



COVID-19

Questions and Answers

**Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:
Last Update: March 23, 2021, 2 p.m.**

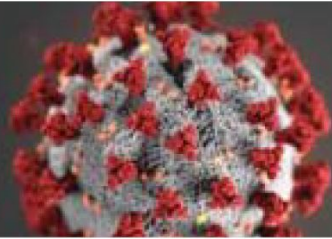
Q-1. What is the Mississippi Department of Corrections doing to lessen the spread of COVID-19 among staff and inmates?

A. The MDOC has provided masks to all inmates and staff and enforcement of wearing them remains in effect. The agency has distributed 60,000 reusable masks to add to the 250,000 donated single-use paper masks. Cleaning and disinfection measures are increased. Good hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing, are reinforced. Gloves and additional soap are provided. Hand sanitizer is made available in strategic locations for both staff and inmates' use. Social distancing should be practiced as much as possible for both staff and inmates. Staff and inmates are encouraged to follow health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention.

Additionally, the MDOC is using electrostatic sanitizing sprayers to spray down all surfaces in all buildings, cellblocks, kitchens and dining areas; installing hospital-type industrial ultraviolet sterilization lights; using portable UV sterilizers and hand wand UV sterilizers; installing air purifiers; installing walk-through sanitization stations that mist inmates and staff with a 75 percent alcohol solution per CDC guidelines; and replacing uniforms, bedding, pillow cases, and mattresses as needed.

Inmates can access medical staff using the sick call system. A face-to-face triage is completed within 24 hours of submission of the sick call request. Medical staff are seeing inmates with acute respiratory symptoms in a timely manner. Symptomatic inmates with fever are tested according to Mississippi State Department of Health and CDC guidelines. They are quarantined, according to MSDH and CDC guidelines. Affected patients may be transferred to a community hospital, if symptoms become severe.

MDOC cohort quarantines all new admissions into the correctional facilities for 14 days to monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Additionally, following the return of hospital visits, incarcerated individuals are also quarantined for 14 days. Those with possible exposure to



Questions and Answers

a COVID-positive individual discovered through contact tracing are also quarantined for 14 days and monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. MDOC vigorously pursues CDC recommended symptom based testing strategy. MDOC is also expanding access to health care services by greatly enhancing our TeleHealth program.

The MDOC is requiring every corrections officer, administration staffer, medical worker, maintenance crewperson, canteen worker, and vendor to screen for temperature and symptoms every time they enter the prison each day. Employees found to have a fever (temperature of 100.0 or above) during screening are not allowed to work and are advised to contact their doctor's office. Employees who are feeling ill before reporting for duty are urged to stay home and see their physician, if needed.

A screening tool questionnaire also is in place for employees arriving at a correctional facility. The questions include asking about recent travel from an affected location and possible exposure to someone who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19 disease.

MDOC has partnered with the Mississippi Department of Health to ensure that various state agencies work synergistically to manage this crisis.

Q-2. What is the latest number of cases in the inmate population?

A. There have been 1,463 confirmed positive cases (cumulative) and of that number, there are currently no active in the inmate population, based on the most recent data. Where the cases are can be found at <https://www.mdoc.ms.gov/Documents/Inmates%20cases%20chart.pdf>

Q-3. What happens in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in an MDOC facility?

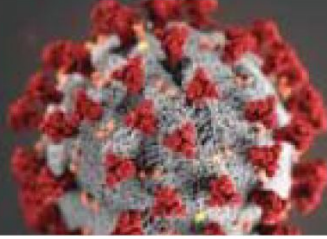
A. The MDOC has extensive protocols in place to address scenarios when illness is present. These include immediate quarantine and treatment at facility infirmaries, designated areas or outside hospitals as necessary, and sterilization of all surfaces. Inmates in close proximity to any inmate testing positive are quarantined and receive enhanced screening. Quarantined inmates are monitored daily for symptoms of the coronavirus.

Q-4. In addition to the positive inmate cases, how many inmates have tested negative and how many tests are pending?

A. There have been 1,963 inmates to test negative, based on the latest report.

Q-5. How many MDOC employees have tested positive?

A. The department has 220 positive cases among staff at the three state prisons and community corrections facilities, of which 161 have returned to work and seven individuals have left the agency, based on the most available information.



Questions and Answers

Q-6. How many other employees have been tested and what is the status of those tests?

A. In addition to the positive cases, 353 negative tests have been reported.

Q-7. When does MDOC test inmates for COVID-19?

A. The MDOC is actively taking steps, based on CDC guidelines, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at its facilities, including testing based on symptoms and as a result of contact tracing. Inmates who have possibly been exposed to other inmates with COVID-19 symptoms in the same housing unit are being tested as a precaution, especially if they have underlying conditions that may put them at a higher risk of complications from the virus.

