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NDCS will implement questionnaire for facility entry

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March 12, 2020 (Lincoln, Neb.) – People entering the 10 facilities operated by the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) will be asked to answer a series of questions to help identify those who have a higher chance of transmitting the coronavirus (COVID-19). For now, visits will continue to be allowed with inmates.

“There is no guarantee that we won’t need to make a decision quickly to suspend visitation,” admitted NDCS Director Scott R. Frakes. “This situation is very much day-to-day and we are prepared to react with an abundance of caution in order to keep those who live and work in our facilities as healthy as possible.”

Visitors, volunteers, contractors and others will be asked to confirm they are symptom-free, verify if they have had contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 and if they have traveled recently by plane. If any questions are answered in the affirmative, entry to the facility will be denied.

“We are going to have temperature gauges on hand, so we can easily detect if someone has a fever,” said Dir. Frakes. “While we don’t want to be intrusive, we have a responsibility to take those precautions that are most appropriate at this time.”

That also includes reminding staff about the symptoms associated with coronavirus and taking additional steps to disinfect areas where they work. “For example, we will be cleaning transport vehicles more frequently and thoroughly after each trip,” noted Dir. Frakes. “We have directed facilities to curtail staff and inmate activities where food is served and where large groups of people may be congregating in small spaces.”

The majority of volunteer activities will continue for now; although, Dir. Frakes indicated it was very likely that a tipping point would come, requiring more stringent steps.

“This illness is moving rapidly. Despite all that we do, we cannot eliminate complete human contact. We will continue to facilitate activities for as long as possible, to the extent that it does not put anyone in NDCS or members of the public in further jeopardy for becoming sick.”

Dir. Frakes said that information about visitation would be updated on the agency’s website: corrections.nebraska.gov. “People should check the status, before they make the trip. Certainly, we appreciate everyone’s willingness in answering those screening questions, before stepping inside our facilities.”

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FACILITIES:
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