



# COVID-19

## *Questions and Answers*

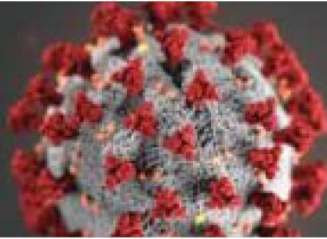
**Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:  
Last Update: September 4, 2020, 4 p.m.**

**Q-1. What is the Mississippi Department of Corrections doing to lessen the spread of COVID-19 among staff and inmates?**

A. The MDOC has provided masks to all inmates and staff. Cleaning and disinfection measures are increased. Good hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing, are reinforced. Gloves and additional soap are provided. Hand sanitizer is made available in strategic locations for both staff and inmates' use. Social distancing should be practiced as much as possible for both staff and inmates. Staff and inmates are encouraged to follow health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention.

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 inmates with fever are tested according to Mississippi State Department of Health and CDC guidelines. They are quarantined, according to MSDH and CDC guidelines. Affected patients may be transferred to a community hospital, if symptoms become severe.

Security staff and non-security staff are screened daily. Employees found to have a fever (temperature of 100.4 or above) during screening are not allowed to work and are advised to contact their doctor's office. Employees who are feeling ill before reporting for duty are urged to stay home and see their physician, if needed. A screening tool questionnaire also is in place for employees arriving at a correctional facility. The questions include asking about recent travel from an affected location and possible exposure to someone who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 disease.



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**Q-2. What is the latest number of cases in the inmate population?**

A. There are 548 confirmed positive cases and of that number, 101 cases are active in the inmate population, based on the most recent data. Where the cases are can be found at

<https://www.mdoc.ms.gov/Documents/Inmates%20cases%20chart.pdf>

**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. These include immediate quarantine and treatment at facility infirmaries, designated areas or outside hospitals as necessary, and sterilization of all surfaces. Inmates in close proximity to any inmate testing positive are quarantined and receive enhanced screening. Quarantined inmates are monitored daily for symptoms of the coronavirus.

**Q-4. In addition to the positive inmate cases, how many inmates have tested negative and how many tests are pending?**

A. There have been 1,010 inmates to test negative, based on the latest report.

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

A. The department has 135 positive cases among staff, based on the most available information.

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

A. In addition to the positive cases, 306 negative tests have been reported.

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

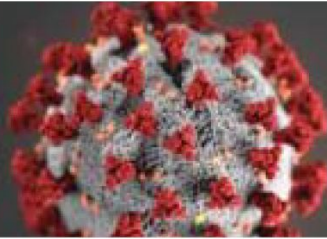
A. The MDOC is actively taking steps, based on CDC guidelines, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at its facilities, including testing based on symptoms and as a result of contact tracing. Inmates who have possibly been exposed to other inmates with COVID-19 symptoms in the same housing unit are being tested as a precaution, especially if they have underlying conditions that may put them at a higher risk of complications from the virus.

**Q-8. Are inmates required to pay medical co-pay during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

A. No. Co-pay for any inmate sick call related to influenza or COVID-19 is waived.

**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.



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**Q-10. How can family and friends maintain contact with their incarcerated loved ones?**

A. Inmates can make telephone calls through the inmate phone system. The United States mail also is a good way to communicate with inmates.

**Q-11. Can inmates travel on approved leave, such as to funerals or wakes?**

A. No. Movement remains suspended.

**Q-12. 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-13. Are prisons on lockdown because of COVID-19?**

A. No. Prisons are not on lockdown.

**Q-14. 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](http://www.mdod.ms.gov)) or contact the Office of Communications at [MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us](mailto:MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us)

**Q-15. Have activities, including educational and religious programs, resumed?**

A. Yes. Programming resumed Monday, August 17. The MDOC is following CDC guidelines, sanitizing common areas, and practicing social distancing.

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

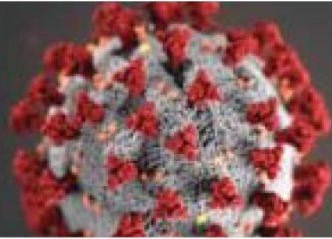
A. Yes. All scheduled releases will occur as planned.

**Q-17. Will inmates be considered for early release because of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

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

**Q-18. Are inmate transfers or movement from county jails and from one facility to another within the prison system affected?**

A. Yes. All movement is suspended. Resuming movement will be re-evaluated after 30 consecutive days.



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### **Q-19. Are inmates allowed to resume working off grounds?**

A. Yes, but not in all cases. Inmates, for example, in the Joint State County Work Program or with the Community Work Centers in Noxubee, Forrest, and Leflore counties have been permitted to return to work provided that all stakeholders remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are taken to protect the community, staff and inmates.

### **Q-20. Should people on community supervision, including probation/parole, continue reporting to supervising agents via email or phone?**

A. Yes, but there have been adjustments. Limited office visits resumed in July. Agents are calling individuals on their caseloads who are not required to report in person. Individuals who are not contacted by their agent must report in person.

### **Q-21. What precautionary requirements are in place for face-to-face visits?**

A. Agents and individuals reporting are required to wear face masks and remain six feet apart for social distancing. High touch areas are cleaned and disinfected among all necessary precautions. Individuals who are instructed to report in person should not come to the office if they are feeling ill. Those persons not feeling well should call their agent on the report day.

### **Q-22. What if an individual must report by phone?**

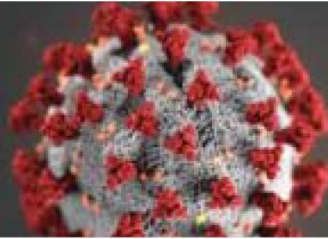
Individuals who are not required to report in person can call. The person who answers the phone will take the report. Office hours are from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Reports are handled as they were in April, May, June, and July. Individuals must provide the person answering the phone 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 also can 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.

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

A. Permits are being granted on a case-by-case basis after careful review.





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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](https://www.coronavirus.gov)**

**[www.cdc.gov/COVID19](https://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****