



Massachusetts Department of Correction Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Q&A

The Massachusetts Department of Correction continues to take unprecedented steps to prevent COVID-19 introduction or transmission in our facilities. DOC leadership, staff, and our contracted medical provider, Wellpath, are focused on reducing, to the greatest degree possible, the potential impact of this virus on inmates, staff and others within our walls.

The following information will help address many commonly-asked questions regarding the DOC's response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and preventative steps we're taking to help protect the health of employees and inmates.

1. Q. Is the DOC allowing general visitors at this time?

A. No, the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) suspended general visits at all facilities on March 12, 2020. This temporary suspension also includes outside volunteers and other tours and groups who routinely come into our facilities. The DOC remains committed to ensuring that family and friends are able to visit with loved ones, and will regularly re-evaluate the temporary suspension of visits.

2. Q. Is the DOC offering enhanced communication services in light of the visitor restrictions?

A. As of March 14, 2020, the DOC has offered two free 20 minute phone calls per week to every inmate. The DOC has also reinstated phone privileges to those inmates serving a loss of phone disciplinary sanction.

3. Q. How are inmates able to access their attorneys?

A. Attorney visits remain in place at DOC facilities. All attorneys are subject to the same screening process as facility staff. It is recommended that attorneys call the facility they intend to visit prior to leaving to confirm accessibility. The DOC is coordinating the update of inmates' phone lists to accommodate attorneys who are working remotely and using a different phone number, as well as working to ensure that attorneys can contact their clients to arrange a timely callback from their clients.

4. Q. Are deliveries of food and cleaning supplies still being accepted at the facilities?

A. Yes. Deliveries continue as scheduled. The DOC currently has adequate supplies of food and sanitation items and is continually monitoring supply levels.

5. Q. Is DOC providing inmates with soap and running water? What precautions are being taken to ensure safe and sanitary hygiene?

A. All inmates and staff have access to soap and water. The DOC provides soap and other hygiene items to inmates. In the event an inmate runs out of these items, more will be provided. Cleaning and disinfectant supplies are also readily available for inmates and staff. To complement hand washing, DOC has made isopropanol-based hand sanitizer, which meets CDC guidelines, available to inmates throughout all facilities across the agency. CDC posters detailing proper hygiene practices and important DOC information have been posted in the prisons. On April 3, 2020, the Department [strictly limited movement](#) within all facilities to further reduce potential transmission and allow greater social distancing. During this limited movement period, inmates at all facilities receive meals and medication in their units. This health and safety measure will be re-evaluated on an on-going basis.

6. Q. Is extra care going into cleaning facilities and sanitizing cells?

A. Yes. Additional cleaning and disinfecting protocols are being implemented at each institution, including continuous disinfecting in high touch areas in accordance with CDC guidelines. Cleaning and disinfectant supplies are also readily available for inmates and staff. All inmates and staff have access to soap and water. To complement hand-washing, isopropanol-based hand sanitizer that meets CDC guidelines has been issued to staff and is available at this time to inmates throughout all facilities across the agency.

7. Q. Are inmates being tested for COVID-19?

A. Medical providers at DOC facilities meet with inmates who present with symptoms consistent with a viral illness. As with any patient, if an inmate meets the criteria for testing, they are tested.

8. Q. Do inmates have to pay to get tested?

A. No. All medical co-pays will be waived for any inmate being tested for COVID-19 or any other medical issue until further notice.

9. Q. Will COVID-19 disrupt or delay the transfer of inmates between facilities?

A. At this time, transfers will occur as needed.

10. Q. My loved one has a scheduled release date. Am I still allowed to pick them up at the facility?

A. Yes, family and friends of inmates who are being released may still pick them up at the facility. We are asking that you remain in the parking lot until they come out.

11. Q. What actions are being taken to protect officers?

A. In addition to the steps outline above, DOC continues to provide guidance to staff and inmates on preventing the spread of infectious disease, including COVID-19. Screening areas have been implemented at DOC facilities, where all persons seeking to enter have their temperatures taken and are surveyed for risk factors. Facilities will restrict anyone who shows signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection including a cough, fever, sore throat, and/or shortness of breath, reside in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring, have traveled internationally within the prior 14

days to countries with sustained community transmission, and/or have had contact with an individual with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or under investigation for COVID-19. Staff who meet the above criteria* are advised not to return to work until contacting DPH and/or their primary care physician in order to be cleared for return to work. The employee must have a document from a qualified medical provider, the CDC, or DPH stating that they are cleared from COVID-19 before returning to work. DOC staff at all facilities have been instructed to utilize personal protective equipment. Isopropanol-based hand sanitizer that meets CDC guidelines has been issued to staff.

*Please note: The criteria may be modified as needed and/or as required.

12. Q. I'm a staff member and I had training and/or out of state travel scheduled. Is it cancelled?

A. All work-related travel is discontinued until further notice. Staff with outstanding travel commitments or concerns about cancelling scheduled travel should bring such concerns to the attention of their Facility or Division Head. The Governor, along with public health officials, strongly encourages individuals to avoid any personal international travel. All work-related conferences, seminars, and largescale gatherings hosted by DOC involving external participants are to be held virtually or cancelled. Employees should not attend external work-related conferences, seminars, and large-scale gatherings and instead should attempt to participate remotely, if feasible.