

Department of Corrections

FAQ-COVID19

MEDICAL

Regarding the waived copays for health services, does that apply to all sick call?

Copays for health services will only be waived for inmates who have flu-like symptoms or those related to COVID-19. Copays should not be waived for all sick call.

Does every facility have test kits?

DOC facilities currently have supplies to collect samples for testing. Medical staff will then send the swab to an outside lab for testing. This is the same process that is happening in the communities.

What kind of PPE should we have on hand for non-medical staff?

The level of PPE necessary varies depending on what task is being performed. Please reference the CDC PPE Guidelines for Correctional Facilities (attached).

Do we have tests available for asymptomatic people? Wouldn't this be wise to get ahead of the virus?

The availability of tests is limited in the State, across the country and around the world. That's why medical providers have certain requirements before referring an individual for a test.

What is the turnaround time for testing?

Turnaround time is dependent on multiple factors including location of the lab as well as number of tests being performed and testing capability. Currently, we are seeing State labs turnaround test results in 24-48 hours. If tests are sent to out of state labs, turnaround time could take between 5-7 days.

VISITATION/VOLUNTEERS/CONTRACTORS

Are professional visitations (i.e. attorney visits) still allowed?

Professional visitation is also suspended at this time. Attorneys have been asked to communicate with their client telephonically for the time being.

What about visiting at the halfway houses? Is that suspended as well?

Halfway houses should follow the policies and procedures put in place for Institutions. Therefore, visitation, volunteers, non-essential contractors, events, tours and group activities are suspended until further notice.

Are contractors able to continue services?

Only essential contractors are allowed in the facilities at this time. If you have a question regarding a certain contract service, please email doc.covid19@alaska.gov

Are volunteer chaplains' part of the group that is suspended from entering facilities?

Chaplaincy services will be limited to Chaplain/Clergy and Lay Leaders for services. All those with Religious Volunteer cards will be denied access.

Are we still authorized to have treatment /educational groups for offenders in the community?

DOC does not have oversight of rehabilitative program groups in the community. The offender should contact their local programming provider for possible disruptions to service.

Are Institutional Educational programs considered "non-essential activities"? Should we cancel all classes or limit class size to 9?

Programming that is led by an outside contractor or volunteer is suspended at this time, as well as all group activities. The department is working to provide alternate methods of education.

LEAVE/TRAVEL/PERSONNEL

Is there a discussion about paid leave for those who contract the illness while working?

The Department of Administration released their COVID leave policy on 3/19/2020. This information is posted on the COVID resource page here: <http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/directorsOffice/covid19/>

Can DOC employees travelling from out of state come to work?

At this time, critical personnel are still allowed to travel for essential purposes. DOC employees who arrive from out of state must comply with all active State Mandates, which includes 14-day quarantine upon arrival to Alaska. You can find those here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>

Will employees working around infected personnel receive hazard duty pay?

There is currently no hazard pay in place for working around infected individuals.

If I have a sick family member with a fever and cough, will I be quarantined for 14 days?

Employees with family members who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 do not need to quarantine unless that family member has tested positive for the virus. It is suggested that that individual should isolate in the home from the rest of the family to prevent the spread of any virus he/she may have.

If members of staff are deemed non-essential and sent home, will we continue to be paid?

Every member of DOC is essential to the department. As of 3/27/2020 all State office building remain open and employees are expected to report to work. DOC understands the challenges each person may be facing, and we encourage you to work with your supervisor to determine a solution that balances the needs of the employee and the Department. Please visit the Department of Administration COVID-19 Resources page for more information. (<http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/directorsOffice/covid19/>)

When you say training up, down and laterally are you talking about crossing union lines?

During an emergency, the director of each division has authority to cross train and assign staff to duties which may be outside normal job descriptions and can enforce mandatory overtime.

My family member arrived in Anchorage from recent domestic travel and is living with me – do I need to quarantine for 14 days?

No, if someone in your family recently arrived from the lower 48 – they should quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. You do not need to. Please see the most up to date travel mandates here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>

Is there the potential for preapproved leave to be canceled in the event offices/institutions are short staffed?

There is a potential for preapproved leave to be cancelled in the event your institution is short staffed because of COVID-19. This will largely be based on the need at the facility and will be dealt with at the Superintendent level. DOC will continue to monitor staffing levels and provide as much notice as possible should we need to cancel preapproved leave.

If an employee is sent home by Institutional Management because the DOC suspects or is concerned the employee may have been exposed/showing symptoms of COVID-19, will the employee be placed on paid administrative leave? If the employee is sent home and it has been determined there are no telecommuting options for the employee, the employee can choose to be released for no longer than fourteen (14) calendar days per self-quarantine event with no loss of pay under COVID-19 Leave. Please see the Department of Administration Leave Policy for more information.
(http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/fileadmin/DirectorsOffice/COVID19messages/COVID_19_LEAVE_Policy.pdf)

Does this mean because I was in down-town Seattle a week ago, that I should go home and stay home? Seattle wasn't on the list of areas.

