

COVID-19 Update

Sept. 30, 2021

Hello everyone,

Yesterday, we hosted **Kirstie Ennis**, former Marine Sergeant, who had to retire from the military after a near-fatal helicopter crash. Kirstie described the crash, her significant physical and emotional injuries, and how she found renewed purpose to serve others, while also tackling the largest mountains in the world on one leg. Her inspiring story was one of grit, determination, and perspective. Kirstie shared how her invisible wounds were more devastating than her physical injuries and her support system was key to her getting through her darkest hours. This feels particularly relevant right now—our IDOC family is hurting. As of late, it's almost daily that we learn about tragedies that have struck our IDOC team or their families. These events can have lasting impacts, creating "invisible wounds." I'm always so proud of how quickly our team rallies to support each other in times of need, but sometimes, we may not know what folks are going through. I encourage you to take a moment to check-in with your coworkers, lend an ear or an encouraging word. Small kindnesses can have big impacts.

COVID update:

Early in 2020, when COVID first swept the nation, we all heard the horror stories from other states and we braced for the worst. Projection models anticipated that our hospitals would reach capacity and that death rates would be high. Then, we waited. And, we waited. COVID arrived in waves, but we never had the tsunami that we thought was coming. Our hospitals continued to function normally and, thankfully, state death rates were relatively low. After our peak of cases in December, we saw state numbers decline through July. We were excited about what we hoped was the light at the end of the COVID tunnel, but sadly, that hasn't been the case.

The Delta variant of COVID has changed the game. It stormed into Idaho this summer, and quickly overwhelmed our hospitals and thrust us into crisis standards of care. We have lost friends and family members, and we know many people who've become sick. Given how much things have changed recently, it's important to remind everyone of a few basic facts about how each of us can do our part to limit the spread. First and foremost, please remain vigilant about conducting medical screenings and staying home if your [symptomatic](#). We've had a few cases recently where folks tried to push through the symptoms and keep working, and ultimately, that caused more people to have to go out on quarantine. Second, let's remember the basics to [stop the spread](#) – wear a mask, keep 6' between you and others whenever possible, and practice good hand washing.

If you've been on the fence about the vaccine, but are worried about the increased risk of the Delta variant, please talk to your medical provider. Vaccines can't prevent 100% of infections, but they can greatly reduce your risk of serious illness, hospitalization, and death. And it's ok to change your mind. If you were hesitant to get a vaccine in January, but now want to get it, here are [resources](#) to find a vaccine. I've heard about several people who were initially reluctant to get the vaccine but want to get it now, and their fears aren't about the vaccine itself, but about how other people will react if they know. Let's be sure we're all creating the space for those around us to change their minds, as the situation evolves and new information becomes available.

I'll close with another quote from Kirstie Ennis, who said, **"some things are far more important than individual success."** Reducing the impacts of COVID-19 and getting back to anything-close-to-normal is bigger than any one of us. It is going to take all of us. We appreciate your continued efforts to stop the spread and to move our agency forward.

Stay healthy,
Bree

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