

Website FAQ Document
January 22, 2021

Are family of those testing positive notified?

In an effort to protect confidential health information, we are unable to disclose the result of COVID-19 testing to family members. Efforts to mitigate spread of the virus require some residents to be in quarantine or isolation. In those instances, in cell time often increases which unfortunately makes phone access more difficult for a facility. However, every effort is expended to have some times in which residents can access phone and JPAY to share their status with family.

Are the prisons on lockdown?

Virus mitigation strategies recommended by Public Health Officials necessitate our residents quarantining or isolating if exposed or tested positive for the coronavirus. Quarantine or isolation necessitates increased time in the residents' cell to reduce exposure to others. This is done as a public health mitigation strategy and is not a lockdown.

How will I know that my loved one is safe?

We know that the news surrounding COVID-19 is distressing, even more so when you are unable to see your loved one in person. To assist you in staying connected to your loved ones, each resident continues to receive two (2) free 15-minute calls and three (3) free 30-minute video visits per week. Any unused visits will reset each Saturday evening and on Sunday, accounts will reset with the number of free visits allowed. These free phone calls and video visits are temporary while visitation is suspended. As was the case prior to visitation being suspended, any residents being managed as a sex offender do not have access to video visits.

Will KDOC be accepting new intakes from jails and court commitments?

Since early in the pandemic, the Department has utilized Intake Isolation Units as a mitigation strategy for residents arriving at KDOC facilities. These allow those new/returning residents to be housed separately from the rest of the population where they will spend a minimum of 14 days (extended to 21 days in November 2020) in isolation while they are monitored for COVID-19 symptoms prior to moving to RDU. The adult males were housed at Larned initially and currently the IIU is on at the El Dorado Correctional Facility to be on-site with the Reception and Diagnostic Unit (RDU). KJCC and TCF also have their own versions to serve their populations. Each person being transferred to KDOC is screened for a fever, signs and symptoms of lower respiratory illness and their contact or potential contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients.

My loved one was scheduled for a transfer to another facility. Will that still go on as planned?

We are limiting transfers as much as possible during this time. If a transfer is needed as a safety precaution for the individual, we will continue with the transfer. The individual will be screened prior to leaving the old facility and screened upon arrival to the new facility.

What does it mean to be on a unit with reduced movement?

Implementing reduced movement in a facility allows fewer opportunities for the virus to move between units. Reduced movement is not a lockdown. Residents are kept within their units, but not locked in their cells, during this time. For necessary movement, residents are kept primarily in their groups or cohorts. For those who have jobs within the facility, including laundry, food services and housekeeping, those workers will continue to report to their work assignments. We are working hard to protect our staff and residents to ensure they are healthy and safe. Reduced movement can be used as an earlier mitigation step, but sometimes quarantine or isolation are required. Each are mitigation steps for public health of residents and staff with goal to avoid a full lockdown, this action may become necessary depending on how quickly this virus spreads throughout the facility. If we can give notice prior to a lockdown we will, but with how rapidly this virus is moving that may not be an option.

What are we doing with the inmates that are at higher risk, such as diabetes, asthma or an underlying health condition?

We know there are many in our population with underlying medical conditions making them more susceptible to the virus and we are working hard to ensure their health and safety. During the course of the pandemic, we have reviewed housing assignments for this population with an emphasis on reducing the use of open dormitory housing for this more vulnerable population. This necessitated a move of residents from our Stockton satellite facility to other non-dormitory housing at other facilities. We have also reduced the use of dormitory style housing across the system to reduce the number of persons in this type of beds.

What is being done at Wichita Work Release with COVID 19?

Operations at the Wichita Work Release Facility (WWRF) were suspended on May 14, 2020. No residents are housed there and staff have been assigned to other facilities to assist in their implementation of coronavirus mitigation strategies.

Does someone who is incarcerated qualify for the EIP (Economic Impact Payment)?

Yes. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) was reversed on their application of this law by the Federal Court. At the request of the IRS, KDOC distributed information and forms to our residents on this payment.

Are cloth masks provided to residents and staff to help reduce the spread of the virus?

Yes. When the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) revised their recommendation on April 3, 2020 regarding use of cloth masks, the Department began manufacturing masks with the first distribution occurring at Lansing on April 9th. Cloth masks were subsequently provided to all facilities on April 23rd and remain in use today. A mandate for staff and residents to wear masks was issued July 3, 2020 with ongoing education and encouragement to residents and staff encouraging the use of masks.

Who is placed on quarantine?

People who don't currently have symptoms but were exposed to the virus.

Who is placed on isolation?

People who tested positive for the virus

How frequently are residents tested in KDOC facilities?

