DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Inmate/Resident Memorandum

To: **All DOC Inmates/Residents**

From: **Commissioner Paul Schnell**

Re: **Social Distancing, Visiting Update**

Date: **March 26, 2020**

As of this memo, we have not detected COVID-19 in any facility or office. Our goal is to keep programs open for as long as possible while protecting both your health and well-being and that of our staff. We continue daily consultations with the Department of Health and other public health experts to ensure every decision we make is based on what the experts tell us about how COVID-19 is transmitted from person to person and how to minimize the risk of that happening.

Social Distancing

We recognize that social distancing is difficult in prisons. But we believe it is possible. I am committed to protecting your health and safety while we keep facility programs open for as long as possible. That's why I have directed every facility to implement plans that will help us follow through on that commitment. Understand that health experts tell us that simply being near someone for a few minutes presents minimal risk. Here's the type of contact you should avoid:

- "Close contact" with an infected person for a prolonged period of time. What that generally means is being within about 6 feet of someone for about 10 minutes.

- Having direct contact with infectious secretions from an infected person – for example being directly coughed or sneezed on by an infected person.

So while on the flag, in recreation, education or industry, or group programs:

- Avoid gathering in groups

- Keep your distance from others when possible, and

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Visiting Closure

We are continuing to limit traffic in and out of the facilities. For that reason, in-person visiting will continue to be suspended at all DOC facilities as we deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. We recognize the importance of connections with your loved ones, so we are continuing to explore ways to expand the availability of electronic visiting, including potential reduction or waiver of fees. You will also continue to receive two free 5-minute phone calls per week.

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Assignments and Compensation

We have heard concerns about how reporting potential symptoms of COVID-19 might impact your employment status, specifically as it relates to Division Directive 204.010: Offender Assignment and Compensation Plan.

Given the current situation, I am suspending the policy that would terminate your assignment after being absent for 10 days if the absence is for COVID-19 related reasons. If you report symptoms related to COVID-19, and you are asked to quarantine, or take any other restrictive measure, you will not be in danger of losing your employment after ten days, and your salary level will remain the same when you return to work..

We thank you for your ongoing commitment to staying healthy by washing your hands, covering your cough, and practicing social distancing wherever possible.