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Screening of Staff and Prisoners

All MDOC staff are being screened on a daily basis and have been for the last week to try to prevent COVID-19 from getting into the facility. Any staff showing symptoms are removed from the facility if already onsite or denied entrance. The MDOC is complying with CDC recommendations not to issue gloves or masks as a preventative measure. At least one MDOC employee was denied entrance to a prison because the employee wanted to wear personal protection equipment (gloves in this case). These are supplies needed for healthcare workers and confirmed positive patients. Additionally, staff wearing PPE's into the prison could increase anxiety or induce panic among prisoners and fellow employees.

Prisoners are being screened during regular contact with MDOC staff, and anyone who complains of or appears to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 are being screened by health care staff as well.

Social Distancing

Social distancing to the extent recommended for the general public is extremely difficult to achieve inside prison. However, the MDOC has taken a number of precautions to try to limit exposure to COVID-19 by educating prisoners and staff and making operational changes. MDOC reports that both institutional staff and prisoners have been provided with multiple rounds of guidance regarding social distancing, that is, maintaining a 6-foot barrier from others whenever possible.

Prisons are on a modified operational plan to reduce and limit contact including the following areas:

- reducing the sizes of programming and education groups
- spreading out meal schedules by limiting 2 prisoners per table
- avoid unnecessary congregating inside housing units and on the yard
- controlling prisoner movement inside and outside of housing units based on the unique physical layout of each prison while trying to maintain as many operations as possible to promote normalcy and engage prisoners since the COVID-19 response is for an unknown duration
- volunteer programs and face-to-face college programming has been suspended
- healthcare has been modified to limit prisoners congregating
- many gate pass prisoners are laid in to limit their potential contact with the public

Soap Availability and General Cleaning

Prison staff have been instructed repeatedly to make soap continuously available to prisoners. There is no set amount of how much soap a prisoner can get. Staff Facility have been told to make soap available to any prisoners requesting it. Staff are also supposed to make sure the soap dispensers in prisons with community bathrooms are kept filled.

The MDOC has advised me that it has enough soap and cleaning supplies for an extended period of time. Michigan State Industries (MSI), MDOC's manufacturing component, makes soap and sanitizers and is increasing production. MDOC reports it has sufficient inventories at this time to take care of its needs and correctional facilities have been told to place future orders because the duration of the COVID-19 protocol is unknown.

Cleaning inside prisons has been increased and the use of bleach for cleaning was approved to help with sanitation efforts. We believe the MDOC is doing everything it can to try to keep COVID-19 out of prisons and to keep it contained if it gets inside a prison.

Testing

The MDOC has testing kits at every prison, but must presently get permission from a county or state health authority to order a COVID-19 test before it can be administered. As the availability of testing kits increases, this protocol could change to permit broader testing at a later date. Without the ability to test everyone, the MDOC is screening prisoners and staff based on the symptoms associated with COVID-19: cough, sore throat, and elevated temperature of 100.4 or above.

If a prisoner is identified with potential symptoms of COVID-19, the prisoner would be immediately isolated along with anyone who had close contact with the prisoner. Prison health care staff would request permission from a county or state health authority to test the prisoner, conducting the test and sending it to an outside lab once approved. The symptomatic prisoner would be kept in isolation until the test results are received.

Consistent with the current community approach, close contacts to the symptomatic individual will be isolated but will not be tested unless they become symptomatic as well.

Quarantining/Isolating Prisoners

A symptomatic prisoner is isolated from the rest of the prisoner population pending approval of testing and confirmed testing results. Increased cleaning is also continuing part of the plan to try to limit exposure.

Prisoners with close contact to a symptomatic prisoner would be kept isolated from the rest of the prisoner population, but away from the symptomatic prisoner. MDOC staff with contact would be monitored and sent home or denied entry if they exhibit symptoms.

The MDOC has advised me that it is exploring all options for quarantining large numbers of symptomatic and positive prisoners if that becomes necessary. The initial response is to not lock down complete housing units, but rather to isolate symptomatic prisoners and close contacts to them as directed by local health officials. For example, this could include moving symptomatic prisoners to specific cells in a housing unit wing and placing close contacts in a different wing. If the numbers of symptomatic or positive prisoners were to

increase, it could result in isolating those individuals in an entire housing unit or perhaps prison.

The MDOC assures me planning is occurring based on changing scenarios and it will be prepared if a significant number of isolation or treatment beds become necessary.

Staff are self-isolating in their homes.

Some repeat questions we get regarding quarantined prisoners and the answers:

Q. How are prisoners being quarantined? Individually in cells? With a bunk?

A. It depends on the physical plant of each facility. Symptomatic cases are quarantined in single cells. Close contacts may be in a single cell, double cell, or a quarantined bay if non-symptomatic.

Q. Are quarantined prisoners allowed any out of cell time? If so, what kind and how much?

A. Close contact prisoners have limited time out of cell for phone calls, showers, and yard. Positive prisoners and prisoners under investigation would generally not be out of cell due to the potential risk to staff and other prisoners.

Q. Do they have access to phones, JPay, SecurePaks, store, library, laundry, etc.?

A. Yes, they have access to phones and laundry. They can also get materials from the law library if necessary. There is no access for the quarantined population to use JPay emails due to a lack of kiosks. Prisoner store merchandise and SecurePak is being held until the prisoner is released from quarantine. Prisoners have very limited property because COVID-19 can be transferred on surfaces. The MDOC is trying to limit the modes of potential transfer of the virus.

Q. Are prisoners told why they are being quarantined.

A. Prisoners who present as symptomatic know the reason they are being quarantined. Prisoners who are close contacts are told they are the close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and that is why they are being placed in quarantine.

Q. Are other prisoners and staff in the unit of the quarantined prisoners or at their facility being told why other prisoners have been quarantined?

A. Staff and prisoners are aware that prisoners are being moved to be placed in quarantine. The MDOC cannot share specific healthcare information with prisoners or staff, such as the status of specific prisoners or employees.

Q. Will the prisoners be returned to their former units or prisons after the 14 day waiting period?

A. Yes in most cases, but it will be dependent on the operational needs of the MDOC and available capacity when they are cleared for return to the general population.

Contact with Loved Ones

Visiting prisoners is still prohibited due to COVID-19 and it is unknown when regular visitation will take place. All volunteer services have been suspended as well.

The telephone vendor has provided prisoners with two free five-minute telephone calls per week so prisoners can stay in touch with loved ones.

The email vendor has provided prisoners with two free e-stamps a week for prisoners to send emails to loved ones.

Both incoming and outgoing regular mail is being processed and delivered.

Prisoner Transfers

The majority of prisoner transfers have been frozen, transfers are occurring only for specific MDOC needs and require Deputy Director approval. Transfers for programming are not eligible for consideration.

The MDOC has stopped transfers out of the Egeler Reception and Guidance Center and have opened a closed block to house the population there.

Some prisoners who staff at correctional facilities believe need to be moved to some type of specialized housing such as mental health, physical health, segregation, and ASRP are still being moved as need but only with Deputy Director approval.

Parole Process

The Parole Board is still conducting normal interviews and issuing decisions. The MDOC is working to expedite approved parole releases so they parole as close to their ERD as possible. The only cases not being considered currently are parolable lifer cases, as the MDOC does not believe it safely conduct public hearings at correctional facilities so they have been temporarily paused.

People are still being released on parole, and offenders who discharge after serving their maximum sentences are also being released.

Prisoner programming, education, and church services are continuing, but at a slower pace with smaller groups in all classrooms to try to prevent the spread of COVID. These activities have all stopped at facilities with the highest positive cases – LCF, MRF, and SMT.