FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS — COVID-19 RESPONSE: MARCH 2020

Department of Corrections Response. The following information outlines the steps taken by the Department of Corrections (DOC) to prepare for and mitigate the impacts in response to COVID-19. The information is current as of March 17, 2020.

Prevention of Introduction at Facilities. The DOC has taken the following actions to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 at facilities:

- Canceled all volunteer activities on March 9 until further notice.
- Canceled all visitation on March 14 until further notice. This includes sending out DOC work crews into businesses and the community. The DOC is exploring reduced-cost calls, Offender mail, and a video visiting solution to implement as soon as possible.
- Began requiring any employee or contractor entering the facility to complete a health questionnaire and undergo a temperature check. If a person is found to be at high risk of having COVID-19, the person is sent home and told to contact a doctor.
- Began screening every inmate being brought into a facility (either new intake or parole revocation hold).

Prevention of Spread Within Facilities. The DOC has taken the following actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the facilities:

- The DOC has updated its pandemic policy/plans to better apply to COVID-19. The plans are available here: doc.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/io-se-26_epidemic_and_pandemic_action_plan.pdf
- The DOC Central Office and wardens have been sending regular messaging and videos to staff and inmates to keep all informed of policies and procedural changes related to the virus.
- Staff are constantly monitoring for anyone showing signs of symptoms.
- If any inmate is found to display symptoms, the inmate is immediately placed in special quarantine, and testing for illness will begin.
- Staff have received training on infection control procedures and on how and when to use the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Supplies are inventoried, and additional PPE can be requested from the State Emergency Operations Center within the Iowa Department of Homeland Security.
- If someone is symptomatic, the person and anyone transporting or caring for the person will be provided with PPE.
- Designated “clean teams” have been developed to consistently disinfect high traffic areas or possibly contaminated areas.
- Quarantine areas within the facilities where multiple inmates who test positive could be located have been identified.

Prevention of Spread Between Facilities. The DOC has taken the following actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 between facilities:

- If an inmate has been identified as having or likely having the virus, the inmate will remain in quarantine and not be transported to another facility or released.
- If a COVID-19-positive inmate is going to be transported to a medical facility or hospital, that entity will receive advanced communication prior to transport.
- The DOC is asking all jails not to bring COVID-19-positive inmates to the DOC, but to hold those inmates in quarantine at the jail.

Additional Information. Further information and any updates regarding the DOC COVID-19 response is available on the DOC website.

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