



Office of the Ombudsman

Independent COVID-19 Oversight to
MA Department of Correction

Lauren M. Andersen, MM, RN, CEN, CCRN
Director/Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
Ombudsman@umassmed.edu
<https://covidombudsman-madoc.org>

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Updated Guidelines from the Office of the Ombudsman

As we move toward resolving the latest COVID-19 surge, the Office of the Ombudsman seeks to improve opportunities long hampered by COVID-19 for DOC inmates and staff at the facilities.

1. Social Distancing: As the rate of infection in the DOC is currently minimal and all signs point to a resolution of the recent surge of COVID-19, the Office of the Ombudsman provides the following updated guidelines around social distancing. For all inmates in group settings (e.g., programming or classroom settings) social distancing of approximately three feet should be followed. This reduction in distance will allow more inmates to participate in essential programming and classes that have been difficult to attend due to the six-foot social distancing standard.

A new three-foot social distancing guideline is based on:

- * Low COVID-19 numbers in staff and inmates;
- * All staff and inmates will continue to wear masks properly while indoors;
- * Hand sanitizer needs to be available and used for hand hygiene, as needed;
- * COVID-19 infection rates remain below 5% in the applicable DOC facility;
- * Ongoing testing for staff and inmates as established.

This change to the social distancing standard will remain in place as long as the COVID-19 rates for the DOC staff and inmates, as well as the state, remain stable or improved.

2. Plexiglass petitions in waiting rooms can be removed. With the COVID-19 rates improving across Massachusetts and within the DOC facilities, the plexiglass petitions are no longer needed. With the airborne component of COVID-19, the plexiglass petitions have not proven to be an asset in preventing COVID-19 infection rates and therefore can be removed. Ultimately, the removal of the Plexiglass petitions will improve the visiting experience for the inmates and their visitors.

Thank You. Laurie Andersen Director Office of the Ombudsman