



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

**During July, 2020, the Department of Correction has been actively mitigating cases of COVID-19 at Sussex Correctional Institution and Morris Community Corrections Center.**

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

Yes. The Warden, members of his leadership team, and senior DOC leaders walk the tiers of the housing units every day and talk with inmates and staff and answer their questions. Multiple written inmate communications have been posted on every housing tier and an informational video is being displayed on one of the TV channels available to all 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 two free 5-minute phone calls each week for all SCI inmates through August 31 and one free 5-minute phone call for inmates at all other DOC facilities. Additionally, video tablets to support video visitation have been installed at JTVCC, BWCI, and in portions of HRYCI. DOC is completing Wi-Fi access points required to provide video visitation at SCI.

### **Are SCI inmates allowed commissary?**

Yes. Commissary was temporarily restricted for one week while COVID-19 testing of all SCI inmates took place. Inmates still had access to shampoo, soap and Tylenol or ibuprofen. They did not have access to snacks, chips or Twinkies. Commissary has been fully restored to all inmates except in the SCI COVID-19 Treatment Center where each inmate receives – at no charge – a weekly “go-bag” of toiletries, personal care products, and snacks, just as we have provided at the JTVCC COVID-19 Treatment Center.

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

Yes. Inmates also have access to Tylenol. SCI allows inmates to purchase additional Tylenol tablets from Commissary.

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

Yes. Inmates receive 2 bars of soap each week, as has been the policy for decades. Offenders in the COVID-19 Treatment Center are also given an additional 3.5 oz. bar of Dial anti-bacterial soap per week. Soap also is provided at all communal sinks.

### **Do COVID positive inmates have access to laundry service?**

Yes. Laundry was restricted temporarily for 2 days as the facility moved inmates between housing units to create a COVID-19 Treatment Center and COVID-free housing areas. Laundry is operating normally. Laundry items in the COVID-19 Treatment Center are laundered 2 times per week, and more if needed.

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

Yes. Several housing buildings have their own outside recreation areas, and they are allowed to continue utilizing those areas continuously. Other areas are affected by our rigorous decontamination fogging efforts. When a building is fogged the inmates in that building are placed in the Gym and yard area while decontamination occurs. Inmates from only one building or area are allowed in the yard at a time to prevent cross contamination. SCI has resumed a normal recreation schedule for all housing units except the COVID-19 Treatment Center.

### **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.

### **Why was pepper spray used in the COVID-19 Treatment Center at SCI?**

One day in mid-July a small number of medium-security inmates who were being held in the asymptomatic tier of the SCI COVID-19 Treatment Center began throwing items at staff. When that behavior was elevated to throwing lockers and larger items from the upstairs balcony and against the doorway, Correctional Officers responded with a targeted use of pepper spray to clear that immediate area and neutralize that behavior without further incident and without the use of force.

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

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

Inmates who tested positive are considered recovered according to CDC guidelines, going 14 days with no symptoms. These recovered inmates are being transferred from the COVID-19 Treatment Center to a step-down housing unit with fewer restrictions. Over the course of the next 14 days, we are retesting these inmates; if they have two consecutive negative COVID-19 test results, they will return to general population. 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. The attached flyer has been distributed to inmates this week as part of that effort. 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. Finally, DOC has ordered additional hand soap stations that will be wall-mounted in recreational areas and facility lobbies. These hand soap stations will be available to staff (lobbies) and inmates (recreation areas).

### **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 March 12<sup>th</sup> 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 a variety of 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 (note: SCI inmates are receiving two free five-minute phone calls through week through August 31) to facilitate communication between individuals in DOC custody and their families.

### **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?**

Effective immediately, all treatment programs at the Probation & Parole District Offices will be suspended for two weeks (beginning March 24, 2020 and ending April 5, 2020) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes Aftercare, Mental Edge sex offender treatment, and Gateway substance abuse treatment and programming. This protective protocol will be reevaluated at the end of the second week to determine best steps moving forward. Treatment staff will be asked to make contact with offenders via telephone as a "check-in" and report any concerns or inability to contact an offender to the assigned Officer and Supervisor immediately. Treatment providers are expected to report "check-in" updates to the assigned officer on a weekly basis.

### **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.

### **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 Key, Crest, and Reflections Substance Use Disorder programs?**

DOC and its behavioral healthcare provider, Centurion, have developed a temporary alternative treatment plan so that inmates in the Key, Crest, and Reflections 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 for Key, Crest, and Reflections 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.

### **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.