



Massachusetts Department of Correction Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Q&A

The Massachusetts Department of Correction (MADOC) and our contracted inmate medical provider, Wellpath, are closely monitoring developments associated with the spread of COVID-19. Correctional and medical personnel are working with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to prevent introduction into MADOC facilities, and to quickly engage, contain, and treat any outbreak should it occur. MADOC is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of staff, inmates, and the public.

The following information will help address many commonly-asked questions regarding the MADOC's response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and preventative steps we're taking to help protect the health of employees and inmates.

1. Q. Is the MADOC allowing general visitors at this time?

A. No, the Massachusetts Department of Correction (MADOC) has temporarily suspended general visits at all facilities effective March 12, 2020. This temporary suspension also includes outside volunteers and other tours and groups who routinely come into the prisons. The MADOC will regularly re-evaluate the temporary suspension of visits as the MADOC remains committed to ensuring that family and friends are able to visit with loved ones.

2. Q. Is the MADOC offering enhanced communication services in light of the visitor restrictions?

A. As of March 14, 2020, the MADOC has offered two (2) free phone calls per week to each and every inmate; each call has also been increased to thirty (30) minutes in duration. Additionally, the DOC has reinstated phone privileges to those inmates serving a loss of phone sanction.

3. Q. Are attorney visits allowed?

A. Attorney visits have not been suspended Department-wide, though restrictions at specific facilities may be necessary to protect the health and safety of staff and inmates. All attorneys are subject to the same screening process as facility staff.

The Massachusetts Treatment Center is currently restricting attorney visits, due to confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the facility.

4. Q. Are deliveries of food and cleaning supplies still being accepted at the facilities?

A. Yes. Deliveries continue as scheduled. The MADOC currently has adequate supplies of food and sanitation items and is monitoring supply levels continually.

5. Q. Is MADOC handing out bars of soap? What precautions is MADOC implementing regarding inmates washing their hands longer?

A. All inmates and staff have access to soap and water. The MADOC provides soap and other hygiene items to inmates. In the event an inmate runs out of these items, they will be provided more. Cleaning and disinfectant supplies are also readily available for inmates and staff. Alcohol-free hand sanitizer pump stations are installed throughout all facilities across the agency. Center for Disease Control (CDC) posters detailing proper hygiene practices have been posted in the prisons.

The MADOC is in the process of distributing Isopropanol-based hand sanitizer that meets CDC guidelines that will be available for staff and inmates.

6. Q. Are inmates being tested for COVID-19?

A. Medical providers at MADOC facilities meet with inmates who present with symptoms consistent with a viral illness. As with any patient, if an inmate has symptoms and meets the criteria for testing then DPH would determine whether to have him or her tested.

7. Q. Do inmates have to pay to get tested?

A. No. All medical co-pays will be waived for any inmate being tested for COVID-19 or any other medical issue until further notice.

8. Q. My loved one has a scheduled release date. Am I still allowed to pick them up at the facility? Can I bring them clothes to change into?

A. Yes, family and friends of inmates who are being released may still pick them up at the facility. We are asking that you remain in the parking lot until they come out.

9. Q. Is extra care going into cleaning prisons and sanitizing cells?

A. Yes. Additional cleaning and disinfecting protocols were implemented at each institution to include continuous disinfecting in high touch areas in accordance with CDC guidelines. Cleaning and disinfectant supplies are also readily available for inmates and staff. Alcohol-free hand sanitizer pump stations are installed throughout all facilities across the agency. All inmates and staff have access to soap and water.

The MADOC is in the process of distributing Isopropanol-based hand sanitizer that meets CDC guidelines that will be available for staff and inmates.

10. Q. What actions are being taken to protect officers?

A. Education is being provided to staff and inmates to prevent the spread of infectious disease, including COVID-19. Facilities will restrict anyone who shows signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection including a cough, fever, sore throat, and/or shortness of breath, reside in a community where community-based spread of COVID-19 is occurring, have traveled internationally within the prior 14 days to countries with sustained community transmission, and/or have had contact with an individual with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or, under investigation for COVID-19. In the event staff meet the above criteria*, their supervisor shall advise the employee not to return to work until contacting DPH and/or their primary care physician in order to be cleared for return to work. The employee must have a document from a qualified medical provider, the CDC, or DPH stating that they are cleared from COVID-19 before returning to work. Additionally, cleaning and disinfecting protocols were implemented at each institution to include continuous disinfecting in high touch areas in accordance with CDC guidelines. Screening areas are currently being erected near the entrances of DOC facilities where anyone entering the prison is having their body temperatures measured for signs of fever.

*Please note: The criteria may be modified as needed and/or as required.

11. Q. Will COVID-19 disrupt or delay the transfer of inmates between facilities?

A. At this time, transfers will occur on an as needed basis.

12. Q. I'm a staff member and I had training and/or out of state travel scheduled. Is it cancelled?

A. All work-related travel is discontinued until further notice. Staff with outstanding travel commitments or concerns about cancelling scheduled travel should bring such concerns to the attention of their Facility or Division Head. The Governor, along with public health officials, strongly encourages individuals to avoid any personal international travel. All work-related conferences, seminars, and large-scale gatherings hosted by MADOC involving external participants are to be held virtually or cancelled. Employees should not attend external work-related conferences, seminars, and large-scale gatherings and instead should attempt to participate remotely, if feasible.