



Issue Brief

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

COVID-19 at the Oregon Department of Corrections

Current Numbers

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) COVID-19 website has updated information on employee and adult in custody (AIC) test results. This information can be accessed through the DOC homepage at www.oregon.gov/doc.

First positive COVID-19 cases at DOC

On March 8, 2020 Governor Kate Brown announced policies designed to slow the spread of COVID-19. On March 12, DOC announced the suspension of visiting and volunteers.

The first positive employee test was at the Oregon State Penitentiary on March 27. The first positive AIC test for COVID-19 was confirmed on April 2 at Santiam Correctional Institution.

Testing of Employees

It is not possible for DOC to know how many employees have been tested for COVID-19 as that information is not always shared with the agency and is protected health information. DOC reports the self-disclosed confirmed employee cases of COVID-19 on the DOC website's tracking page.

Testing and Housing of AICs

DOC is following the recommendations of its medical doctors, who are working closely with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for when testing should occur.

The Agency Operations Center (AOC) is in consultation with DOC's Chief of Medicine and DOC's Infectious Disease Specialist to determine the best medical care for adults in Oregon DOC custody.

DOC is not mandatory testing AICs. Staff are working hard to educate all AICs on the benefits of getting

tested and how to stay healthy. Health Services inside Oregon's state correctional settings are similar to any community doctor's office – tests and procedures are recommended by the provider. However, the patient may choose not to move forward with the recommended plan. Like all Oregonians, AICs are encouraged to be engaged in their own healthcare and medical choices.

AIC Screening Protocol

Screening protocol is determined by a variety of factors, including the Tier Status of an institution, institution layout, and AIC movements. More details can be found in [DOC's COVID-19 Infection Prevention, Testing, and De-Escalation Protocol](#) document.

AICs with symptoms of COVID-19 are screened by DOC's healthcare providers. Signs and symptoms are determined by the CDC and currently include new fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and/or new loss of taste or smell.

All AICs participating in work opportunities in institution kitchens, dining halls, physical plants, and correctional industries are screened for symptoms prior to reporting to their assignment. AICs who are showing symptoms will be directed to Health Services for additional assessment.

AIC Testing Protocol

DOC does not have any current limits on its ability to provide COVID-19 tests to AICs. Testing is determined by designated healthcare providers for each DOC institution, in accordance with guidance from DOC's Chief of Medicine and Infectious Disease Specialist, consistent with CDC and OHA clinical guidelines. DOC does not have mandatory testing—a provider may recommend a test, but the AIC may also decline.

While recommended testing is generally determined by DOC health providers on a case-by-case basis, some groups of adults in custody are scheduled for

recommended testing based on their incarceration dates. This includes:

- AICs in Intake are offered testing on arrival and again on day 10
- AICs who are releasing from DOC custody are offered testing prior to release
- AICs who must be transferred to another facility are schedule for a test prior to transfer

AICs Positive for COVID-19

When an AIC tests positive for the virus, DOC isolates the patient. That person may be transported to another facility for appropriate medical care. Not all prisons have 24/7 healthcare onsite.

Medical Isolation

Medical isolation refers to confining a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case. Ideally, each isolated individual would be confined in a single cell with solid walls and a solid door that closes to prevent contact with others and to reduce the risk of transmission. Medical isolation ends when the individual meets pre-established clinical and/or testing criteria for release from isolation, in consultation with clinical providers and public health officials.

In this context, isolation does NOT refer to punitive isolation for behavioral infractions within the custodial setting.

Quarantine

Quarantine refers to confining individuals who have had close contact with a COVID-19 case to determine whether they develop symptoms of the disease. Quarantine for COVID-19 lasts for a period of 14 days. Ideally, each quarantined individual would be confined in a single cell with solid walls and a solid door that closes. If symptoms develop during the 14-day period, the AIC will be placed under medical isolation and evaluated for COVID-19. If symptoms do not develop, movement restrictions can be lifted, and the individual can return to their previous residency status within the facility.

The above definitions are from the CDC and “guidance may need to be adapted based on individual facilities’ physical space, staffing, population, operations, and other resources and conditions.”¹

Wearing Masks Inside DOC’s Institutions

Anyone entering DOC property is required to wear a mask or face covering in any indoor work setting or other indoor premises regardless of distance from others unless they are in a private, individual setting not shared by anyone else or they are actively eating or drinking AND at least six (6) feet of distance can be maintained between other people.

On October 8, the Agency Operations Center (AOC) acquired a large quantity of enhanced face coverings for distribution to DOC employees and AICs after new research and guidance from the CDC and discussion with OHA encouraged this level of protection.

While these face coverings are technically [N-95](#) respirators, fit-testing will not be done for the vast majority of staff and AICs. These face coverings have been made available for employees and AICs through Health Services at each location. Institutions have been ordering additional enhanced face coverings from CDC each month as needed.

Employee Screening Protocol

Upon entering the institution, a staff member takes employee temperatures and asks employees the following questions:

- Are you experiencing a new fever, cough, shortness of breath, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea and/or new loss of taste or smell?
- Have you been identified through Local Public Health Authority or Health Provider contact tracing as a close contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 illness within 14 days?

If an employee answers no to both questions and does not have a temperature above 100 degrees, the employee will be allowed to enter the facility. If an employee responds yes to one or more questions, and/or records an initial temperature above 100 degrees, the manager(s) will direct the employee to a designated waiting area and will administer a secondary screening protocol.

¹ Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities

The secondary screening protocol administered by the designated manager(s) is conducted no less than five minutes after the initial screening.

Social Distancing in Oregon's Prisons

DOC's institutions and worksites have implemented social distancing measures to the best of their ability given infrastructure and operational restrictions. These measures vary by institution but commonly include:

- All DOC prisons are closed to visitors, volunteers, and the majority of contract employees.
- Modified line movements to limit the number of AICs in common areas.
- To the extent possible, AICs are staying together by unit. For example, meals, medline, and yard time.
- Markings have been placed on the ground six feet apart, indicating where people should stand in line.

AIC Communication

Communication

DOC is engaging in frequent communications with AICs in the form of updates, printed and hand delivered to every AIC, letters from health services, posters, digital announcements, and video messages. The Office of Communications provides as weekly update which includes current case numbers and helpful information on AIC kiosks and announcement boards. DOC has distributed and placed many signs regarding symptoms of COVID-19, hand-washing, and social distancing within DOC facilities. As of December, these communications also include updates on and promotion of the COVID-19 vaccine which will begin to be distributed to DOC staff and AICs in late 2020/early 2021.

Transporting AICs

As part of the existing transfer process, all AICs are medically screened prior to leaving the facility. If an AIC is transferred from a quarantined facility to another facility, they are quarantined for 14 days.

AIC work crews from non-outbreak institutions are regularly screened and continue to be transported to their daily work locations in the community.

Tier Status

The tiered prevention plan and protocol was created by the AOC in conjunction with Health Services.

- Tier 1 – Institutions without known COVID-19.
- Tier 2 – Institutions with confirmed COVID-19 (AIC and/or employee) originating from the institution.
- Tier 3 – Institutions with confirmed COVID-19 and expanded testing of those with direct contact and all symptomatic AICs.
- Tier 4 – Entire institution quarantined for 14 days.

All AIC transfers for Tiers 2-4 designated institutions are coordinated through the Agency Operations Center.

**The mission of the
Oregon Department of Corrections
is to promote public safety by
holding offenders accountable for their
actions and reducing the risk of future
criminal behavior.**



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