



**Indiana Department of Correction
2020 Emergency Response Report
September 14, 2020**

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Summary

The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) is a 24/7 operation consisting largely of essential personnel and services with a mission to promote public safety by providing meaningful, effective opportunities for successful re-entry.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact Indiana, the IDOC began planning for modifications of facility operations in the event of a large-scale outbreak. This plan included utilizing IDOC industry resources to begin manufacturing masks, hand sanitizer, face shields, and gowns to provide to staff and offenders.

The Indiana Department of Correction has continuously maintained a proactive and quickly moving approach to slow the spread of COVID-19. Throughout this “Public Health Emergency”, IDOC has adhered to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Interim Guidance on the Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities¹ and followed guidance given by the Indiana State Department of Health.

The IDOC has implemented a five-phase approach to assess each facility’s status throughout the pandemic. As we work through the phases, the IDOC continues to develop plans for the fall and winter months in the event of a second surge of COVID-19.

If you have questions please direct them to Legislative Liaison Margaux Auxier at MAuxier@idoc.in.gov or 317-719-5585.

Operations Overview and Suspended and Reduced Services

Overview:

The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) has continuously maintained a proactive and quickly moving approach to slow the spread of COVID-19. Throughout the public health emergency, IDOC has adhered to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Interim Guidance on the Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities" and followed guidance given by the Indiana State Department of Health.

Preparation:

Prior to the first positive case in the state of Indiana, IDOC leadership met and distributed educational materials to all IDOC facilities and staff. IDOC medical staff coordinated with our medical vendor, Wexford Health Services, to develop an IDOC & Wexford COVID-19 Protocol² detailing screening, treatment, isolation, and testing protocols in the event staff or offenders were exposed to the virus.

On March 6th, 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Indiana was announced. All IDOC facilities developed emergency response plans detailing strategies to handle a large-scale quarantine or isolation scenario. Additionally, IDOC changed the mission of its industries division and began producing facemasks, hand sanitizer, face shields, and gowns to provide to staff and offenders. At IDOC's central office location, staff who were able to work-from-home were encouraged to do so.

The Indiana Department of Correction also placed their Technical Response Team on standby. The IDOC Technical Response Team is an in-house hazardous materials response team that was developed in 2018. When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Indiana, this team was tasked with assisting in sanitizing areas within our facilities to help control and prevent the spread of the virus.

One of the most notable changes in procedure occurred by developing new entry/exit measures at all IDOC facilities for all staff. These procedures include screening questions, social distancing during shakedown, temperature checks, and encouraging staff who are symptomatic or ill to stay home and seek testing. These protocols will be maintained as the "new normal" moving forward.

Over the course of the following weeks IDOC reduced or suspended the below services:

Reduced	Suspended
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industries• Offender intakes• Offender transfers• Inter-facility movement• In-office meetings• Offender services (made available via tablet/kiosks):<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational services• Vocational services• Religious services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offender visitation• Volunteer services• Non-essential staff trainings• In-person interviews• In-person attorney visits• Offender movement<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exception: Emergencies• In-person offender programming• Off-site work crews

COVID-19 Operations:

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 occurred on April 1, 2020. Offenders were isolated and quarantined in accordance with CDC Guidelines and staff were distributed appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The Indiana State Department of Health strike team was activated and assisted with decontamination and testing. IDOC has waived all medical co-pays associated with the Coronavirus testing and treatment.

IDOC quickly adopted the mentality that communication with staff, offenders, and offenders loved ones was essential. An IDOC Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 website was launched at idoc.in.gov. On this site there are many resources for the public, including daily updated comprehensive data for each facility regarding the virus.³

As details about the transmission of COVID-19 were learned, all IDOC staff were given a self-assessment tool to screen their risk levels. Additionally, IDOC began a Live Infocast three days a week which allowed staff to tune-in, ask questions, and provide feedback. IDOC also launched a COVID-19 inbox and hotline to respond directly to staff's requests for advice, testing site information, and human resources support in real-time.

Furthermore, Commissioner Rob Carter and IDOC leadership developed several letters (see Attachment I) and videos for offender families to keep loved ones updated on current COVID-19 mitigation efforts. In an additional effort to keep offenders in communications with families, IDOC collaborated with our tablet services provider to offer free video conference calls (once a

week) and phone calls (twice a week) to all IDOC offenders so they could stay in contact with their families.

