FIND COVID-19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

VISITATION HAS BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

TDOC FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING COVID-19

TDOC INMATES COVID-19 TESTING

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding COVID-19

1. Why has visitation for family, friends and volunteers been suspended?

Out of an abundance of caution and to protect what we consider a vulnerable population, the TDOC made the decision to suspend visitation until further notice. This decision is being re-evaluated daily and based on current updates of the COVID-19 impact in Tennessee.

2. How can family and friends maintain contact with their loved ones while visitation is suspended?

Telephone calls through the inmate phone system will continue uninterrupted. TDOC offenders with phone accounts through GTL will receive two free five-minute phone calls per week through April 30th.

3. Are prisons on lockdown due to COVID-19?

No. Many regular activities such as educational programs and inmate jobs are continuing.

4. Do inmates have access to soap and hand sanitizers?

Yes. Soap, water and hand sanitizers are readily available to the entire population. In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Health recommendations, soap and water is the best option for protection.

5. What activities can inmates participate in during this time?

All facilities are maintaining as many services as possible, including most educational and work programs.

6. Are inmates allowed to go out on work crews?

Currently, a limited number of inmate work crews are supporting state and local partners without contact with the public. Anyone who works outside is being screened when they return.

7. Can inmates' family members send them gloves, masks, or hand sanitizer?

TDOC facilities do not accept packaged mail deliveries for inmates. Letters and correspondence are accepted.

8. Will mail and laundry services continue inside the facilities?

Yes. Mail and laundry operations are continuing.

9. If an inmate is eligible for release, will they remain in custody?

All scheduled releases will occur as planned.

10. Are victims and families still allowed to attend parole hearings?

Effective immediately, the Board of Parole will begin conducting parole hearings to the extent possible through electronic means. Victims and offenders' family members may submit statements to the Board of Parole by mail or email.

11. Are inmates allowed to meet with their attorneys?

Legal visits have been suspended until further notice. Any special request for a legal visit should be addressed to the warden of the facility.

12. Are any offenders being released from TDOC prisons early due to the coronavirus?

There are no plans for early release from TDOC prisons at this time because of the coronavirus.

13. Will people on probation/parole be required to report in?

Probationers and parolees continue to be supervised according to risk, with officer contact through electronic platforms. There is limited in-office reporting which incorporates a non-invasive screening process for symptoms. Probationers and parolees with questions about their reporting schedule should contact their supervising officer.

14. Are the Day Reporting Centers (DRC's) still operational?

Programming is being delivered by electronic means for DRC participants.

15. How is the TDOC ensuring the health and welfare of the inmate population?

The TDOC is conducting non-invasive screenings of everyone entering our facilities for symptoms such as fever (over 100.4F) and difficulty breathing prior to entry to maximize prevention efforts. Facilities are evaluating all inmates upon intake and returns from court, medical, and all outside work locations. Additionally, medical co-pays for inmates are being waived at this time.

We have formalized a schedule to ensure cleaning and disinfection of high touch areas multiple times per day:

- Include the use of a 10:1 bleach solution or other coronavirus effective germicide.
- Focus on high touch areas and shared workspaces at shift change.
- High touch areas include common workspaces, toilet seats, light switches, door handles, handrails, phones, elevator buttons, handheld radios, security keys/chits, ID badges, and pens/pencils.

16. What happens in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a TDOC facility?

The TDOC has extensive protocols in place to address those who present with symptoms, which will include immediate isolation. Protocols are in place to address scenarios where illness is presented. This includes treatment at facility infirmaries or outside hospitals, as necessary.

17. Are masks available to staff and inmates in TDOC?

Masks have been distributed to all staff and inmates as they are being produced, including those donated by Reform Alliance. We continue to encourage constant handwashing as the best defense against COVID-19.

18. Which TDOC facility is going to be used to house coronavirus-positive inmates?

The TDOC has infirmaries at each facility to treat patients.

19. Why are offenders currently in TDOC custody not being tested for the coronavirus?

Presently, inmates that meet the requirements of testing have been tested. As the guidance changes, TDOC will adjust accordingly.

20. Have there been additional tests for inmates or staff connected to a TDOC facility?

In conjunction with the Department of Health and the Department of Military, mass testing of staff was conducted at the Northwest Correctional Complex and the Bledsoe County Correctional Complex. The department is evaluating further testing for the inmate population. Consistent with CDC guidelines and in consultation with the Tennessee Department of Health, appropriate monitoring and or testing has been implemented in the event an inmate or staff member has signs or symptoms of infection. Presently, nineteen inmates have tested positive for COVID-19. Click here for a breakdown of current inmate testing.

21. Why is there a correctional officer taking temperatures instead of trained medical staff at the facilities? Is this a HIPPA violation?

Temperature checks are part of the CDC recommended screening. Staff members are not providing medical care nor are they offering medical advice. Staff are utilizing a tool that is common in every household. If there is a concern, medical staff are alerted to perform an assessment.

22. Are Core Civic facilities following the same policy and guidelines as TDOC facilities to stop the spread of COVID-19 ?

We have issued guidance to CoreCivic based on CDC and Department of Health recommendations.

23. What are inmates doing to assist in the fight against COVID-19?

Inmate workers are assisting in the manufacturing of PPE for TEMA distribution at two facilities in partnership with TRICOR. Surgical masks are being produced at the Morgan County Correctional Complex. Masks and tyvek gowns are being made at the West Tennessee State Penitentiary.

This is an unfolding and fluid situation. Please check back frequently for updates.

If you have additional questions or concerns in regards to COVID-19, complete the form provided below. If you have questions/concerns that are not COVID-19 related, send them to TDOC.Webmaster@tn.gov.

TDOC COVID-19 Questions/Concerns

Please fill out all the required fields.

Name *

First Name **Last Name**

Contact Phone Number *

Include area code

Email *

Are you contacting us in regards to a specific offender or location? If yes, please provide the location and/or the offender's name and TDOC #.

Write a brief description of your concerns and/or questions. *

Submit Form