

Sanitizing and Cleaning

What sanitation and disinfectant protocols are being used to clean the facilities?

All DOC locations have established intensive sanitizing and disinfectant measures with an emphasis on routinely cleaning critical areas and high touch surfaces throughout its facilities and transportation vehicles. Quantities of hand soap have been increased at all facilities for use by staff and persons in our care. As recommended by DHS, *frequent handwashing remains the preferred method of virus prevention.*

Screening, Testing and Healthcare

How is the Department of Corrections (DOC) managing the situation if persons in their care test positive for COVID-19?

As of March 24, 2020, we do not have any known cases of COVID-19 amongst persons in our care. Any person in our care that has influenza-like symptoms is seen by a medical professional on-site. If the person in our care is found not to be diagnosed with Influenza-A, and has COVID-19-like symptoms, the on-site medical professional tests the individual and sends their sample to a lab for processing. In the event a person in our care tests positive, we will place the patient in a designated quarantine area and will work with Health Services staff to ensure an individualized treatment plan is in place following all medical guidance to ensure appropriate medical care. Any patient determined to have been in close contact with the individual who tested positive will also be placed in quarantine.

Is it true that a DOC employee tested positive for COVID-19? What are the protocols when this happens?

Yes. As of March 24, 2020, [two employees have tested positive for COVID-19](#). The first positive case was confirmed on March 18, 2020 and is an employee at Waupun Correctional Institution (WCI). The second positive case was confirmed on March 21, 2020 and is an employee at Columbia Correctional Institution (CCI). Upon notice of the confirmed positive tests, each institution [suspended administrative rules to limit movement](#) for the protection of staff and persons in our care.

We have protocols in place that follow recommendations for quarantines set forth by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Employees who test positive are directed to self-quarantine at home for 14 days. Upon learning of the positive test result, sites activate their Emergency Operating Procedures and move from the “alert” phase to an “action” phase. DOC works to identify and notify staff that were potentially or directly exposed. All persons in our care that were directly exposed are quarantined following DHS and CDC guidelines. Any employee that was directly exposed and report symptoms are directed to quarantine for 14 days.

Additionally, we have thoroughly cleaned and disinfected the areas in DOC sites with positive results. We have also taken steps to increase the number of employees working remotely to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among our employees and in Wisconsin. We remain vigilant in our efforts to maintain the safety, health and welfare of our facilities, along with staff and persons in our care.

What is DOC’s protocol for testing persons in their care?

The DOC has developed screening tools in our electronic medical records system that alerts key healthcare staff of a possible COVID-19 case and immediately notifies an institution’s Advanced Care Practitioners (ACP). The DOC’s healthcare professionals have developed a tiered testing method for influenza and COVID-19. All persons in our care have been encouraged to alert healthcare staff immediately if they are displaying any symptoms consistent with Influenza-A or COVID-19. Any person in our care that has influenza-like symptoms is seen by a medical professional on-site. If the person in our care is found not to be diagnosed with Influenza-A, and has COVID-19-like symptoms, the on-site medical professional tests the individual and sends their sample to a lab for processing. If an individual tests positive for Influenza-A or COVID-19, healthcare staff will screen those in our care accordingly and make individual treatment plans for each person, just as is being done in the community with the general public.

Have any persons in DOC’s care been tested so far? Is this number being tracked?

Yes. Department of Corrections is testing persons in our care at the direction of the treating advanced care providers at the institutions. Samples obtained are sent to various labs within the state for subsequent processing and results. All testing requires a nasal swab, similar to testing for the flu. As of March 24, 2020, we have conducted 22 tests total for COVID-19 and 41 tests total for Influenza-A.

Is DOC identifying at risk persons in their care?

Yes. We have established several precautions to help protect our most vulnerable populations. The DOC's Bureau of Health Services has developed tracking tools to identify those at risk and generate reports that are shared with healthcare staff on a regular basis for use in their isolation and quarantine plans.

Is DOC providing doctors' visits for persons in their care?