Health Mandate 10, issued by the Governor on 3/23/2020 requires all travelers coming from out of state to self-quarantine for 14-days, regardless of where you are coming from. You can find that mandate here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/03232020-SOA-COVID-19-Health-Mandate-010.pdf>

For those of us who have small children, if and/or when child care centers and schools are shut down due to outbreaks, will we be expected to bring our children to work with us or will we be given the opportunity to work from home and therefore issued a state laptop?

Please do not bring children to work. DOC is prepared to be flexible to your unique challenges during this time. DOC continues to explore and implement teleworking when possible. Please talk to your supervisor about opportunities that may be suitable for you and your family.

TRANSPORT/INSTITUTIONS/DP3

Is there a way we can ensure booking facilities perform these screenings prior to transferring inmates to other facilities?

All inmates are being screened before being transferred to another facility. This includes questions about symptoms, travel and a temperature check

Can inmates meet in groups of 10 or less for classes or programs being conducted by a DOC employee?

All group activities have been suspended at this time.

Are we asking our institutions to limit to a certain number of prisoners in a dining hall at one time?

Institutions are making every effort to modify meal service. How that is done varies from facility to facility and depends on the facility size and layout.

Should Probation & Parole continue or cancel field services testing programs, such as UA and PBT colors?

DP3 is modifying the Colors program and random urinalysis testing to reduce the numbers of tests that are collected each day by staff. Currently DP3 is only testing those offenders that are reported to be actively using or those who exhibit signs of use.

Is hand sanitizer being given to inmates with alcohol in them?

Hand sanitizer stations have been set up in the facilities in high-use, common areas for inmate use. They are closely monitored by staff. Inmates are not being issued personal hand sanitizers at this time.

Are release procedures affected by COVID-19?

Inmates without symptoms who have completed their sentence can be released to the community. Inmates who are under quarantine at the time of release, will be given instructions regarding the duration of self-quarantine in the community. The names of individuals released while under quarantine will be provided to the Alaska Department of Public Health. Individuals with an active infection are contagious and may not be released directly into the community. The DOC medical social worker or designee will coordinate with the Department of Public Health regarding the safe release of individuals who are actively infected depending on the level of medical need. Options may include release to a hospital facility; assisted transport to a personal residence for self-isolation; assisted transport to designated housing for isolated individuals.

SUPPLIES

My facility is very limited cleaning supplies & orders have been cancelled by vendor(s). What is being done to rectify this problem?

Currently there is not an issue with limited supplies. Institutions are implementing control procedures in order to keep staff and inmates from hoarding. There has been no interruption to the delivery or access to supplies. The Commissioner approved and is implementing the Emergency Procurement process for any/all COVID-19 expenditures necessary during this time. But demand for cleaning supplies and PPE is currently greater than the supply, and shortages are being seen across the country. Our procurement department is working hard to locate and order supplies as quickly as possible. We have also encouraged staff to be on the lookout – if you see disinfectant wipes or hand sanitizer in the community, purchase the limit and bring the supplies with a receipt to your supervisor for reimbursement. Together, we can make a difference.

Is there going to be any interruption to inmate commissary orders?

At this time, there should be no effect on inmate commissary. The Port of Alaska, who is responsible for receiving all cargo (food, supplies, etc.) states all shipping operations should remain normal, meaning supplies in commissary should be unaffected.

STAFFING

Will there be specific instructions given to each facility about how we are responding to a confirmed COVID-19 in our facility?

DOC has developed a COVID-19 Outbreak Response Plan that has already begun to be implemented. If a confirmed case (or cases) is identified in a facility, Superintendents and security management staff will inform the inmate population of the outbreak response plan and the actions being taken to reduce exposure to the virus.

If there is a widespread outbreak at a facility, what staff members, if any, will be considered non-essential and sent home to prevent further transmission.

In an emergency, all staff are essential and all well employees are expected to report to work. However, employees can speak to their supervisors about telecommuting opportunities that may be available.

If there is a facility-wide quarantine what happens to the staff at the facility? Will staff be held at the facility?

Again, all well employees are expected to report to work for their assigned shifts. Should a facility-wide quarantine be necessary, staff will be provided PPE in accordance with CDC PPE Guidelines, but they will be able to go home between shifts.

In the event CO or medical staffing numbers are down due COVID-19, will POs be required to work in the jail?

During an emergency, the director of each division has authority to cross train and assign staff to duties which may be outside normal job descriptions and can enforce mandatory overtime.

What happens if we drop so below minimum staffing and they state we can't go home and have to remain at the facility for the safety/security of the facility?

DOC management is closely monitoring staffing levels at all facilities and is prepared to bring in additional resources if necessary.

If flights to distant facilities such as Nome are cancelled how will we be approaching officer and medical provider coverage?

Effective March 28, 2020, Health Mandate 0012 prohibits all in-state travel between communities, whether resident, worker, or visitor, unless travel is to support critical infrastructure, or for critical personal needs. Correctional officers and correctional healthcare workers are essential to support critical infrastructure and are exceptions to this Mandate.

Staff who start to show symptoms can they be tested by the department or do they do to local medical centers?

Staff who begin to show symptoms should call their healthcare provider. Do not go to a clinic or hospital without calling ahead first. For more information about what to do if you feel sick, visit

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/Sick.aspx>.