

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

COVID-19 Response

Ensuring the safety of our staff, inmates, and the public

Law and Justice Interim Committee

March 30, 2020.



Education



FOR STAFF

DOC's Clinical Services Division provided printed information, face-to-face education sessions with small groups, and ongoing support. The DOC also implemented a COVID-19 hotline and email address for questions from employees.



FOR INMATES

Information regarding COVID-19, its symptoms, and how to prevent it was distributed via pamphlets in units, inmate tablets, and by Clinical Services staff who visited the units to talk to inmates and answer their questions.



FOR THE PUBLIC

Updates on efforts by the DOC to protect its staff and offenders in its care were delivered through the Governor's Office, the media, social media, legislators, email and phone calls.



Visitation

In order to minimize the risk of introduction of COVID-19 to our secure facilities, the DOC suspended visitation until further notice on March 13, 2020. That extends to volunteers and non-essential contractors. Attorneys are strongly urged to communicate with their clients via phone or video call. CenturyLink, our phone and video visitation provider, agreed to provide each inmate one free phone call and one free video call per week to assist during this difficult time. The DOC recognizes the importance of visitation to our inmates, their families, and friends. The department looks forward to resuming regular visitation once the threat of COVID-19 has passed.



LIMITING MOVEMENT

THROUGHOUT THE STATE, FROM STATE TO STATE

The DOC prefers inmates to remain in place to help prevent the potential spread of COVID-19. We are working closely with our community partners including MSPOA and MCCA to accomplish this.

While our partners have been agreeable to limiting movement, should a facility decline to hold an offender — and the choice becomes retrieving the inmate or having him or her released to the public — the DOC and the governor's office agree that serious violent felons and sex offenders should not be released for public safety reasons.

WITHIN FACILITIES

The department is closely monitoring inmate movement to allow as much opportunity for social distancing as possible. For example, meals are staggered to limit numbers of inmates in one area at any given time.

Screening/Quarantine

STAFF

DOC staff members are screened at all facilities every day before they start their shifts. Clinical Services employees take temperatures and ask questions about risk factors as advised by the CDC. Anyone with a fever or symptoms is sent home before entering the facility and asked to consult their health provider.

INMATES FROM MT FACILITIES

Prior to entering DOC facilities, Montana inmates are screened by Clinical Services employees for temperature and CDC-identified risk factors. Inmates who exhibit symptoms are quarantined for 14 days.

INMATES FROM OUT OF STATE

Prior to entering DOC facilities, inmates coming from out of state are screened by Clinical Services employees for temperature and CDC-identified risk factors. All inmates coming from out state are quarantined.



STAFFING

DOC leadership is closely monitoring staffing levels. Priority posts have been identified and staff is deployed accordingly. The DOC has contingency-planning in place to ensure adequate facility staffing.

SUPPLIES

Staff is monitoring levels of all medical and cleaning supplies and working with Montana Disaster and Emergency Services to ensure staff and inmates have access to the items they need to mitigate the risk associated with COVID-19.



COVID-19 TESTING

**4 inmates - 2 negative,
2 pending**

3 ONSITE, 1 AT OFFSITE FACILITY

The DOC received limited numbers of COVID-19 test kits. Staff is using those as delineated by DPHHS and the CDC. As of March 27, 2020 the DOC had collected samples from three inmates using the department's allotted test kits. One inmate was tested at a community hospital using that facility's resources. All kits are tested by the DPHHS lab or by that department's contracted facility.





ARE WE RELEASING OFFENDERS?

**WE CONTINUE TO EVALUATE
OPTIONS, BUT NOT AT THIS TIME**

The DOC has conditionally released, within its current authority, offenders in community corrections facilities who are appropriate for release.

In addition, the department is working with the Montana Board of Pardons and Parole to identify offenders who are within a year of discharge and may be appropriate for parole.



THANK YOU TO OUR DOC STAFF!

ANY QUESTIONS?