The most notable communications came from the Commissioner's Update Briefing. Each day Commissioner Rob Carter and IDOC leadership conducted virtual meetings with all correctional facilities, parole districts, and medical services providers to conduct daily update briefings and field questions as the circumstances of each facility changed and developed. Topics covered each day included proper cohorting/isolation/quarantining protocols, recommendations on social distancing efforts, food contingency plans, staff call-offs and health screenings, PPE production and needs, offender management needs, and fielding specific questions from each facility. These communications proved vital in the dissemination of information during the rapidly developing Public Health Emergency.

Further communication was provided to offenders in our facilities on their tablets via videos and flyers. Topics covered included basic prevention methods (hand washing, covering cough, utilization of sanitizers, social distancing whenever possible, etc.), how to allow their family members and loved ones to access their private medical information, top precautions IDOC is taking to ensure a healthy environment, the importance of mask wearing, and resources for those who are soon to be released during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure COVID-19 protocols were implemented as intended at each facility, IDOC utilized the auditing division to conduct compliance checks. In addition to these internal audits, staff were allocated to monitor cameras via remote surveillance and report violations of COVID-19 protocols.

IDOC also developed contingency plans for our high-risk populations. These high-risk individuals include those pregnant or caring for a child, those over the age of 60 and those with high-risk co-morbidities (as deemed by medical). Offenders who met the appropriate criteria (as determined by security and medical staff), were moved to alternative locations to reduce the risk of possible exposure. An example of this was moving approximately 45 male offenders, who had been conduct free for the past two years and were over the age of 60 to Logansport Correctional Facility to prevent possible exposure. These individuals were monitored and screened daily for COVID-19 symptoms by medical staff.

Indiana National Guard soldiers and airmen provided necessary medical support and perimeter assistance to the Indiana Department of Correction facilities across the state in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This partnership allowed IDOC staff traditionally posted in these positions to be reassigned inside the facilities and provide additional safety and security as non-traditional housing spaces were utilized to isolate and quarantine offenders.

Preparations Overview for Recovery and Future Emergencies

Recovery

Indiana Department of Correction will systematically reestablish normal operations by following a multi-phase reintegration plan to address the needs of our offender population, the community, and the State of Indiana while ensuring the safety of our staff and offenders. The end goal is to return all IDOC correctional facilities to normal operation using a phased reintegration plan.

*Criteria to move to next phases:

- Number of new positive cases has consistently decreased for *10 days*
- Number of hospitalizations has consistently decreased for *10 days*
- Less than 10% of non-custody staff covering custody posts
- PPE inventory above 30% surplus

*NOTE: If any of the above criteria begins to trend negatively for a facility, executive staff will evaluate the facility and may move the facility back to a previous phase to prevent further spread of the virus.

IDOC continues to evaluate each facility on an individual basis and has provided a catered phase-in approach in accordance to CDC and Indiana State Department of Health guidelines.

Future Emergency Planning

As the COVID-19 surge rapidly made its way to Indiana, IDOC learned how truly adaptable we are as an organization. Our essential staff moved quickly to flatten the curve in a situation no one had ever faced. However, as we experience what may be a brief reprieve, we have not become complacent, and have begun emergency planning for a potential second wave of COVID-19 in the fall.

As part of our future pandemic strategies, we are conducting after action reviews and updating our facility's pandemic emergency response plans. Parts of these plans include providing more guidance on remote work policies for those staff who are able (It is important to note IDOC consists mostly of essential personnel that cannot work remotely). Also, for our staff, we will update our screening documents for the facility and office entry/exit process to reflect the most recent CDC guidelines and streamline the process time. Additionally, we are also working with our offender food services provider to prepare and plan for the need to distribution of sack lunches for quarantined and isolated offenders.

We continue to work with the Indiana State Department of Health and local health departments to prepare in the event of an outbreak at a correctional facility. A top priority will be maintaining communication with local officials, so they are aware of updates within our facilities. Our Chief Medical Officer is in conversations with local hospitals to discuss preferred staffing and locations in the event we have a large scale need for offender transport for care outside of the facility.