Expanded testing under guidance from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDOC) requires testing upon potential exposure to another person who may have or has the virus. An initial test is done with another test at the end of the quarantine/isolation period. Each time a resident is exposed to a positive case the testing process is repeated, which can result in residents being tested multiple times. Residents are also tested at admission, release, at any transfer to or from another facility and if sent out to Court. As of January 11, 2021, over 33,000 tests have been conducted on facility residents.

What type of COVID-19 tests are utilized by KDOC?

KDOC primarily utilizes the PCR nasal swab test. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has provided equipment and training for use of saliva-based testing, but when used any positive saliva test is confirmed with a PCR test which is more accurate.

Is KDOC working on any additional early releases?

Not currently.

Is KDOC experiencing staff shortages due to the virus?

As community spread of the virus increased across Kansas our employees have been affected. When necessary healthy staff have stepped forward to work overtime to cover shifts in addition to some staff being temporarily reassigned to other facilities.

How does KDOC discipline facility residents and staff who do not follow health safety measures that are in place?

KDOC educates, and regularly communicates the need for responsible and appropriate behavior of residents and staff in response to Covid19. Everyone must do their part to bring this pandemic to end. Education is supported by active screening of staff as they report for duty each day and sent home when indicated.

What is KDOC doing to limit the spread of COVID-19 in its facilities?

The Department has implemented and sustained many mitigation strategies since the beginning of the pandemic. That includes but is not limited to reducing access to our facilities, implemented screening of all who enter our facilities, continually provided information and education on the virus to residents and staff, changed use of specific units with particular emphasis on reduced use of dormitory style housing, implemented intake isolation units for new admissions, and testing protocols. All have been developed and implemented with public health officials at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and for more information please see our website at <https://www.doc.ks.gov/kdoc-coronavirus-updates> which is updated each month.

How many COVID-19 tests have been conducted in Kansas facilities?

Through January 11, 2021 a total of 33,683 tests have been conducted in Kansas facilities. Of those tests, 28,136 (84%) were negative and 5,547 (16%) positive.

How many residents and staff have the virus at this time?

Data on both current positive cases and cumulative totals during the pandemic for residents and staff are posted to our website each week at <https://www.doc.ks.gov/kdoc-coronavirus-updates/kdoc-covid-19-status>

How do family, the public and media stay current on the mitigation and impact of COVID-19 at KDOC?

We encourage anyone interested in COVID-19 specific to the KDOC to visit our website at <https://www.doc.ks.gov/kdoc-coronavirus-updates> where we post data, list mitigation efforts, post the weekly messages to residents and their families and other facts associated with our mitigation efforts.

Are residents still able to receive programs that help them change behavior and earn credits to reduce their period of incarceration?

Like other areas of facility operations, the virus has impacted our program staff in many ways. But through their ingenuity and team effort we have been able to continue to provide many of the programs for our residents. Mitigation efforts do result in fewer in person classes and smaller group sizes to provide for increased social distancing. And at times classes have to be temporarily suspended for a short period. In response our staff take materials to each resident's cell, in other instances they've been able to move program materials onto the resident tablets, in yet others we have been able to acquire additional equipment so that classes can be delivered online. Overall, these adjustments have allowed us to continue most of our program offerings while seeing successful completion rates consistent with historical rates.

Have the residents' rate of earning program credit declined due to COVID-19?

Through November of 2020, we have not seen a decline. Eligible residents continue to earn program credit at rates consistent with historical trends in which approximately 90% of available credit is earned.

Are fewer persons participating in programs due to smaller class sizes or cancelations?

The virus has caused some reduction in the number of participants. With the implementation of mitigation strategies that began in March of 2020, the impact in FY2020 (ended June 30, 2020) was less than might be expected at 4% fewer participants for the year (of over 6,500). Based upon FY2021 year to date information, we currently anticipate a decline of 15-20% of participants by the summer of 2021, unless the pandemic is successfully resolved.

How long will a resident be housed in an Intake Isolation Unit (IIU) before admission to the Reception and Diagnostic Unit (RDU)?

Current public health guidelines for our facilities require a minimum of 21 days (14 days prior to November of 2020) in the IIU. However, stays can be longer when a resident is exposed to a positive resident due to persons becoming positive or admission of a positive person from another facility. We understand that longer periods in IIU, and mitigation strategies associated with IIU, can be frustrating

for residents and family. However, to not extend time in the IIU when an exposure occurs would negate the benefit of the IIU of reducing spread into the RDU or other parts of the facility.

Are tents being used to house women at the Topeka Correctional Facility?

All women at the Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) are housed in buildings. However, within the open dormitory style building that houses the residents in the Intake Isolation Unit (IIU) tents are used inside the building in an effort to give the women some privacy from other residents and to encourage isolation from other residents in an effort to reduce virus spread in the IIU.

