



Ombudsman Update

Announcements and Updates from the Office

INSIDE

From the Ombudsman

Spring Message from Lauren
"Laurie" Andersen, the
director/ombudsman

Key Accomplishments & Concerns

A synopsis of the key
accomplishments of the Office

About the Office / Contacting Us

Learn about the Office and
ways to connect.



FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

By Lauren "Laurie" Andersen, MM, RN, CEN, CCRN

Spring has sprung, and I, for one, am thrilled to see the sun and feel the warmth. The winter was certainly not the worst we have seen – neither due to weather, nor illness! Now that COVID-19 infection rates seem to be stable and the federal and state governments are ending the Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023, we can return to business as usual in the DOC.

The COVID-19 seven-day isolation and quarantine periods will continue for staff and inmates who are either symptomatic or COVID-19 positive. COVID-19 testing will only be for those who are symptomatic or otherwise require a COVID-19 test for a medical procedure or other purposes. As Massachusetts continues with "low" COVID-19 risk in the community, the DOC can use basic infection control methods (hand washing, gloves for exposures to body fluids, and masks if desired). Please be mindful that we all need to remain aware of the signs and symptoms of illness and infection.

I appreciate how each of you has faced all the challenges of COVID-19 and its impact within the walls of DOC facilities. The Office respects how difficult this pandemic has been on your lives, spirits, activities, and families. As we recover from this traumatic illness, take some time to be kind to each other and support each other.

I want to thank you for your diligence and attention to the changing requirements of COVID-19. I hope that we will all apply those infection control measures that will keep everyone healthy as we return to life as usual.

FROM THE OMBUDSMAN - CONTINUED

With COVID-19 infection dwindling, the Office is beginning to focus on general DOC staff and correction officer wellness initiatives. We want to collaborate with you and work to understand what will support you in your mental and physical wellness. In the weeks to come, the Office will be visiting your facilities to talk to correction staff about what would make their work life better and healthier. We want to hear your ideas and will work with you to make some of those ideas happen.

Glenn Doher, a recently retired Captain from Souza-Baranowski is working with our Office as a consultant to help us to better understand the wellness needs of DOC staff and correction officers. Glenn will be traveling with us to meet with you and to get your input.

Some of the wellness initiatives that we are working on, or have already shared with DOC, include:

- ✓ Infection Control Update for all DOC Correction Officers and Staff: Our goal is to keep you up to date and aware of infection risk.
- ✓ Mental Health Videos: Compilation of five videos with DOC staff and correction officers talking about mental health awareness and what it means to those working in corrections.
- ✓ DOC Gyms: The Office is touring and reviewing staff gyms on DOC properties to better understand their current condition and to identify if we can assist in updating them.
- ✓ DOC Staff and Correction Officer Meetings: We are visiting DOC facilities to talk with DOC staff and correction officers about their wellness needs and ideas.
- ✓ DOC Staff Panel: We collaborated with the training team to add a "panel" of front-line DOC staff to talk with new recruits at the academy. We want you (representatives of front-line DOC staff) to share the reality of the work you do with the new recruits. The first panel will be held in May 2023.

National Correctional Officer's Week is May 7th - 13th! The Office would like to acknowledge and thank each of you for your hard work and dedication to the mission of the DOC. Your work makes a difference!

I encourage you to either use our website to access the inquiry form or call and share your ideas about how this Office can support you and your wellness.

We care about each of you and want to support you in the important and challenging work that you do. Thank you for all you do!

Best,

Laurie Andersen

ABOUT THE OFFICE



Office of the Ombudsman

Independent COVID-19 Oversight to
MA Department of Correction

The independently operated Office of the Ombudsman, run by Lauren M. Andersen, MM, RN, CEN, CCRN, Director/Ombudsman, monitors, and reports on the Massachusetts Department of Correction's efforts to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in the DOC's facilities across Massachusetts. In addition, the Office also focuses on wellness initiatives related to mental and physical health.

CONTACTING US



Website: <https://covidombudsman-madoc.org>

Inquiries can be submitted anonymously if desired. If you provide your contact information when filling out the form, the Office will use its best efforts to respond within two business days.

We look forward to addressing your COVID-19-related questions, concerns, and inquiries. We encourage you to share suggestions for DOC correction officer and staff wellness as well.

Free Call: 1-833-662-8410

You may also submit your COVID-19 inquiry or wellness suggestions via our telephone number. COVID-19-related inquiries may be left anonymously. If you would like a response from the Office, then please leave your contact information as instructed on voicemail.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS & CONCERNS

The Office would like to share with you a few items that have been reviewed, including:

- ✓ **Masking is Voluntary:** For most of the time, in most places, masking is now voluntary. In all healthcare areas (where medical care is being provided), masking will continue to be mandatory per the CDC guidelines for healthcare. Governor Healy has announced that masking in healthcare areas will no longer be mandatory as of May 11, 2023 so those areas too will have voluntary masking after that date.
- ✓ **DOC Correctional Facilities have had Minimal Recent COVID-19 Outbreaks:** There have been single numbers at a few DOC facilities during the months of March and April 2023. Quarantine and isolation efforts have been excellent and the spread of COVID-19 infection has been minimal.
- ✓ **Communication:** We have a new website under construction to enhance our wellness focus. In the meantime, continue to use the current website, email, and phone number. We would love to hear from DOC staff regarding concerns and questions about COVID-19 and wellness ideas or needs.
- ✓ **Return to Normal: As the emergency orders for COVID-19 end on May 11, 2023, the DOC will continue to return to normal operations.** Quarantine units will only require masks if a COVID-19-positive inmate has to be isolated. Quarantine and isolation periods will continue to be seven days with a release on day eight if there are any positive cases of COVID-19.