Q-8. Are inmates required to pay medical co-pay during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A. No. Co-pay for any inmate sick call related to influenza or COVID-19 is waived.

Q-9. How long will the restrictions on visitation for family, friends, and volunteers continue?

A. A date for lifting restrictions has not been determined. Visitations remain delayed until official clearance is given from the CDC and Mississippi Department of Health. Resuming visitation is based on current updates of the COVID-19 impact.

The MDOC understands that visitation between inmates and their loved ones plays an important role in our inmates' well-being and all available options to ease the impact are being explored. The restrictions on visitation will be lifted after a careful and thorough assessment of the impact of the public health crisis.

Q-10. How can family and friends maintain contact with their incarcerated loved ones?

A. Inmates can make telephone calls through the inmate phone system. The United States mail also is a good way to communicate with inmates.

Q-11. Can inmates travel on approved leave, such as to funerals or wakes?

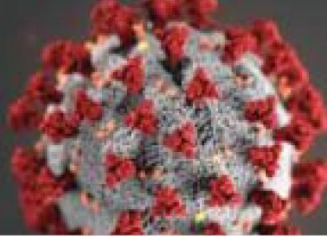
A. No. Movement is being kept at an absolute minimum.

Q-12. Are inmates allowed to meet with their attorneys?

A. Yes. All legal visits are permitted. The legal visit areas are sanitized after each visit.

Q-13. Are prisons on lockdown because of COVID-19?

A. No. Prisons are not on lockdown.



Questions and Answers

Q-14. If I usually travel from out of state to Mississippi to visit an inmate, how can I find out the status of the visitation suspension before I leave?

A. Call the facility first. Telephone numbers are listed on the MDOC website (www.mdoc.ms.gov) or contact the Office of Communications at MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

Q-15. Have activities, including educational and religious programs, resumed?

A. Yes. Programming resumed on August 17. The MDOC is following CDC guidelines, sanitizing common areas, and practicing social distancing.

Q-16. If an inmate is scheduled to be released, will the release occur?

A. Yes. All scheduled releases will occur as planned.

Q-17. Will inmates be considered for early release because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

A. No. Inmates are being released through the standard release practice.

Q-18. Are inmate transfers or movement from county jails and from one facility to another within the prison system affected?

A. Yes. Movement is being kept to an absolute minimum.

Q-19. Are inmates allowed to resume working off grounds?

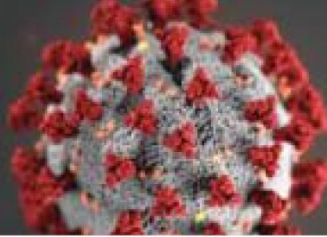
A. Yes, but not in all cases. Inmates, for example, in the Joint State County Work Program or with the Community Work Centers in Noxubee, Forrest, and Leflore counties have been permitted to return to work provided that all stakeholders remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are taken to protect the community, staff and inmates.

Q-20. Have there been updates to how people on community supervision, including probation/parole, should continue reporting to supervising agents?

A. YES. All Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) offenders, High and Moderate-High Risk supervision levels must report in person to their assigned agent. Low risk and other offenders may continue to contact their assigned agent by phone or email.

For the low risk and other offenders calling in, the person who answers the phone at the probation and parole office will take the report. Office hours are from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Individuals must provide the person answering the phone with their name, MDOC number, address, and phone number. They will be asked additional questions related to employment and other issues specifically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Individuals also can email their agent or use technology portals, such as Skype and FaceTime, to communicate. Individuals will be considered non-reporting if they fail to contact the MDOC.



Questions and Answers

Q-21. What precautionary requirements are in place for face-to-face visits?

A. Agents and individuals reporting are required to wear face masks and remain six feet apart for social distancing. High touch areas are cleaned and disinfected among all necessary precautions. Individuals who are instructed to report in person should not come to the office if they are feeling ill. Those persons not feeling well should call their agent on the report day.

Q-22. Is out-of-state travel permitted for individuals on supervision?

A. Permits are being granted on a case-by-case basis after careful review.

Q-23. What is the MDOC's current COVID-19 practice regarding individuals in the Interstate Compact program, which handles the transfers between the states of individuals under supervision?

A. Mississippi is only processing incoming transfers that are resident, resident family, and military. Approvals are only for probationers living in the receiving state at the time of sentencing and those with military affiliation.

For outgoing cases, go to [interstatecompact.org](https://www.interstatecompact.org) for a list of state restrictions to see if an offender will be able to transfer to a particular state. The list changes frequently so you should check it often for the most current information.

For current information regarding the coronavirus, visit the following websites:

www.coronavirus.gov

www.cdc.gov/COVID19

<https://msdh.ms.gov>

**The Mississippi Coronavirus Hotline is available 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday-Friday
Call **877-978-6453****