Yes. We have medical professionals on-site closely monitoring the health of persons in our care. We have encouraged individuals who are exhibiting symptoms related to COVID-19 to fill out a health service request form or contact a staff member immediately. These requests are triaged by healthcare staff and patients will be treated accordingly. [Medical co-pays have been temporarily suspended](#) to allow anyone experiencing signs of illness to seek medical attention. All non-urgent visits offsite have been cancelled. Transfers to an emergency room will be evaluated on a case by case basis dependent on the orders of the treating advanced care provider at the individual facilities.

Will persons in DOC's care be given Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to protect themselves in the event of an exposure?

DOC is following guidelines recommended by CDC and DHS on the use of PPE. CDC has stated that persons who are not sick do not need to wear a facemask. Facemasks may be in short supply and should be saved for caregivers. DOC is practicing proper isolation guidelines to minimize the spread of the virus for anyone who has been exposed or infected. Every person in our care is given an adequate supply of soap and warm water to ensure proper hygiene and handwashing is taking place, which is the preferred method of prevention at this time.

What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?

Isolation separates sick people experiencing symptoms related to a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were potentially or directly exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

Are individuals being screened before entering a DOC facility?

We have implemented enhanced medical screening protocols for persons in our care with a diagnostic intake screening process for individuals entering and leaving DOC facilities consistent with recommendations from DHS and CDC.

What steps has DOC taken to proactively protect the health and welfare of persons in care?

The Department of Corrections remains committed to protecting the health and welfare of all persons in our care. We have been preparing our facilities and our staff to safely and effectively manage the spread of COVID-19 including:

- Reviewed and updated existing pandemic plans to address COVID-19, including the protocols and isolation procedures if someone becomes infected.
- Regularly communicating with staff and persons in our care to provide accurate and up-to-date public health information including basic health guidance and precautions to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Educating staff and persons in our care about the virus (its transmission, symptoms, duration, etc.) following guidelines consistent with DHS and encouraging persons in our care to alert Health Services staff immediately if they experience any symptoms related to COVID-19.
- Identifying and enhancing purchasing efforts for pandemic supplies such as personal protective equipment.
- Securing contingency staffing plans and remote access to care in case of provider/staff shortages.

If the virus spreads throughout DOC, what contingency plans are in place to ensure things keep running?

The DOC has prepared continuity of operations plans for maintaining critical functions of the department. We have activated the Department Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate resources and internal information sharing on planning progress, staffing numbers and medical surveillance agency-wide. Additionally, our response is supported by the Governor's Office, Department of Military Affairs, Department of Health Services, the Wisconsin Emergency Management and several other state and federal agencies.

Social Distancing

What social distancing practices is DOC implementing?

In line with DHS guidance, the DOC is taking a number of precautions to promote social distancing and reduce the risk of potentially spreading COVID-19 in our facilities and offices. In addition to suspending all non-essential face-to-face visitations, correctional facilities are encouraging social distancing and limiting the amount of congregate groups. We are also utilizing existing infrastructure to accommodate phone calls and video conferences, or non-contact visits whenever possible. We have suspended work release for those in our care in the private sector. Contracted programming, and most internal programming has been suspended, and we have adjusted necessary programming to align with current social distancing recommendations. Non-essential staff at the Central Office and with-in the divisions are implementing telework where possible. Acknowledging the importance of these services for those in our care, DOC continues to evaluate how to provide programming and other services in a safe manner while following social distancing guidelines and will adjust delivery models as necessary.

Operational Changes at Correctional Facilities

Is my loved one still allowed visitors?

On March 13, 2020, the Department of Corrections [temporarily suspended visits at all correctional facilities](#) until further notice to minimize the risk of exposing staff, persons in our care and the public to COVID-19. All professional and legal visits will continue, but we will make accommodations for phone calls and video conferences, or non-contact visits whenever possible. We understand the significant impacts this suspension has on persons in our care and their loved ones. As a result, we have partnered with CenturyLink to expand methods of communication during this time.

