily postponed, however, the sick call process remains operational at all facilities.

### **Have inmates been kept informed of the virus?**

Yes. Facility leadership, security staff, and medical providers are walking the tiers of housing units and talking with inmates and staff to answer their questions. Multiple written inmate communications have been posted on every housing tier and an informational video is being displayed in most prison facilities on one of the TV channels available to inmates that explains more about COVID-19 from a counselor who had the virus and recovered.

### **How can I contact a loved one during COVID?**

DOC has secured one free 5-minute phone call each week for all inmates, in addition to phone time that inmates and their families can purchase through the DOC phone vendor. This free call is automatically loaded to every inmate phone account. Additionally, video tablets to support video visitation are available in all Level V prison facilities.

### **What kind of care are inmates receiving in COVID Treatment Centers?**

Inmates receiving treatment for COVID-19 receive DOC-issued personal hygiene items, laundry service at least two times per week, a personal water pitcher with ice, and 24-hour care by medical staff.

### **Are inmates in COVID Treatment Centers allowed commissary?**

Yes. Commissary is being permitted in COVID Treatment Centers.

### **Are inmates in COVID treatment units allowed mail delivery?**

Yes. Inmates in COVID treatment units have always received legal mail. Commissary is being permitted in COVID Treatment Centers. Non-legal mail service had been restricted as a precaution to mitigate spread of the virus through surfaces, but that restriction was modified in December to allow personal mail delivery.

### **Are inmates in COVID treatment units allowed to have personal items?**

Yes. Inmates in COVID treatment units had been prevented from bringing personal items with them to COVID Treatment Centers as a precaution to mitigate the spread of the virus through infected items, but that restriction is being gradually lifted, beginning at JTVCC.

### **Do inmates have access to Tylenol?**

Yes. Pain relief medication is being provided by medical staff to COVID-positive inmates and other inmates, as needed. Inmates can purchase additional Tylenol tablets from Commissary.

### **Are inmates provided soap for proper hygiene?**

Yes. Inmates receive 2 bars of soap each week in all facilities, as has been the policy for decades. Soap also is provided at all communal sinks. Inmates have wide access to soap and water, which public health officials have indicated is the preferred method of handwashing (see <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>).

### **Have known COVID-positive inmates been housed with COVID-negative inmates?**

No. DOC have never moved inmates who had received a COVID-positive test result in with inmates who had tested negative for COVID or were awaiting a COVID test result. All COVID-positive offenders are immediately isolated upon notification of test results.

### **Are inmates being provided recreation time?**

Yes. Normal recreation is occurring in all housing units except the COVID-19 Treatment Centers.

### **Are inmate medical sick calls being addressed?**

Yes. All sick call slips are picked up daily and triaged by an RN for any COVID-related symptoms from inmates, and those cases are addressed immediately. Non-COVID sick calls are then reviewed by a medical professional to determine if they needed immediate attention. If so, the inmate receives medical attention.

## **General DOC COVID-19 FAQs**

### **What is the recovery protocol for COVID-19 positive inmates?**

Consistent with the latest CDC guidelines, the DOC considers most inmates "recovered" when the inmate exceeds 10 days since the start of symptoms or the COVID test was administered **and** the inmate has been free of fever and other symptoms of illness for more than 72 hours. Inmates who are immunocompromised or who were treated for severe COVID-19 symptoms, including requiring supplemental oxygen or hospitalization, are considered recovered after the inmate exceeds 20 days since the start of symptoms or the COVID test was administered **and** the inmate has been free of fever and other symptoms of illness for more than 72 hours. Recovered inmates remain in quarantine until they receive at least one negative follow-up COVID-19 test result. We are effectively treating inmates and they are recovering in good health.

### **What precautions are DOC taking to protect inmates and staff from COVID-19?**

In January, 2020 the DOC initiated screening of symptoms of respiratory illness for inmates, staff and volunteers as a precaution during the annual flu season. At that time, the DOC also began screening inmates at intake for recent travel outside the continental US in recognition of the spread of coronavirus in China. In late February, even as incidents of the flu trended downward within its facilities, the DOC expanded these screening measures to all visitors as an early precaution against coronavirus.

Inmates who arrive at our facilities receive a medical screening to assess their healthcare needs and to learn about any potential exposure to COVID-19. Since mid-March, all inmates who have arrived at our facilities are being carefully monitored every day by medical staff for 14 days to look for signs of illness.

We are thoroughly screening every single person who enters our prisons, work release and violation of probation centers, and probation and parole offices. They are asked specific questions about their medical condition and whether they have had any direct or indirect contact with someone who has been tested for COVID-19 or is in quarantine. And they receive a forehead temperature check with a thermometer. Anyone who exhibits signs of illness is turned away and directed to consult with a doctor.

Additional cleaning of all DOC facilities is occurring as much as two times each day, including sanitizing work spaces and disinfecting of hard surfaces that can retain germs. Surfaces in high traffic areas are sanitized even more frequently. Additionally, inmates are provided cleaning supplies to sanitize and disinfect cell areas. The DOC is enlisting all staff, contractors and inmates to take individual action to prevent infection and the spread of Covid-19 through good personal hygiene, including frequent hand washing with soap and water. Inmates have wide access to soap and water, which public health officials have indicated is the preferred method of handwashing (see <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>). Additionally, DOC provides wall-mounted hand sanitizers throughout its facilities. These hand sanitizers are primarily for the use of staff, but hand sanitizers mounted on the walls in hallways and prison infirmaries are frequently used by inmates.

