December 16, 2020

Georgia Department of Corrections Coronavirus (COVID - 19) Response

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) is responding with all available resources to help prevent/mitigate the potential introduction and spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) into our facilities. We continue to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) to coordinate the appropriate response to this evolving situation, the GDC has implemented a phased approach to include activating GDC's Pandemic Emergency Response Team, planning and education, preparedness and response.

Phase One - Planning and Education: (Initial Activation)

Activated an interdisciplinary agency task force to evaluate GDC's Emergency Response Plan, Infection Control Plan and other areas that will be affected by COVID-19.

Education of staff and inmate population (to include ADA) regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) through the Office of the Governor, CDC, Department of Public Health. Information includes but is not limited to symptoms of COVID-19, prevention of COVID-19 hand-washing and sanitation protocols related to the virus.

Evaluated partner agency response to determine impact to GDC: Sheriffs, Dept of Community Supervision, Judicial Branch, Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Phase Two - Preparedness and Preventative Measures:

Inmate Movement:

The GDC suspended all non-essential offender movement across GDC facilities on March 11, 2020.

Tours and Visitation Restriction:

All prison tours are suspended until further notice.

All volunteer visits are suspended as of March 12, 2020 until further notice.

Visitation at GDC facilities will remain suspended until further notice, in keeping with Governor Kemp's renewed executive order extending COVID restrictions through November 30, 2020.

Additional measures remain in place to accommodate the inmate population until visitation resumes:

- GDC has partnered with Securus Technologies and JPay to provide each offender with one FREE fifteen (15) minute call each week starting Saturday, March 14, 2020 and 2 FREE stamps each week starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020. The one free call and 2 free stamps per week will continue until further notice as we maintain safety efforts for our offenders, staff and visitors.
- Medical CoPay waived related flu and COVID-19 Symptoms

The GDC will be delaying all visitation, including attorney visitation, until after January 8, 2021. We do not have a definite date for when attorney visitation to resume at this time.

Programming and Details:

Programming is scheduled to begin, on a limited basis beginning July 1, and classes will be conducted following strict social distancing guidelines as recommended by the CDC.

Outside Details - suspended (unless emergency)

Staff Actions:

Screening and Sanitation: Enhanced Screening of all staff to include the requirement of staff to sign an attestation of no known illness questionnaire, and have temperature checks prior to entry into the facility. Further, Portal Sergeants are required to wear gloves and observe hand washing requirements and other sanitation measures as communicated. As an added measure, mats have been placed at all facilities for sanitizing shoe soles upon entry and exit.

Single-ply and two-ply sneeze/cough masks have been distributed to all staff.

Enhanced Screening of Contractors and vendors to include the requirement of staff to sign an Attestation of no known illness questionnaire and have temperature checks prior to entry into the facility.

TC Resident screening is being conducted in the same manner as all other GDC facilities.

Enhanced Facility Sanitation: Increased chemical orders statewide, availability of hand sanitizer and soap increased for staff at all GDC locations, increased sanitation rounds and required cleaning of high traffic areas and high touch areas, sanitation officer mandated not to be pulled for other assignments. Increased the availability of soap over and above normal issue for the inmate population as well. All facilities have received a chemical fogging treatment.

All staff onsite training suspended until further notice and will be reevaluated as the situation warrants. Staff may take online trainings at this time.

Staff Hiring: Staff recruitment and hiring will continue.

Staff Teleworking: Staff designated as non-essential may telework.

Optimizing use of Telecourt, Telemedicine and Telepsychiatry.

Phase Three - Implementation and Response:

Actions for Inmate Population:

Enhanced Facility Sanitation: Increased chemical orders statewide, availability of hand sanitizer and soap increased for staff at all GDC locations, increased sanitation rounds and required cleaning of high traffic areas and high touch areas, sanitation officer mandated not to be pulled for other assignments. Sneeze/cough masks distributed to each offender.

Modified Movement Plan

The GDC suspended all non-essential offender movement across GDC facilities on March 11, 2020. As we begin transitioning into a modified movement process within our system, a strategic plan has been developed to ensure priority is placed on taking precautionary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and offenders.

Beginning May 18, 2020, all points of offender entry into our system will be Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison (GDCP) for male offenders and Lee Arrendale State Prison (LASP) for female offenders. All new arrivals (intakes) and court return offenders will be administered a COVID-19 test. Offenders who are symptomatic will be placed in a designated medical isolation unit while awaiting test results. Non-symptomatic offenders will be placed in 14-day security quarantine while awaiting test results. Those offenders receiving negative test results will resume the normal diagnostic process.