



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE  
SPRINGFIELD 62702

## **COVID-19 RESPONSE**

**JB PRITZKER**  
Governor

**ROB JEFFREYS**  
Director

### **Memorandum**

**To:** All Men and Women in Custody

**From:** Alyssa Williams, Chief of Programs and Support Services

**Date:** March 19, 2020

**Subject:** COVID-19 Preventative Measures for Men and Women in Custody

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Your health, safety, and well-being are among our highest priorities at Illinois Department of Corrections. With recent developments regarding COVID-19 (the 2019 novel Coronavirus), we want to take a moment to reinforce best-practice preventative safety measures and reference our process and procedures to keep IDOC staff healthy.

COVID-19 causes upper respiratory disease similar to the flu. In some cases, it can evolve into a viral pneumonia with or without further systemic complications. In most cases, however, the disease resolves without complications particularly if the persons are otherwise healthy. Elderly persons with underlying chronic health conditions are at increased risk. It is important to remember that at this time, according to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), there are several confirmed cases of the Coronavirus in Illinois. Currently there are no confirmed cases in any IDOC facility. As an agency, we are closely monitoring the situation and are taking guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). The immediate health risk to the public in Illinois and the United States remains low.

We encourage you to be mindful of preventative measures that can be taken. Please remember that if you are sick or think you have a fever, you should inform a healthcare provider or correctional officer. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher. Keeping distance from those who complain of respiratory symptoms is also important. The value of frequent handwashing and sanitization cannot be emphasized enough.



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What we currently know about COVID-19 is that it may present with fever, cough and shortness of breath. We know that approximately 80% of those infected will have a mild disease. Others will develop more serious disease requiring hospitalization. An even smaller percentage may require critical care and ventilator support. Like Influenza, COVID-19 is readily transmissible through infected surfaces or by being in close proximity to a person that is infected and has respiratory symptoms. COVID-19, however, seems to be more potent and can spread with greater ease. In the community, “social distancing” is an important tool we are all using throughout the U.S. to halt the accelerated growth of COVID-19. This is important because there are currently no vaccinations or targeted treatments available as yet. Social distancing, however, is not practical in prison where there is not ample space to spread out. It is therefore imperative that we practice the stance of prevention and early identification to avoid it’s spread.

### **Proactive Steps to Stay Healthy**

You are encouraged to follow these common-sense practices:

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth and broken skin with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with the inside of the arm or with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue away immediately. Wash hands as soon as possible afterward.
- For the safety of you and those around you, daily temperature checks of every person in quarantine or isolation will be mandatory as it will be important to quickly identify those that may be at risk for escalating or worsening symptoms and offer expedient monitoring and supportive care. It will also help us to know when it is safe to return the offender back to general population. Because this will be essential for your safety, the staff and those around you, temperature checks for offenders in quarantine or isolation will not be optional, but mandatory. Those refusing would potentially be subject to further quarantine or isolation for the safety of everyone.



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We will continue to monitor this situation closely in the days and weeks to come. Be assured that additional communication will be forthcoming, if and when the situation changes. We will continue to take guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health and communicate with you, as appropriate.