I've heard about shortages of medical supplies and equipment, has KDOC been impacted?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused shortages across the globe that impact KDOC the same as other organizations. We have seen some improvement across time and continue to monitor inventoried supplies on hand.

What medical monitoring is provided for persons who test positive for Coronavirus?

KDOC residents who are test positive are monitored daily by medical staff for any change in their condition. This daily monitoring is comparable to what anyone in the community should do, assess for symptoms, take temperature, quarantine for others but is done by medically trained personnel instead of relying only on self-care.

Where will my loved one be housed if they test positive?

Housing decisions are made based upon test results, underlying health conditions, whether or not have symptoms, facility of residence and our regular safety considerations. The goal is to provide quarantine or isolation from other residents to the maximum extent possible. For residents housed at our more rural male facilities, if they test positive the first choice is to send them to a COVID Management Unit (CMU) located at the Lansing Correctional Facility where they will be housed temporarily and returned to the original facility when appropriate. Men at El Dorado and Hutchinson will quarantine/isolate at those facilities or Lansing depending upon underlying health conditions and bed availability. Women at Topeka, youth at the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) quarantine or isolate at their facility. Quarantine/isolation is done on a unit by unit basis whenever possible, however in some specialized housing units this may occur on a cell by cell basis in which positive residents will be in a cell with another positive resident(s) while negative residents will be in other cells on the same unit. When this occurs out of cell time is managed by cohort groups to not mix positive and negative residents engaged in activities in day rooms, at meals, etc. Any resident who develops symptoms that are more serious than can be managed by on-site health care staff are admitted to a community hospital.

What if another resident tests positive for COVID-19, how will my loved one be protected?

Those that test positive will be isolated from those that are healthy. KDHE and the local health department will assist us with screening what additional residents need to be isolated. Those who are identified will be moved to isolation and monitored for possible symptoms.

What happens if a resident is unwilling to submit to a COVID-19 test?

Staff communication with any resident who refuses a test is the first step. We recognize that the PCR test is uncomfortable and that some of our residents have been tested multiple times. If that communication is unsuccessful in obtaining resident consent to take the test, the resident will be housed and managed as a positive case for the health and safety of other residents and staff.

What are we doing with the inmates that are at higher risk, such as diabetes, asthma or an underlying health condition?

Residents who are older and/or with underlying health conditions have historically been housed more frequently in our lower custody dormitory style housing units. Dormitory housing has proven to present greater risks to the health of our residents during the coronavirus pandemic. Over the summer of 2020, with an over 15% decline in total population, we were able to reduce the number of persons in many dormitory style units to increase social distancing. In addition, the mission of our Stockton satellite facility was changed from serving older, often infirmed, residents to a population that is younger and healthier.

Is the KDOC attempting to practice "herd immunity"?

No. KDOC coordinates our response to COVID-19 with officials at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to ensure all mitigation efforts are consistent with current public health practices.

Will KDOC residents and staff be prioritized for receipt of vaccines as they become available?

Prioritization of available vaccine doses is being coordinated by public health officials for the State of Kansas on behalf of all citizens. Information on vaccines is being provided by the Governor in her weekly press conferences and will be the source of information as vaccine is received and prioritization is determined.

Is Kansas still housing residents at the Saguaro Correctional Complex in Arizona?

Prior to the pandemic, the Department planned to return our residents by the end of June 2020. The pandemic necessitated leaving them in Arizona after that date and the Department revisits that decision periodically. In November of 2020, with the current reduced population in Kansas facilities, we concluded that we can safely return the residents in Arizona to Kansas and maintain our COVID-19 protocols. The 118 residents housed at that facility returned to Kansas on December 15, 2020.

Are Facilities still processing mail (incoming & outgoing)?

Throughout the pandemic mail has continued to be processed. At points in time this has been slower but it is still coming in and going out.

Why was visitation closed and when will it reopen?

The virus has demonstrated how easily it can be spread in residential settings like a Correctional Facility. By limiting the number of people coming in and out of our facilities, we reduce the potential for further spread. We review our practices on visitation periodically and it will remain suspended until we can resume visitation safely. While not the same as an in-person visit, at this time residents are still

receiving 3 free video visits and 2 free phone calls each week. Sex offenders who are not authorized video visits receive 5 free phone calls each week.

When will KDOC facility residents and staff receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Staff and residents in our facilities are included in Phase 2 of Governor Laura Kelly's vaccination plan. Kansas entered this phase on January 21, 2021 and as availability increases, we anticipate receiving doses over the next several weeks until everyone has had the opportunity to be vaccinated. For additional information please see <https://www.kansasvaccine.gov/>

Why would a minimum custody resident be housed at a higher custody level?

At times the effort to mitigate further spread of the virus has caused this to occur. This can become necessary to provide needed bed capacity in a particular unit for a group of persons on isolation/quarantine or those for those who are not exposed to the virus.