



COVID-19

Questions and Answers

In response to developments with COVID-19, the Mississippi Department of Corrections will continue to take action to protect staff, inmates, and the public. The MDOC is committed to ensuring inmates' rights, safety, and health are safe guarded during this process. The department is in constant communications with the Governor's Office, the Mississippi Department of Health, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, and other authorities.

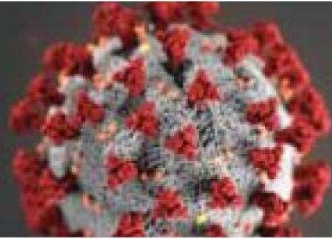
**Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:
(Updated daily as needed)**

Q-1. What is the Mississippi Department of Corrections doing to ensure the well-being of staff and inmates?

A. Inmates can access medical staff using the sick call system. A face-to-face triage is completed within 24 hours of submission of the sick call request. Medical staff are seeing inmates with acute respiratory symptoms in a timely manner. Symptomatic inmate patients with fever are tested according to Mississippi Department of Health and CDC guidelines. They will be quarantined or isolated, according to Department of Health and CDC guidelines. There is no treatment for COVID-19 currently so affected patients will receive symptomatic treatment and support and may be transferred to a community hospital, if symptoms become severe. Hand sanitizer stations have been installed in the correctional facilities for inmate and staff use. Correctional staff and support staff are screened daily for elevated temperature. Correctional staff found to have a fever (temperature of 100.4 or above) will not be allowed to report to work that day and will be advised to contact their doctor's office. Information regarding frequent hand washing, cough hygiene, and social distancing has been distributed to staff. Information regarding hand washing and cough hygiene is distributed to inmates. A screening tool questionnaire has also been implemented for inmates arriving at a correctional facility. The questions include asking about recent travel from an affected country and possible exposure to someone who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 disease.

Q-2. Have there been any confirmed cases in the inmate population?

A. Yes. One case has been confirmed at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.



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Q-3. What happens in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in an MDOC facility?

A. The MDOC has extensive protocols in place to address scenarios when illness is present. This includes immediate quarantine and treatment at facility infirmaries, designated areas or outside hospitals as necessary. Sterilization of all surfaces also is included.

Q-4. Has any MDOC employee tested positive?

A. The department has four employees to test positive for COVID-19.

Q-5. When does MDOC test for COVID-19?

A. The criteria for testing inmate patients are the same as for the general public. Testing protocols have been implemented within the MDOC. Testing priorities include having a fever of 100.4 or above with symptoms of an acute respiratory illness (cough or difficulty breathing). Patients with fever and respiratory illness are tested for influenza. If the influenza tests are negative, then the patient is tested for COVID-19. Symptomatic inmate patients who test negative for influenza will be isolated and tested for COVID-19. The inmate patient will remain isolated in the infirmary until the test result is received.

Q-6. Are inmates required to pay medical co-pay during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A. Co-pay for any inmate sick call related to influenza or COVID-19 is waived.

Q-7. Why has visitation for family, friends, and volunteers been suspended?

A. The MDOC has temporarily suspended visitation for family, friends, and volunteers until further notice as a precaution. Other states have done likewise.

Q-8. When will visitation resume?

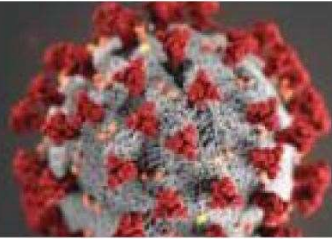
A. A specific date has not been determined. Resuming visitation is being re-evaluated daily and based on current updates of the COVID-19 impact.

Q-9. If I usually travel from out of state to Mississippi to visit an inmate, how can I find out the status of the visitation suspension before I leave?

A. Call the facility first. Telephone numbers are listed on the MDOC website (www.mdod.ms.gov) or contact the Office of Communications at MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

Q-10. Are inmates allowed to meet with their attorneys?

A. Yes. All legal visits are permitted. The legal visit areas are sanitized after each visit.



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Q-11. How can family and friends maintain contact with their incarcerated loved ones?

