



COVID-19

Questions and Answers

**Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:
Last Update: May 8, 5 p.m.**

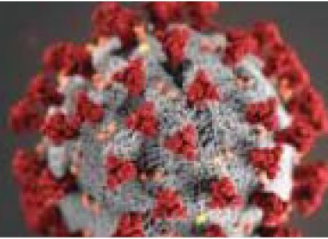
Q-1. What is the Mississippi Department of Corrections doing to ensure the well-being of staff and inmates?

A. The MDOC has provided masks to all inmates and correctional staff. Gloves and additional soap are provided. Hand sanitizer is also available in strategic locations, including dining halls.

Signage has been posted throughout MDOC facilities and handout information has been provided to inmates listing symptoms of COVID-19 and informing them how to protect themselves.

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 State Department of Health and CDC guidelines. They will be quarantined or isolated, according to MSDH and CDC guidelines. Affected patients will receive treatment and support and may be transferred to a community hospital, if symptoms become severe. Security staff and non-security staff are screened daily for elevated temperature. 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 and inmates.

A screening tool questionnaire has also been implemented for staff 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.



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Q-2. How many confirmed cases are in the inmate population?

A. Seven (7) cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the inmate population - two (2) at the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) at Parchman, two (2) at the Winston-Choctaw County Regional Correctional Facility, two (2) at Marion-Walthall County Regional Correctional Facility, and one (1) Carroll-Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility.

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. Inmates in close proximity to any inmate testing positive are quarantined and are receiving enhanced screening in addition to wearing a mask. Quarantined inmates are monitored daily for symptoms of the coronavirus.

Q-4. How many other inmates have been tested and what is the status of those tests?

A. The MDOC has tested 35 other inmates. Thirty-one (31) tests show negative results. Four (4) tests results are pending.

Q-5. How many MDOC employees have tested positive?

A. The department has seven (7) employees to test positive for COVID-19.

Q-6. How many other employees have been tested and what is the status of those tests?

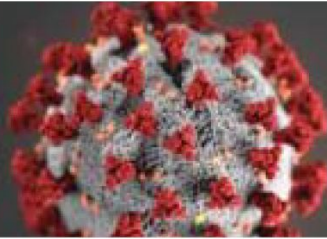
A. Thirty-six (36) other employees have tested. Thirty-four (34) tests show negative results. Two (2) test results are pending.

Q-7. When does MDOC test inmates for COVID-19?

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

Q-8. 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.



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Q-9. How long will the restrictions on visitation for family, friends, and volunteers continue?

A. A date for lifting restrictions has not been determined. Resuming visitation is based on current updates of the COVID-19 impact.

Q-10. 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-11. Are inmates allowed to meet with their attorneys?

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

Q-12. How can family and friends maintain contact with their incarcerated loved ones?

A. Telephone calls through the inmate phone system will continue uninterrupted. The United States mail also is a good way to communicate with inmates.

Q-13. In addition to masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers being provided, what other steps have been taken to protect staff and inmates from potential exposure to the coronavirus?

A. Additional cleaning is occurring. Fire and safety staff are ensuring that additional chemicals are available in the housing units. Inmates are receiving antibacterial soap. 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-14. Can inmates travel on approved leave, such as to funerals or wakes?

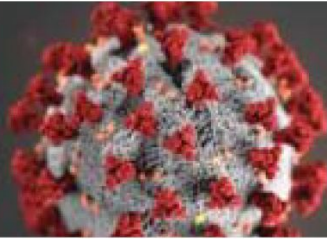
A. No. Movement remains suspended.

Q-15. Are prisons on lockdown because of COVID-19?

A. No. Prisons are not on lockdown.

Q-16. What activities can inmates participate in during this time? Will activities, including educational and religious programs, continue?

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



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Q-17. If an inmate is scheduled to be released, will the release occur?

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

Q-18. Will inmates be considered for early release because of the coronavirus pandemic?

A. No. Inmates are being released through the standard release practice.

Q-19. Are inmate transfers affected?

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

Q-20. Is the MDOC accepting new inmates into the system?

A. Yes, but under limited circumstances.

Q-21. Are inmates allowed to go off grounds for work assignments?

A. No. Inmate work crews remain suspended.

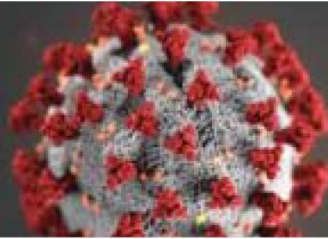
Q-22. Should people on community supervision, including probation/parole, continue reporting to supervising agents via email or phone?

A. Yes. The phone call will serve as their report. 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, and phone number. They will be asked additional questions related to employment and other issues specifically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals can also email their agent or use technology portals, such as Skype and FaceTime, to communicate. Individuals will be considered non-reporting if they fail to contact the MDOC.

Community supervision also includes house arrest, earned release supervision, conditional medical release, and interstate compact, which includes movement between states.

Q-23. Is out-of-state travel permitted for individuals on supervision?

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



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Q-24. 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.

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
Call **877-978-6453****