

COVID-19 Update - May 21, 2020

Hi all-

My apologies for the absence of updates this week. The combination of some family commitments and a lack of COVID-specific breaking news pushed them off until today.

Hazard Pay: Finally, we're able to share details about hazard pay. DHR's statewide policy on Hazard Pay was released this afternoon. Here's what's important to note about the hazard pay plan: It's not perfect, but it is designed to compensate staff based on the heightened risks associated with their job duties. That's always the tough part of designing these types of proposals. All of us take pride in what we do, and all of us are operating with increased risk every time we leave our homes. This proposal isn't about that. Instead, this plan is in direct response to the elevated risk associated with specific job duties. And while this public health crisis has highlighted the importance of all the job disciplines in this agency working together to improve outcomes, the unique nature of how this illness is transmitted increases risk for some job classifications.

In accordance with state and federal guidance, IDOC's hazard pay proposal has four components:

1. **Extreme Hazard Bonus:** This bonus is triggered by a positive COVID-19 case in a prison or CRC and the activation of Phase 3 of our emergency management protocols. The bonus consists of \$300/pay period for everyone working in the affected facility for the duration of the elevated emergency response status.
2. **Essential Hazard Bonus:** This bonus applies to essential staff whose job duties necessitate contact with people of positive or unknown COVID-19 status for a substantial portion of their regular work week. Eligible staff will receive \$50/pay period from April 26, 2020 through December 31, 2020.
3. **Exemption Bonus:** A number of Prisons and CRC staff have been exempted from the extended leave benefit afforded by the FFCRA. This bonus is for \$100/pay period and is provided in lieu of the Essential Hazard Bonus and in recognition of their ineligibility for the extended leave benefit. Eligible staff will receive the bonus from April 26, 2020 through December 31, 2020.
4. **COVID-19 Performance Bonus:** These limited bonuses may be awarded to staff for exceptional performance during the COVID-19 emergency. These bonuses will be issued with input and recommendations from statewide leadership.

HR will send out additional specifics on the plan tomorrow, but I wanted to share the broad brush strokes here. We'll have a lot more information on hazard pay in the days to come. DHR will be working on a FAQ, and I suspect we also will encounter some issues we didn't consider. Either way, I'm excited to be able to get this out to you, and I appreciate your patience.

Condolences to Bonneville County: Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Deputy Wyatt Maser and the entire Bonneville County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Maser tragically lost his life in the line of duty Tuesday morning. Sheriff Wilde expressed his sincere gratitude for the support they've received. Six members of IDOC's Honor Guard will pay tribute to Deputy Maser's service at a ceremony to held this Saturday. Details for the service and information about a memorial fund established in Deputy Maser's honor can be found [here](#). There's no other way to put it – it's tragic and it's

heartbreaking. It also is a somber reminder of the inherent dangers in public safety and the debt of gratitude owed all our first responders for their service and sacrifice.

Continued Vigilance Required: You're going to get tired of hearing me say this, but I'm going to keep saying it so long as there's a need: we are not out of the woods yet! We've received a number of requests for trainings and other events where the safety plans were lacking. Trust me, I have COVID-fatigue like everyone else, but now is not the time to let our guard down. Wanting to get back to normal and being in an environment that allows for that are two entirely different things, and I'm asking for your continued vigilance to protect yourselves and others. Our efforts now buy us time – time for additional testing and other changes in the landscape that can reduce risk for everyone who lives and works in one of our correctional facilities. Please continue to wash your hands regularly, practice good social distancing, and wear a face covering when you're not able to adhere to physical distancing guidelines.

I was struck by a quote I saw this morning. It went, "People of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things." I read that quote shortly before jumping on a WebEx with District and CRC leadership. Universally, they were singing the praises of staff and expressing how proud they were of the way staff have responded during this prolonged event. That quote is particularly relevant because it would have been easy for this agency to let COVID-19 be something that happened to us. Instead, all of you have gone above and beyond to find new and creative ways to continue the important work. You've "happened to things" and I'm proud of you.

I'm taking tomorrow and Monday off, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed it actually happens. I hope all of you have a great Memorial Day weekend. Stay safe, take care of yourself, and keep looking out for each other.

Thanks-
Josh