Press Release

4/16/2020

Department of Corrections Update on Comprehensive COVID-19 Prevention and Response Efforts

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Colorado, the Department of Corrections has been working with state and local partners to proactively prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 into the state prison system. The Department's prevention and response efforts have continued to adapt to the changing circumstances during this global pandemic.

Below is an overview of the numerous steps the Department has taken in order to protect staff and inmates during the COVID-19 crisis:

- CDOC is screening all staff and vendors when entering the facility, including taking staff temperatures prior to entry. Any staff who are feeling ill or demonstrating symptoms are not allowed inside the facilities or offices. At this time the CDOC has had 8 staff members who have been confirmed by CDPHE to have tested positive. The risk management department, in collaboration with the CDOC medical team, conducts detailed contact investigations to ensure anyone who may have had exposure to those staff members are properly quarantined.

- All co-pays have been waived for offenders showing symptoms associated with COVID-19, and inmates are being assessed cell-side whenever possible by the medical team, in order to limit their movement in their facility. After clinical evaluation, offenders may be tested for COVID-19. Although the CDOC has seen a relatively low number of symptomatic inmates, the Department has already tested 27 inmates as of 4/15/2020. Of those 22 have tested negative, 3 have tested positive, and 2 tests are still pending outcomes.

- If any inmate tests positive for COVID-19 they will be medically isolated from the general population. The department risk management and medical teams will conduct a thorough contact investigation and any inmates who may have been in contact with that individual would be quarantined in the facility if they are an inmate, or sent home to self-quarantine if they are a staff member. When a facility has a staff member or inmate who is confirmed to have tested positive for COVID-19, the rest of the facility and inmate population have received communication from the facility leadership.

- CDOC has a designated risk management nurse conducting contact tracing for staff and offenders who test positive. In accordance with the guidance from the Center for Disease Control, the Department is quarantining offenders who had prolonged exposure to a positive case, and staff that had prolonged exposure to a positive case are being placed on leave for up to 14 days.

- To reduce the risk of introducing COVID-19 to a facility and the inmate population, CDOC staff members who work in prison facilities or parole offices are required to wear face coverings at work, and have been provided non-medical

cloth mask barriers created by Correctional Industries ("CCi"). CCi is continuing to make cloth masks and the Department has begun distributing them to inmates as the supply is created. As of 4/15/2020, there have been 14,297 masks distributed for staff and 19,107 masks distributed for inmates.

- While the facilities have already taken steps to effect social distancing within the walls, as of 4/16/2020 all CDOC prison facilities will move to modified Phase II operations in order to further support those efforts. The modified operational plan increases social distancing by separating people based on living areas, and reducing the amount of people permitted in any area during dining and other activities that might otherwise occur in large groups. Efforts are being made to space out seating in dining rooms and in medline.

- CDOC has also stopped all communal programs to include, education and in-person congregant religious services, and is developing and deploying in-cell and in-unit program opportunities and individualized religious engagement resources in order to continue to provide support.

- Inmates will continue to have recreation opportunities outside the living units but will recreate in smaller groups limited to their assigned unit. Continuing existing practices, as each group leaves, dining areas, recreation areas, and other multi-use areas, are disinfected prior to any new group entering the area. Staff members are also being consistently assigned to specific unit and work areas to prevent unnecessary crossover with other areas of the facilities to the greatest extent possible.

- CDOC has been working to manage the prison population, while also maintaining public safety. In accordance with Governor Polis' Executive Order (found HERE):

  - CDOC has implemented a temporary moratorium on receiving new intakes from county jails. During this suspension CDOC will be able to create empty bed space in facilities, which in turn allows staff resources to be shifted to new living units at Centennial Correctional Facility South (CCF-S) in Canon City. CCF-S will temporarily become the initial intake location for male inmates. By moving the initial intake to CCF-S, CDOC will be able to quarantine new arrivals for up to fourteen days to ensure they are not symptomatic for COVID-19. After inmates are cleared for COVID-19 symptoms, they will be transferred to the Denver Reception and Diagnostic Center (DRDC) to complete the intake and assessment process.

    Moving the initial intake to CCF-S will minimize the risk of introducing COVID-19 to DRDC where a large number of inmates are housed with high medical needs.