## **How can I stay in touch with my loved one in DOC custody?**

The health and safety of our staff, visitors and the individuals under our supervision is the DOC's first priority, and [on November 12th the DOC temporarily suspended inmate visitation](#) as a necessary step to reduce the risk of Covid-19 entering and spreading within our facilities. The DOC currently offers phone and video visitation to inmates in order to facilitate family and community support that is important to their wellbeing.

While visitation is suspended, the DOC has increased the use of video visitation as available in its facilities. Additionally, DOC is providing one free five-minute phone call per week to all inmates to facilitate communication between individuals in DOC custody and their families.

## **Is the DOC continuing to “flow down” offenders from Level V prisons to Level IV community corrections centers when their Level V sentence concludes and their Level IV sentence is scheduled to begin?**

Yes. Offenders are being moved from Level V facilities to Level IV facilities, as scheduled, with additional COVID-19 testing and quarantine procedures in place.

## **Do probationers still need to check in to their Probation Officers as scheduled?**

Case plans and reporting instructions are developed on an individual basis based on risk and needs. The individual should call his/her Officer for specific reporting instructions. If the assigned Officer is not available, the individual should ask to speak with the Duty Officer or Duty Supervisor.

## **Are probationers required to report to Probation and Parole "Weekly" group meetings?**

Group meetings with contracted treatment providers (Aftercare, Mental Edge, Gateway, and People's Place) at the Probation & Parole facilities are being conducted based upon space and staffing availability. Probationers should contact the respective treatment provider or their assigned officer to determine whether group sessions are being conducted in person (and where) or remotely. In-person individual treatment sessions and assessments are being conducted at the Probation & Parole facilities and probationers should check with the respective treatment provider or assigned officer for more details.

## **Do inmates continue to have access to their lawyers?**

Yes. The temporary restriction on visitation does not apply to inmate meetings with their attorneys. The DOC is working to accommodate video meetings for attorneys who prefer to meet with their clients remotely.

## **Have any Officers, other DOC employees, or offenders tested positive for COVID-19?**

[Click HERE to review Confirmed DOC COVID-19 Cases](#)

## **What specific screening measures are in place?**

Anyone who enters a DOC facility are asked specific questions about their medical condition and whether they have had any direct or indirect contact with someone who has been tested for COVID-19 or is in quarantine, and they receive a forehead temperature check with a thermometer.

## **Are pre-trial detainees and newly-sentenced offenders tested for COVID-19?**

In January, we began enhanced medical screenings for individuals held in pre-trial detention and sentenced offenders in our facilities during the flu season. In February, we stepped it up these screenings for COVID-19 as it spread to the United States. Inmates who arrive at our facilities receive a medical screening to assess their healthcare needs and to learn about any potential exposure to the virus. Since mid-March, all inmates who have arrived at our facilities are being carefully monitored every day by medical staff for 14 days to look for signs of illness.

## **If an offender shows symptoms for COVID-19 is he or she isolated?**

Yes.

## **Will information be shared with the public if an offender or officer tests positive for COVID-19?**

Yes. [Click HERE to review Confirmed DOC COVID-19 Cases](#) and [Click HERE to read COVID-19 announcements.](#)

## **If there is a large outbreak of COVID-19 in a DOC facility, where will inmates be housed?**

Each facility has a contingency plan in place in the event that an offender contracts COVID-19.

## **Who is wearing face masks in DOC facilities?**

- All officers and contract healthcare workers
- Two (2) washable cloth face masks have been issued to every inmate across all Level V prison and Level IV work release and violation of probation facilities. Inmates have been directed to wear their face masks at all time.

Additional COVID-19 mitigation measures in all DOC facilities:

- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days and are closely monitored for signs of illness, including daily temperature check.
- In-person programming and visitation have been temporarily suspended to reduce the number of people coming into DOC facilities from the community and to reduce movement of individuals within DOC facilities.
- DOC facilities, including housing areas, undergo twice-daily cleanings and more frequent disinfecting of commonly-touched surfaces. DOC also employs specialized equipment to disinfect targeted areas. Additionally, inmates are provided with supplies to clean cells.

## **Is DOC testing inmates and staff for COVID-19?**

Yes. The DOC has been a leader in COVID-19 testing since the spring. Early on we partnered with the Delaware Division of Public Health to bring rapid COVID testing capability to our facilities. Through December 3 the DOC has administered **7,198 inmate COVID-19 tests**, mostly proactive tests on inmates with no symptoms of illness, and the DOC has facilitated **2,568 staff COVID-19 tests**, not including tests that staff have secured on their own through community testing events or through their medical providers.

## **Is DOC considering early release for offenders?**

No. DOC's facilities are not overcrowded. DOC's prison population is down more than 25% over the past 6 years.

## **How has COVID-19 impacted the Road to Recovery Substance Use Disorder programs (formerly known as Key, Crest, and Reflections)?**

DOC and its behavioral healthcare provider, Centurion, have developed a temporary alternative treatment plan so that inmates in Substance Use Disorder treatment programs can continue to make progress toward completing these programs. It is designed to keep participants on course to complete programming without significant delay and to continue to apply meritorious good time for program participation and meritorious bonus good time for program completion. The Transitions treatment program is continuing with its normal structure, but is using video.

This temporary alternate treatment plan focuses on self-study and journaling, increased use of program peers, and use of phone and video conferencing technology. Centurion program staff are evaluating each participant's progress to determine their advancement to the next phase of the program and graduation.

Program participants who have questions about their specific treatment plan or how this temporary program plan will affect their progress or graduation date have been directed to write a letter to the program staff.