A. Telephone calls through the inmate phone system will continue uninterrupted. Also, GTL, the state phone provider, is granting two free phone calls at five minutes each per week through April 30. The United States mail also is a good way to communicate with inmates.

Q-12. What other steps are being taken to protect staff and inmates from potential exposure to the coronavirus?

A. Systems are in place to provide temperature screening of staff arriving to work daily. Fire and safety staff or staff assigned by the superintendent have installed additional hand sanitizer stations throughout the facilities and the inmate dining halls. They are ensuring that additional chemicals are available in the housing units. Fire and safety staff are thoroughly sanitizing all areas.

The MDOC is recommending staff and inmates follow the health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention. Social, distance, and hygiene protocols are being followed as well as the avoidance of unnecessary groups or meetings of ten (10) or more.

Q-13. Can inmates travel on approved leave, such as to funerals or wakes?

A. No. Movement is temporarily suspended.

Q-14. Are prisons on lockdown because of COVID-19?

A. No. Prisons are not on lockdown.

Q-15. What activities can inmates participate in during this time? Will activities, including educational and religious programs, continue?

A. Programming is temporarily suspended. However, inmates are free to participate in recreational activities while practicing social distancing.

Q-16. If an inmate is scheduled to be released, will the release occur?

A. Yes. All scheduled releases will occur as planned.

Q-17. Are inmates being released because of the coronavirus?

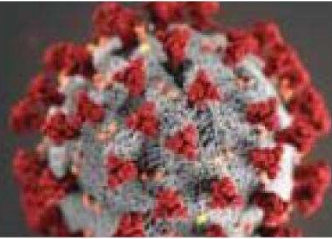
A. No. The MDOC has no legal authority to change its release practice.

Q-18. Are inmate transfers affected?

A. Yes. There are limited transfers of inmates between MDOC facilities unless absolutely necessary.

Q-19. Is the MDOC accepting new inmates into the system?

A. No. However, there are limited exceptions.



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Q-20. Are inmates allowed to go off grounds for work assignments?

A. No. Inmate work crews have been suspended.

Q-21. Can people on community supervision, including probation/parole, report to supervising agents via email or phone?

A. Yes. Individuals on probation, parole, house arrest or any other form of community supervision should report by telephone and continue through April 17. The phone call will serve as their report and their normal report day can be disregarded for April.

All calls must be made between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. No calls will be accepted on weekends.

Individuals are not required to speak with their assigned agent when they call. Individuals must provide the person answering the phone with their name, MDOC number, address, phone number, and other relevant information. Individuals must call. They will be considered non-reporting if they do not call.

Community supervision includes individuals on probation, parole, house arrest, earned release supervision, conditional medical release, and interstate compact, which includes movement between states.

Q-22. Is out-of-state travel permitted for individuals on supervision?

A. No. Issuance of permits is suspended until further notice.

Q-23. What is the MDOC's current COVID-19 practice regarding individuals in the Interstate Compact program, which handles the transfers between the states of individuals under supervision?

A. Mississippi is only processing incoming transfers that are resident, resident family, and military. Approvals are only for probationers living in the receiving state at the time of sentencing and those with military affiliation.

For outgoing cases, go to [interstatecompact.org](https://www.interstatecompact.org) for a list of state restrictions to see if an offender will be able to transfer to a particular state. The list changes frequently so you should check it often for the most current information.

Q-24. Are people at restitution centers allowed to work?

A. No. Work has been temporarily suspended.

Q-25. Is the MDOC still hiring?

A. Yes. Applications are being accepted at the three state prisons and online at www.mspb.ms.gov and on the website mdocrecruitment@mdoc.state.ms.us. The next interview date is Wednesday, April 15, 2020. Interested applicants can call 601-359-5696 between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. to schedule an appointment.

**For current information regarding the coronavirus,
visit the following websites**

www.coronavirus.gov

www.cdc.gov/COVID19

<https://msdh.ms.gov>

**The Mississippi Coronavirus Hotline is available 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.
Monday-Friday and can be reached at [877-978-6453](tel:877-978-6453)**