Effective March 16, 2020, the Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) is providing persons in our care two (2) free fifteen-minute phone calls each week, Sunday through Saturday, until visits resume. International phone calls are not included in the free phone calls available. The Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) is providing unlimited phone calls, Sunday through Saturday, until visits resume. All other institution telephone policies and procedures still apply. Find out how to take advantage of the [free phone calls](#).

Will my loved one have increased access to items in the canteen?

Yes. Effective March 16, 2020, the Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) has changed the weekly and bi-weekly spending limits for persons in our care. Weekly spending limits increased from \$42.00 to \$50.00 and bi-weekly spending limits increased from \$84.00 to \$100.00. The change in spending limits does not change the spending limits placed at specific facilities or housing units. The second policy change addresses the permitted refunds available to persons in our care (see Section II, C of the [Inmate Canteen Policy](#) for updates).

What other climate improvements have been implemented at DOC facilities that have limited movement due to confirmed positive tests within the institution?

Persons in our care will have access to additional movies, cable channels and digital TV, wherever possible.

Are inter-facility transfers being effected in any way?

Effective March 19, 2020, all [transfers from state contracted county jail beds have been suspended](#) until further notice. This applies to all individuals sentenced to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) but are currently housed in a contracted county jail bed. Traditionally, DAI places state inmates from Dodge Correctional Institution (DCI) into a county jail placement for up to 120 days and then transports those inmates back to DAI. In order to limit the potential for exposure and spread of COVID-19, DAI will not be scheduling transfers into or out of the county jail for the duration of this public health emergency.

Effective March 23, 2020, internal transfers are also suspended with the exception of essential transfers out of an abundance of caution. We continue to work with the Governor and other state and federal agencies on best practices to protect the health and safety of staff and persons in our care.

I heard all admissions to the state prisons and juvenile facilities are suspended. Is this true?

Under the authority of [Executive Order #72](#), effective March 23, 2020, Governor Evers suspended all admissions to state prisons and juvenile facilities operated by the Department of Corrections in [Emergency Order #9](#). This decision was made out of an abundance of caution as part of the statewide efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We take our responsibility to protect staff and persons in our care seriously and continue to work with the Governor, other state and federal agencies, as well as our county partners to establish any modifications that may be necessary.

What is the status of work release programs?

Effective March 16, 2020, work release for persons in our care in the private sector was temporarily suspended at all correctional facilities until further notice. Please contact individual work release sites for additional details related to this suspension.

What is the status of volunteer programs?

Effective March 13, 2020, volunteer visits and activities at all correctional facilities were temporarily suspended until further notice. All public tours and events have been postponed.

What is the status of contracted and internal programming?

Effective March 17, 2020, all non-essential activities/interventions provided by external partners were temporarily suspended at all correctional facilities until further notice. This suspension applied to all contracted programming. For clients in the community, it is recommended that agencies (where appropriate) utilize technology (phone calls, FaceTime or Skype, etc.) in order to provide services and/or case management resources. Additionally, most internal programming has been suspended, and we have adjusted necessary programming to align with current social distancing recommendations.

Community Corrections

Will individuals on probation, parole or extended supervision still need to come into the office for scheduled contact visits with their agent?

Communication is vital between individuals on supervision and their agents to avoid any complications or confusion with supervision rules and requirements. Individuals should assume all scheduled appointments are still taking place, although appointments may be replaced with video meetings using FaceTime or Google Duo type applications. Even though offices are closed, Agents will be working remotely and are available by phone and email. There have been many accommodations made to utilize other methods of communication for meetings whenever possible, but not all contacts will be able to be accommodated remotely. Clients should contact their agent for more information.

Will probation and parole offices for the Division of Community Corrections (DCC) remain open?

Offices will be closed to the general public, but they will continue to be staffed to accommodate situations that require in person meetings, service electronic monitoring equipment, revocation hearings and other appointments. Attorneys will also have the ability to review client files by prescheduling meeting times. Clients should contact their agent with specific questions.

Are parole releases or discharges being effected in any way?

The Department of Corrections has not issued any memorandum regarding early release criteria and does not have any plans to release persons in our care early.