

COVID-19 RESPONSE

A MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY KEVIN A. CARR



Thursday, December 17, 2020

Friends and Colleagues,

I would like to take this time to wish you all a happy, safe, and healthy holiday season. This year has been unlike any other in recent memory, so it is more important than ever to celebrate the holiday season with loved ones, whether in person or in a virtual environment. I would also like to send my condolences to those who have lost someone this year or been personally affected by this public health crisis. I recognize this holiday season may be difficult for both you and those in our care, and I will be keeping you all in my thoughts. I hope you can draw strength from friends and family during this difficult time.

I'm sure the COVID-19 pandemic is at the very top of your list of concerns this holiday season. We hear and empathize with these concerns, which echo the concerns of everyone in our agency. The DOC continues to work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and review the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for updates, and we are following their COVID-19 recommendations as best we can in the institution setting. I ask that you continue to show patience, respect and appreciation for the essential staff who risk their own health to keep our institutions safe every day.

We are working diligently to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our institutions, and keep both your loved ones and our staff safe. However, virus cases surged across the country in recent months, and our prisons were no exception. Thankfully, the rate of new, positive cases in DOC institutions has dramatically slowed in recent weeks, as has the number of those our care actively battling the virus. That decline gives us hope that the worst is behind us.

I imagine that many of you have heard talk of COVID-19 vaccines and are wondering where Persons in Our Care fall on the list of those to receive vaccines. While we don't yet have a concrete timetable for when this will happen, the DOC's Emergency Operation Center has put together a vaccine task force to work with the Department of Health Services and our local health agencies to ensure we advocate for our staff and those in our care, and get vaccines to our institutions as soon as it is possible. As we learn more, we will update that information on our public website, so I encourage you all to check DOC's public COVID-19 webpage frequently for the most up-to-date information (doc.wi.gov/COVID19).

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While it's not yet safe to resume in-person visitation, I encourage you all to visit with your loved ones through Zoom video visits. I know it can be difficult to not see your loved ones in person, especially during the holiday season, but I can assure you that we will open our doors for in-person visits as soon as it's safe to do so.

As we move into a new year, I want to wish you all moments of peace and strength amid the difficulties that we have all faced in 2020. While the road has certainly been difficult at times, I hope the lessons we have learned and the challenges we have faced have made us all stronger.

I want to also thank the persons in our care, their families and loved ones for their sacrifices and continued cooperation during these challenging times. Their actions have helped to keep them and countless others safe, and deserve recognition.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Kevin A. Carr

Wisconsin Department of Corrections Secretary