

COVID-19 FAQs



What is IDOC doing to provide access to soap and water for incarcerated individuals?

For individuals who are indigent, we typically distribute soap and toilet paper once per week, but since this crisis began, we have been providing additional soap whenever requested. Now, soap is distributed to everyone regardless of ability to pay. We've also been working with our commissary provider, Keefe, to provide "comfort kits" free-of-charge to each incarcerated individual. The kits were delivered the week of March 30, 2020 and included: one bar of soap, one wash cloth, and one bag of cookies.

Is IDOC providing alcohol-based sanitizer to incarcerated individuals?

Per CDC recommendations, alcohol-based sanitizer should only be used when soap and water are not readily available. At this point, incarcerated individuals all have unrestricted access to soap and water, so we have not made sanitizer available.

How is IDOC keeping prison and CRC facilities clean during the COVID crisis?

Cleaning supplies are always provided free of charge and this includes cleaning products as well as gloves for those individuals who serve as janitors. Janitorial schedules typically require daily cleaning of common areas, but we have increased cleaning of common areas to multiple times per day to ensure sanitization.



Has IDOC eliminated co-pays for medical care related to COVID-19?

On March 12, 2020 we began waiving co-pays for anyone seeking medical care for any flu-like symptoms (e.g., fever, coughing, runny nose).

How will IDOC decide on which people to test?

As we are following the recommendations of the CDC, anyone who presents with influenza-like illness is immediately given a mask and isolated. Medical will perform necessary testing (rapid flu, strep, COVID-19, etc.) during the patient assessment.

When will IDOC put people into quarantine?

If a person develops flu-like symptoms, they will immediately be isolated for medical assessment and testing. The unit where the patient was housed or working, prior to his/her isolation, will be quarantined until negative results are confirmed. If a COVID-19 test is positive, the area will remain quarantined for 14 days and all people living/working in that unit will be observed for the development of any symptoms. If any of the people in quarantine develop symptoms, the process begins again, and the area stays in quarantine for another 14 days.



Will IDOC provide COVID-19 care in-house or will IDOC send people out to local hospitals for care?

If we develop cases, patients will be maintained at the facility and treated based on their symptoms. Should it become unsafe for them to remain at the facility or should they require higher level of medical care, they will be transported to a local hospital.



Is IDOC continuing to transport new people into IDOC facilities from county jails?

IDOC continues to bring new people from the county jails into IDOC facilities. Everyone is medically-screened before the transport and then all new individuals are going to one of two facilities (one for men, one for women) for the intake process. At the start of the crisis, IDOC instituted a 72-hour quarantine for all newly-admitted individuals. On April 20th, however, we initiated a full 14-day quarantine for all new admissions to IDOC. This process has reduced the number of individuals who can enter the IDOC system but greatly reduces the risk that someone new will introduce COVID-19 into our facilities.

Is IDOC continuing to let incarcerated people go out to work in the community?

Yes, in certain cases. Some people under our jurisdiction participate in essential work in the community (e.g. food production) so they are continuing to work. We have required that any community-based employer document the precautions they are taking to keep our workers distanced from community members and to provide medical screening. We are also requiring medical screening for each off-site worker as s/he leaves the facility and upon return. Continued work helps families who rely on the wages of the incarcerated person, reduces idleness, and allows people to give back to the community. Each day, we evaluate this decision and may, at some point, stop all off-site employment.

Is IDOC going to release incarcerated individuals early?

IDOC is working with the Parole Commission to systematically evaluate parole-eligible individuals and consider options.

Is IDOC still allowing interstate transfers to Idaho?

Yes. Idaho sends approximately seven times the number of people to other states, via interstate compacts, as we accept into Idaho from other states. Returning people to their communities increases success so we are committed to trying to facilitate interstate transfers when appropriate.



What is considered essential work within IDOC?

Due to multifaceted structure of our agency, much of the work we do is essential. In addition to security staff, daily operations of our prisons and Community Reentry Centers (CRCs) depend on food service, transport, medical, clinical, and support staff. Continuing to provide opportunities, to people under IDOC jurisdiction, to learn and grow is also an integral part of our agency and so are staff who facilitate programs and education classes.

In the community, probation and parole officers as well as staff who perform court-mandated assessments and programming are all regarded as essential.



How are incarcerated individuals able to stay connected with family and friends?

We've worked with our partners at Century Link and Jpay to provide video visitation and other modes of communication to our incarcerated population. Each incarcerated individual is receiving two free phone calls every week while their family and friends receive one free video phone call per month. Additionally, each incarcerated individual is granted two free eStamps per week which they can use to send emails, VideoGrams, and eCards.

IDOC also is temporarily funding a portion of communication costs for phone calls and eStamps to help facilitate continued communication between incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. Rates for phone calls have been reduced from \$0.11/minute to \$0.08/minute, prices for eStamp packages have been reduced, and additional entertainment and educational content has been made available.

Standard mail service delivery remains unchanged at this time.



Is Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) being made available?

Yes. Our incarcerated population began making cloth masks in early April. To date, they have sewn more than 19,000 masks! Additionally, IDOC also placed and received an external order of 30,000 masks. The goal is to provide 3 cloth masks to every IDOC staff member and incarcerated person.

Masks are being distributed based on risk of possible exposure to COVID-19 (i.e., staff and incarcerated persons who work in the community), followed by medically-vulnerable individuals, and then healthy confined persons.