



Pete Ricketts, Governor

DATE: March 13, 2020  
TO: NDCS Inmate Population  
FROM: Dr. Harbans Deol, Medical Director  
RE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

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**Background:** COVID-2 is a respiratory illness that originated in Wuhan, China and likely emerged from an animal source. Now, it is spreading from person to person. The risk of infection is higher for those who are close contacts of people with COVID-19, for example, healthcare workers or household members, relatives and friends. Close contact is considered within six feet. It may also be transmitted by touching surfaces that are infected; although, that is not considered to be the main way this virus is spread.

**Prevention:** Universal precautions are the best steps for prevention of transmission. 1) Wash your hand thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. 2) Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. 3) Clean and disinfect those objects and surfaces that are touched frequently. We are currently working on acquiring and distributing free bars of soap to everyone living in the facilities.

Staff members have been asked to do self-assessments of their health. Anyone entering the facilities will be asked questions pertaining to symptoms, travel and possible direct exposure to those with COVID-19, before they are permitted entry to the buildings.

**Treatment:** There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. But, we continue to make the flu vaccine available. Flu season is still ongoing, and that vaccine will offer protection against that virus.

Unfortunately, there is no treatment for the coronavirus. If you get it, it will have to run its course. But, you can seek medical care to help relieve the symptoms. For COVID-19 the particular symptoms include:

- a dry cough
- fever

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- shortness of breath

If you have those symptoms, contact facility medical staff. If you are an older individual or you have a compromised immune system, pay particular attention to your health.

**Visits and Activities:** At the moment, visitation is being allowed. But, that situation may change quickly, depending on the transmission of the virus in the community. This is to protect the health of those who live and work inside our facilities, as well as family members, friends and other members of the public. Should it be necessary, activities and programs may also be curtailed. It is impossible to know how long that may last. But, we will continue to manage those situations as they arise and with the best outcomes for all in mind.

**Going Forward:** Obviously, this is a unique situation for everyone involved. Our best defense involves doing as much as we can to limit transmission of the virus. Again, symptoms will not be apparent for everyone. Be conscious of contact with other individuals and continue to utilize universal health precautions.

**CC:** NDCS Staff members