

COVID-19 Update - June 24, 2020

Hi all-

It's been a busy week on the COVID-19 front, and while we hoped we could continue the status quo for some time, circumstances simply won't allow it. On Monday, as COVID-19 cases continue to climb, the Central District Health moved Ada County back to Stage 3 of the statewide reopening plans. This was a direct response to the significant number of increases in positive cases. We find ourselves in a similar situation as it relates to how community spread is impacting our staff.

In the past 10 days, we've had 44 staff unable to report to work because of potential exposure and 18 of those have come in the last 3 days. We've also had 3 additional staff test positive for COVID-19 - 2 of those were at ISCI and 1 was at ISCC. Any staff who may have had significant contact with the positive individuals have been notified and instructed to self-quarantine and take appropriate precautions. At this point, we don't believe any of the positive cases among staff are related and we have no reason to believe these positive cases have resulted in exposure to the population in custody.

That said, it is clear we have to take additional precautions to protect our staff and the people in our custody.

Masks mandatory in prisons and CRCs: Effective at 1800 hours today, June 24th, all staff working in prisons and CRCs are required to wear a cloth face covering while on duty. Chief Page and Chief Underwood will be sharing an operational memorandum later today with additional details. To date, we've encouraged staff to wear a cloth face covering when not able to appropriately maintain physical distance from others. This new directive mandates that all staff working in prisons or CRCs **wear a cloth face covering at all times**. If the mask needs to be removed for any reason, staff are directed to ensure safe physical distance before doffing the mask. We are mindful that asthma or other respiratory illness may prevent some people from safely wearing a mask. If you are concerned a medical condition may be exacerbated or compromised by wearing a mask, please reach out to your supervisor or HR.

We have discussed making masks mandatory for the people in custody, but we're not taking that step at this point. Frankly, that's not where the risk is. We have really good safeguards in place to ensure people entering our system are quarantined and observed for symptoms, some of them multiple times, before they move elsewhere in our system. If COVID-19 shows up on a transport bus, we're ready to contain it. It's COVID-19 coming through our front sally port that poses the greatest risk, not just to the people in custody, but to all of our staff. We're working on additional precautions for CRC residents and people in custody with off-compound privileges and we'll announce those steps by the end of the week.

ISCI on Modified Level 3 Status: Also effective at 1800 hours today, June 24th, ISCI will move to a modified level 3 status. This change in status means movement in the facility will be further restricted to accomplish two primary objectives. The first objective is to modify posts in preparation for a higher number of staff being unable to report. The second objective is to add an additional layer of protection to the population in custody by minimizing movement between units, modifying schedules to provide for additional cleaning and sanitation of shared areas between uses, and allowing the opportunity for units to shelter in place for observation. This operational period runs from 1800 hrs on June 24, 2020 to 1800 hrs on July 8, 2020.

COVID-19 Testing: The ID NOW testing instrument that provides rapid test results will be available for use tomorrow at ISCI. Any staff or people in custody in the S. Boise Complex who present as symptomatic are eligible to be tested using the ID NOW instrument. Through a partnership with the Veterans Administration, we also will be rolling out a mass/surveillance testing process. This new testing capacity will be rolled out in phases. The first phase will include testing all people entering our system through RDU prior to their movement to any other facility. The second phase will include testing of members of the population moving from one facility to another, and the third phase will include people being released from our custody. This partnership is invaluable for the implementation of a surveillance testing protocol to continually test the population in custody for asymptomatic positive cases. This testing capacity will also be utilized to conduct mass testing in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in our in custody population.

Our correctional facilities aren't islands. What happens in the communities where we live can and will show up at our front door, and we're seeing that happen now. I can't stress enough how important it is to take precautions, not just at work, but also while you're off duty to protect yourselves and the people you care about from needless exposure to COVID-19. People in our IDOC family have been impacted by COVID-19, some of them significantly. We'll continue taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure the fewest number of people possible are impacted by COVID-19.

Please take care of yourself and keep looking out for each other.

Thanks-
Josh