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# NDCS suspends inmate visitation amid COVID-19

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NDCS suspends inmate visitation amid COVID-19

March 16, 2020 (Lincoln, Neb.) -- Visitation with inmates housed in the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) has been suspended indefinitely amid concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19). NDCS Director Scott. R. Frakes said the decision comes at the right time for limiting the spread of the illness across the agency's 10 facilities.

"While there is no way to keep it out completely, we need to take precautions that will at least reduce the risk of exposure for as long as possible," said Dir. Frakes. "We have people in the population as well as among our teammates who are at higher risk for infection due to age and a variety of health considerations. They are a primary concern certainly, but we also want to do everything we can to prevent transmission from our facilities back into the community."

There have been no confirmed cases of coronavirus among staff members or inmates. Some facilities did turn visitors away over the weekend who had acknowledged they presented symptoms or were otherwise at risk for transmitting COVID-19. Tours have also been suspended during this time and volunteers will not be permitted entry to NDCS facilities. Visits from attorneys are being permitted, but attorneys will be screened when they arrive.

"They will be asked if they are showing symptoms, prior to entry. If there are alternatives for communicating with inmates during this time, I would advise that attorneys try to utilize those options

in order to avoid close personal contact," said Dir. Frakes.

NDCS is currently looking into what video technology options may be available for allowing inmates to connect with family members, friends and others.

"Those opportunities are being explored with our providers. With few exceptions, most inmates have a tablet that allows them to make phone calls from their rooms," explained Dir. Frakes. "We are going to get as creative as possible to maintain those pro-social family ties while this situation is ongoing."

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