

Nancy Dahlstrom
Commissioner

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Department of
Corrections

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

The Department of Corrections Implements Mitigation & Response Plan for COVID-19

3/13/2020 (Anchorage) – The Department of Corrections is taking necessary precautions to protect inmates, employees and visitors from Coronavirus (COVID-19). Although DOC has not encountered any cases of the virus, protocols has been implemented at all facilities across the state out of an abundance of caution. All visiting has been temporarily suspended effective immediately to include outside volunteers and other tours and groups who routinely come into the institutions. Chaplaincy and contract services at all institutions will continue normal operations. “This was not an easy decision to make,” said Commissioner Dahlstrom. “I recognize how important family contact is to both inmates and their loved ones, so I am looking into other options to be sure communication continues while visiting is suspended.”

Other actions the Department is taking includes:

- Criminal booking screen has been updated to include screening questions for COVID-19
- Increased sanitation to mitigate the spread of germs, to include increasing the frequency of cleaning high-use areas, hiring additional inmate workers to clean facilities, providing additional hygiene products to inmates free of charge
- Stocking medical supplies at each facility to ensure additional outbreak medical supplies are available
- Increased education and outreach to inmates through posters stressing the importance of handwashing and disease prevention (posted in living areas, work areas, and clinics)
- Waived medical copays for prison-based health services to ensure individual economic concerns do not limit an inmates’ willingness to seek medical care

“At this time, the Department is being proactive instead of reactive. Due to the nature of the environment and the challenges we face with regard to social distancing, it is important we are staying ahead of this,” Dahlstrom said. Superintendents at each facility have informed the inmate population of the outbreak response protocols and the actions being taken to reduce the amount of movement and possible exposure. DOC is also working with Department of Law and the court system to address conducting remote hearings for those in custody, should the need arise.

In the event the virus enters a DOC facility, the Alaska Department of Corrections shall institute, in coordination with state and federal health officials, medical and environmental safety measures including quarantine and isolation procedures with the purpose of preventing the spread of disease within DOC population or into the Alaskan community.

DOC will be reevaluating all protocols and procedures in 30 days. Additional protocols may be implemented as the situation warrants.

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