



April 28, 2020

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30329
ATTN: CDC Director Robert R. Redfield

Dear Director Redfield,

We applaud the majority of the measures being recommended by the CDC regarding COVID-19 in our correctional facilities. Your leadership in identifying the need to limit all non-emergency ingress and egress, to temperature test all staff prior to admittance to a facility and to, wherever possible, segregate parts of the population that have either tested positive or are showing symptoms have been very important and are likely already saving lives.

However, as infection, and death rates continue to grow much more rapidly inside prisons than in the general population we feel compelled to point out some areas where we need stronger leadership, direction, guidance and even oversight from the CDC and the National Governors Association.

We feel there are certain areas that fall below the standards that correctional facilities must adopt if we are to ensure the safety of front-line staff, the safety of our families, those incarcerated, and our communities.

Except for medical professionals, no other first responders face a higher level of exposure to contagions than Correctional Officers do. No other occupation works in confined spaces with such a high-risk population and where social distancing is virtually an impossibility. These conditions impact over 400,000 staff and the 1.5 million people in our custody, and as such, they must be addressed and prioritized.

First, we believe that N95 protective masks must be provided to anyone entering, working or living in a prison or jail. All staff should be required to wear a mask, be provided with a new one each shift and those in our custody as well as anyone else (wardens, etc.) in the prison setting must also be provided with and wear top quality masks. As you know, the evidence is now clear

that rates of transmission are dramatically lower when all parties not able to practice social distancing are wearing best in class masks.

Second, in many of our facilities it is a physical impossibility to segregate or quarantine the population. Ventilation is also an issue, especially in older facilities, which raises the risk of contamination, as such we must adopt the safest postures possible. In addition to the N95 masks, gloves must be mandatory for all staff and disinfectant must be readily available throughout the facility.

Third, if COVID-19 does not already exist in a facility, proper precautions should keep that facility infection free. The only way for the virus to take hold is if staff bring it in. Since we now know that COVID-19 can be carried with no outward signs of infection, temperature checks are insufficient. All staff and all inmates should be tested without exception. Lack of testing leaves us blind to the level of threat and incapable of fully preparing for what is to come. It also increases our fears that we may be unknowingly endangering our families.

Fourth, if the infection is detected in the facility (through staff or inmate testing) then all precautions must be taken to minimize its spread. Alternative housing arrangements must be provided for staff working in those facilities to limit that potential and wherever possible inmates testing positive must be medically segregated.

We ask that you consider updating your regulations to include the mandatory wearing of face masks by everyone in a correctional facility, asymptomatic testing of all staff and those who are incarcerated and that staff always wear protective gloves.

Furthermore, we continue to see a lack of consistency in practices and protocols from state to state. From our recent survey we know that still 25% of staff don't have hand sanitizer and 20% don't have masks. We think there is more the CDC could do to inform Governors and heads of DOC's across the country about what the CDC is recommending and urge them to comply with these minimum standards.

We stand ready to partner with you in these efforts and are more than willing to help. With more than 30 Correctional Officers and staff having lost their lives in the line of duty as a result of COVID-19 we will do whatever it takes to protect our brothers and sisters.

Please get back to us as soon as possible to let us know how we can work together and discuss next steps.

With respect,

Andy Potter
Founder
One Voice

Brian Dawe
Executive Director
ACOIN