



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.

Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:

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

A. Inmates may 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 will see inmates with acute respiratory symptoms in a timely manner. Symptomatic inmate patients with fever will be tested according to 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 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 being 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 will be distributed to inmates.

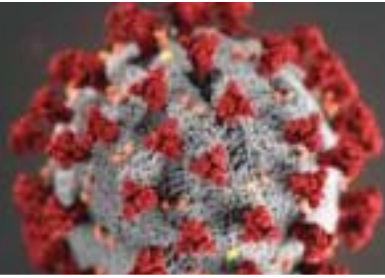
A screening tool questionnaire has also been implemented for inmates arriving at a correctional facility. The questions include asking about recent travel from an affected country and possible exposure to someone who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 disease.

Q-2. Have there been any confirmed cases in the prison system?

A. No. There are no confirmed cases in the prison system.

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 those who show symptoms, including immediate quarantine. Protocols are in place to address scenarios when illness is present. This includes treatment at facility infirmaries or outside hospitals, as necessary.



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Q-4. When does MDOC test for COVID-19?

A. The criteria for testing inmate patients is 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 24 to 48 hours later. Fortunately, MDOC has not had any symptomatic inmate patients who tested negative for influenza.

Q-5. 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-6. When will visitation resume?

A. Resuming visitation is being re-evaluated daily and based on current updates of the COVID-19 impact.

Q-7. 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.mdock.ms.gov) or contact the Office of Communications at MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdock.state.ms.us

Q-8. Are inmates allowed to meet with their attorneys?

A. Yes. All legal visits are permitted. The legal visit area will be sanitized after each visit.

Q-9. How can family and friends maintain contact with their loved ones while visitation is suspended?

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 13. The United States mail also is a good way to communicate with inmates.

Q-10. 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 are installing additional hand sanitizer stations throughout the facilities and the inmate dining halls. They will ensure that additional chemicals are available in the housing units. Fire and safety staff will thoroughly sanitize 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-11. Can inmates travel on approved leave, such as to funerals or wakes?

A. No. Movement is temporarily suspended.

Q-12. Are prisons on lockdown because of COVID-19?

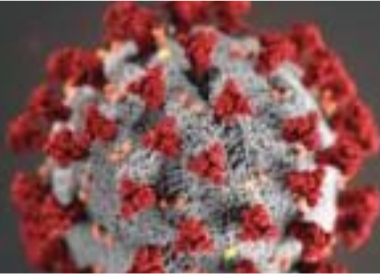
A. No. Prisons are not on lockdown.

Q-13. 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.

Q-14. If an inmate is scheduled to be released, will the release occur?

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



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Q-15. Are inmates being released because of the coronavirus?

A. No. Nothing has changed about the MDOC release practice.

Q-16. Will inmate transfers be affected?

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

Q-17. Is the MDOC accepting new inmates into the system?

A. No. However, there will be limited exceptions.

Q-18. Can people on community supervision, including probation/parole, report to supervising agents via email or phone?

A. Yes. Individuals on community supervision can now contact their supervising agent via email or telephone for reporting instructions. Community supervision includes individuals on probation, parole, house arrest, earned release supervision, conditional medical release, and Interstate Compact.

Agents are conducting business through office windows, e-mail or phone and technology portals, such as Skype and FaceTime. Individuals, newly sentenced or released from prison, should call their local office for reporting information. Signs are posted on office doors with instructions.

Anyone who fails to contact his or her supervising agent will be considered in violation of reporting. Contact must be made on or before the scheduled report day.

In addition to changes in reporting, travel permits are restricted.

Q-19. Are inmates allowed to go off grounds for work assignments?

A. No. Inmate work crews have been suspended.

Q-20. Is out-of-state travel permitted for individuals on supervision?

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

Q-21. Are people at restitution centers being allowed to work?

A. No. Work has been temporarily suspended.

Q-22. Is the MDOC still hiring?

A. Yes. The MDOC will hold scheduled New Hire Orientation, including correctional officer hires, scheduled to begin April 1. Whether hiring will occur beyond April 1 has not been determined.

Q-23. 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.

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**