

# COVID-19 Q & A

January 14, 2021

1. There are currently no social distancing measures in cell blocks and common spaces; inmates from various cell blocks are being moved around and mixed together, making it easier for the virus to spread.
  - a. **This is true, although earlier in the pandemic, our relatively low population made it easier to provide enough space for residents to social distance, if they chose to. It is more difficult to do so now with our higher population. In addition, our new quarantine procedures require more space to provide a higher level of quarantine. However, even when we had more space for social distancing, residents would still sit together to play games and watch TV or socialize. It is difficult in any room where you live, eat, and sleep 24 hours a day and seven days a week to maintain 6 feet at all times.**
2. Officers and inmates are not wearing masks consistently; inmates have only been given a few masks since the pandemic started, and are rarely able to clean them.
  - a. **It is not feasible to force any resident to wear a mask although it is encouraged. In addition since the majority of our facility is open air and dormitory in nature, unless residents also wear their mask properly while sleeping, it is not as effective as it otherwise could be.**
  - b. **The masks provided to residents are washable and reusable. They are provided two masks. One can be laundered while one is being worn. Residents are also provided soap and access to water at all times in order to hand wash their masks as I do my personal mask at home.**
  - c. **Staff are required and if necessary disciplined if they are not wearing their PPE. As all of us during this pandemic have experienced, it is difficult to maintain a mask properly over your mouth and nose as you are working and speaking for 12 hours at a time. Masks slip under the nose when speaking and it may not be realized until they are notified by someone else. After being notified, if the behavior is not corrected, they can be disciplined.**
3. Inmates instead of a professional cleaning company have been required to clean the jail themselves without proper training or proper cleaning supplies. (1 cleaning rag per cell block, and watered down cleaning solution)
  - a. **All residents are expected to clean their housing area, much like I clean my own home; residents are not trained since there are not extraordinary cleaning measures relative to a normal cleaning process. The cleaning solution provided is approved by the CDC to kill the Corona Virus.**
  - b. **The solution provided to us is distributed through equipment that automatically dilutes the chemical to the levels indicated by the manufacturer to perform at its designed mixture. Staff does not “water it down”.**

4. Inmates are depressed because they have not been allowed visitation or virtual calls (facetime, zoom, etc.) with loved ones; also have had very little activities available.
  - a. **I certainly empathize, and we are working on a long term solution with Video Visitation. Activities require movement throughout the facility which can spread the virus to other parts of the jail. Our main goal is to prevent, to the best of our ability a facility wide outbreak and ensure our residents and staff members are safe.**
5. The entire jail has not been tested for COVID since September
  - a. **Large scale facility wide COVID tests are only conducted with an outbreak has occurred. We have been fortunate that we have not experienced an outbreak that would warrant a large scale test.**
6. What official COVID safety measures and guidelines have been implemented at the jail? How do you ensure that they are followed?
  - a. **Temperature checks are conducted through thermal imaging at all entrances to the facility. Staff members are provided with and expected to wear PPE at all times. Inmates are given 2 reusable masks. All incoming residents are screened per CDC guidelines for COVID symptoms and exposure. Those who are symptomatic or have had a recent exposure are tested. Those who are asymptomatic and have had no known exposure are placed into quarantine and tested prior to be placed into the general population. Cleaning supplies approved by the CDC to kill the virus are provided daily. All residents have access to soap and water 24/7.**
7. A big concern seems to be COVID testing. When and how often are inmates being tested for COVID? What about staff?
  - a. **All new residents are tested at day 14 of quarantine before they are placed into general population. During those 14 days, they are monitored by medical staff daily for symptoms.**
  - b. **Staff members are tested if they are symptomatic or have reported an exposure.**
  - c. **Testing asymptomatic / non-exposed staff or inmates every two weeks is highly resource intensive and would yield a false sense of security since a person could contract and shed the virus between testing, or test negative today only to be exposed or contract the virus tomorrow.**
  - d. **We have to operate on the assumption that everyone is positive and wear PPE and take universal precautions whenever possible.**
8. Some of the other issues brought up specifically pertained to the women being housed in the old jail which is badly in need of many updates. Is the building going to be renovated, and if so, when? Will the women be moved into the newer portion of the jail, if so, when?
  - a. **The old portion of the jail was built in the mid 70's and is in desperate need of renovations. The board is looking into doing that at our January 14, 2021 meeting.**
  - b. **The newer part of the facility that was built in 2000 is a much better environment.**
  - c. **Over the years, we have tried to house women in these units. Due to the relatively low population compared to our male population, it requires that all of the women be housed in one housing unit.**