A major hurdle during the initial days of the pandemic was access to no-touch, temporal, and oral thermometers. In preparation for future emergencies the IDOC has procured a surplus of approximately 500 thermometers to distribute state-wide in the event of a future outbreak.

IDOC continues to manufacture PPE in-house, and will be able to provide these items to our fellow state agencies if the surplus allows. Additionally, we are currently working with our partners to procure additional N95 masks, thermometers, and other high demand items in preparation. We are working with our Technical Response Team (hazmat team) to provide fit testing and education for staff so they are aware of how to properly wear N95 masks if the need arises.

Our offender services and tablet provider is working closely with IDOC leadership to provide a robust library of electronic services in the event of a future outbreak. Some of these include additional education, legal, addiction recovery, and mental health resources.

Legislative Recommendations for Future Emergencies

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic severely physically and/or mentally ill offenders became eligible for release. During this time, many transitional care facilities traditionally utilized in these scenarios were not accepting intakes due to the virus. IDOC having the general authority to hold an offender up-to seven days during these situations would allow for greater community partnership and proper continuation of care and services upon release.

Continuity of care for persons released.

- (a) Any person incarcerated by the Department may be permitted to remain within a treatment facility operated by the Department, if serious physical or mental disorders or disabilities exist, until release to a similar treatment setting outside of the Department can be accomplished.
- (b) In no case should the continuation of housing extend beyond a seven-day period.
- (c) The Department will adopt policies to govern the housing situations.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2020. *Communities, Schools, Workplaces, & Events*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html>>
2. In.gov. 2020. *Indiana Department Of Correction: IDOC & Wexford COVID-19 Protocol*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.in.gov/idoc/3751.htm>>
3. In.gov. 2020. *Indiana Department Of Correction: IDOC Facility COVID-19 Statistics*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.in.gov/idoc/3780.htm>>

April 6, 2020

Dear family, friends, and loved ones of incarcerated individuals,

As we face this “Challenge of our times”, there is much uncertainty about what is to come in the days and weeks ahead. Having a loved one in prison only adds to that uncertainty. I believe it’s important that you know the steps we are taking, and how you can find updates in our efforts to resist the spread of COVID-19, and limit its impact on those incarcerated within IDOC’s juvenile facilities and prisons.

As we work through this public health emergency, please know that our goal is the same as yours; to keep your loved ones safe and healthy. To that end, we are doing all we can. The IDOC’s efforts are closely aligned with the national Center for Disease Control’s recently updated “Interim Guidance on the Management of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities.”

Just a few of the measures we have taken include, social distancing by preventing visitors, volunteers and unapproved persons from entering facilities, and carefully screening all others before they are admitted. Newly sentenced inmates begin in a quarantine-like status until it is confirmed they do not have signs of the disease. We have begun a cleaning campaign in which inmates and staff alike are continuously deep-cleaning and sanitizing areas throughout facilities; and we have a specially trained response team at-the-ready to disinfect any area that might be exposed. We have waived all medical co-pays associated with the coronavirus.

Experienced and trained staff are in continuous contact with Indiana’s State Department of Health. We are prepared to handle any case of COVID-19 that may infiltrate our facilities; and staff are prepared to take the steps necessary to ensure those incarcerated receive appropriate medical care.

Unfortunately, I am apprised by health care professionals that this situation will likely get worse in the coming weeks before it gets better. Our website and social media accounts will have the most up-to-date information, so I encourage you to follow the IDOC on Facebook or Twitter, and to check our website frequently for updated information.

I encourage you to continue to contact your loved one’s to offer them encouragement, support and reassurance; just as I expect them to provide the same level of support and reassurance to you. To assist with this communication, we have worked with telephone and video services providers to permit, throughout the coming weeks, eligible inmates the ability to make, free of charge, two five-minute phone calls each week, as well as one weekly 10-minute video visit.

Your compassion and support is important, and in many cases essential, to ensuring incarcerated individuals observe good self-care practices, maintain good mental health, and continue their ongoing efforts to complete treatment and programming expectations toward their overarching goal of returning to you, and successfully re- entering our community.

Sincerely,

Rob Carter
Commissioner
IDOC