    During the temporary suspension of intake, CDOC will work with counties on

a case by case basis to accept inmates from jails that are faced with overcrowding or public safety issues.

- In addition to the moratorium on jails, the executive order allows CDOC to create appropriate guidelines, criteria, and practices related to earned time credit caps, Special Needs Parole, and Intensive Supervision Program-Inmate (ISP-I). CDOC will work within the parameters of the executive order in an effort to reduce crowding in various facilities and help prevent an outbreak and spread. All operational decisions will be made with a focus on safeguarding CDOC staff, facilities, and offices while continuing to protect public safety. ***The criteria that will be used to screen potential inmates for ISP-I, Special Needs Parole, and Earned Time Credit*** can be found HERE

- All in-person visits to CDOC facilities have been suspended. In addition to the regular phone time provided to offenders, the Department worked with phone vendor, GTL, to allow for an additional free phone call per week. In addition, the Department has been working with GTL to implement video visitation options in all of the facilities. Those video visitations have had their initial roll out, and the Department continues to work with GTL to ensure smoother delivery of that visitation option. Offenders will receive one free video visit per week. Non-contact legal visits are still occurring and attorneys have the option to arrange for a video conference with their clients. The Department also worked with the company, FlikShop, to allow for photo postcards from inmate families. FlikShop offered CDOC families 3 free postcards.

- All volunteer services at the facilities have been suspended, and public tours and family reunification events have been postponed.

- Both the staff of CDOC and the inmate population are being provided education on COVID-19, and best practices to prevent the introduction of the virus into facilities and offices. This information includes physically posting educational information on the virus and necessary hygiene practices in the facility common areas, and putting the information on the inmate titler system. Staff have also been provided regular updates from their appointing authority and from headquarters. The CDOC has also created several roll call trainings that have been provided to staff at the facility regarding the COVID-19 virus.

- Offenders are being provided two free bars of soap per week to maintain appropriate hygiene.

- The facilities and offices have increased cleaning efforts to help with prevention. Inmates at most custody levels and all staff members regularly have access to cleaning products in order to clean and disinfect the facilities, and for inmates who want/need to clean their cells.

- CDOC has collaborated with the state Emergency Operations Center, CDPHE, and Correctional Leadership Association, to develop the Department's emergency plans, and each CDOC facility has conducted tabletop exercises to prepare, practice, and identify any additional resources needed to protect their facility.

- The CDOC medical team and CDOC Risk Management continually monitor CDC and CDPHE guidelines and the Department adjusts operations as appropriate.

- The Parole Division has developed alternatives to in-person contact for parolees who are sick, immunocompromised, over 60, and/or considered to be at higher risk of infection (people who have traveled to areas where community transmission is occurring or had direct close contact with a presumptive positive case of COVID-19).

- CDOC has temporarily suspended arrests of parolees for low level technical parole violations. This will help alleviate the influx of people into county jails, and reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections coming into jail and prisons. Low level technical parole violations may be dealt with through alternative interventions to incarceration such as referral to treatment, increased contact with the parole officer, electronic monitoring, and house arrest. These low level technical violations might include things like not being able to locate employment, establish a residence, see their parole officer in person, restitution requirements, etc. The temporary suspension still allows for arrest of offenders that are a risk to public safety. The department will also review the list of people who are currently in jail for low level technical parole violations to determine if any of them could be released and managed in other ways. As the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, the Department will continue to evaluate the management of technical parole violators taking into consideration public safety and the impact on the criminal justice system, and make appropriate adjustments.

- The Department of Corrections facilities, parole offices and the department's headquarters have begun to implement staffing plans that will limit the amount of staff in facilities and offices at any given time while ensuring the safety and continuity of operations. These staffing levels will allow for better social distancing, without creating other safety risks. Staffing numbers will differ from facility to facility due to security levels, physical plant, and programs, and other considerations of the appointing authorities. The parole offices are implementing staffing plans that will allow for remote work while still maintaining appropriate and necessary supervision of parolees. Headquarters team members will be covering essential needs and will be working remotely. A small number of staff will continue to work in the building to support critical functions that cannot be performed remotely. Facilities and offices across the state will continue to receive the support they need from the headquarters team.