

COVID-19 Update - June 25, 2020

Hi all-

Today felt a lot like mid-March again. Fortunately, we're a lot smarter and better prepared than we were in mid-March. If we've learned anything from the states that have been dealing with COVID-19 in their facilities for months now, it's that where there is one positive case inside a prison, there are likely others. We're learning that first-hand now, and I expect cases will be on the incline for some time to come.

The number of cases in the community continues to grow, with more than 200 new cases each of the past 2 days. It is more important than ever to wear your mask whenever close contact with others can't be avoided. This is true at work and in the community.

**Incarcerated Population COVID-19 Cases:** Yesterday, we learned of our first positive case among the incarcerated population. Today, we've added two additional positive cases for a total of three. All three individuals were residing in one housing unit, E block, at ISCC when they became symptomatic. E block is divided into three tiers and so far, all of the positive cases have been in the same tier. We're in the process of tracing contacts with the staff members and the incarcerated people who tested positive at ISCC. Until that process is complete, we're going to keep things buttoned down pretty tight. That process also includes looking at people who were recently transferred from ISCC and placing them on medical quarantine until we can rule out exposure or confirm they're negative for COVID-19 through appropriate testing.

**Staff COVID-19 Cases:** We've also had a growing number of staff impacted by COVID-19. As of today, we have 13 staff who have tested positive, 8 of those occurring just this week. 5 of the staff who tested positive work at ISCC. We have another 27 staff members who are out of work currently as a result of having had close contact with another staff member who has tested positive.

**COVID-19 Testing:** The ID NOW instrument has been rolled out and resulted in the immediate identification of two individuals who are positive for COVID today. The immediacy of testing helps us move quickly to limit additional exposure. Staff testing through the ID NOW instrument will begin on Monday. We also are beginning our first mass-testing event on Monday at ISCC starting with E block. The contact tracing will guide subsequent mass-testing efforts.

Here's what happens next: We have to take wearing masks and exercising appropriate precautions seriously. The first thing to do when you find yourself in a hole is to stop digging! Wearing masks at work is going to be the norm for a while, and it's no longer optional. It quite literally is the most basic thing each of us can do to better protect ourselves and others. It also isn't just an Ada County or Treasure Valley problem. None of our facilities are immune so long as community spread is occurring in the state.

Test, trace and quarantine. Repeat as necessary. That's how we work our way out of this. We've known since March we would be living with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future. Testing to identify symptomatic and asymptomatic cases, tracing potential contacts, and quarantining to prevent additional spread is the path forward for us.

It's worth noting just how fortunate we've been to be able to hold the line as long as we did. 103 days. That's how long we were able to keep COVID-19 out of our system. It should be a source of pride, but it also bought us valuable time to prepare. It bought us valuable time to learn from how other states approached outbreaks in their systems. And it bought us critical time for testing capacity and other resources to be developed. We're ready, and now the real work starts.

Please take care of yourself and stay safe!

Thanks-  
Josh