



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**  
P.O. Box 41101 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1101

February 18, 2022

Dear Families of Incarcerated Individuals,

I wanted to share that we are seeing cases of COVID-19 start to significantly decline in facilities across the state. Many work release facilities have come off facility-wide outbreak status while ten of our 12 prisons remain on facility wide outbreak and restricted movement. As of February 17, (Thursday), we have seen a 76% decrease in COVID cases among our incarcerated population from the peak of the surge, and a 65% decrease in cases among staff for the same period.

Currently, those facilities that had disruptions to yard recreation time are working to increase access. As cases decline, we will be able to return to regular programming and resume in-person visitation. We are scheduled to re-evaluate visitation March 3, but we are prepared to open up visitation at some facilities as early as next week if the data continues to show declining cases so please, stay tuned! We will continue to share updates on our website and through the Statewide Family Council and Local Family Councils.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) continues to follow the [Centers of Disease Control \(CDC\) and Prevention guidance for Correctional and Detention Facilities](#) and Washington State Department of Health (DOH) guidance. People living in prison are at a much higher risk for highly contagious viruses like COVID-19, which is why protocols for congregate settings such as prisons that house many vulnerable people, differ from the guidance for the general public. We work very closely—often daily—with Washington State Department of Health when creating our protocols. At this time, DOC in consultation with CDC and DOH, are not in a position to have protocols that mirror the guidance for the general public.

As shared before, I've have authorized over a million dollars of the [Incarcerated Individual Betterment Fund \(IIBF\)](#) to provide comfort items and communications discounts for incarcerated individuals. Discounts for JPay and GTL credits have now been provided through the JPay accounts, snacks were distributed. The televisions which will be loaned to those in isolation and quarantine have been ordered and we hope that they will be delivered soon. Currently, supply chain issues, which have affected so many people in and outside our facilities, continue to cause delays however, I heard today good news on this front and they are on their way!

Based on your feedback, the department is working to improve direct communication with families. Currently, local prison facilities in outbreak status provide weekly update memos and also hosts COVID Informational calls, which you can [read more about here](#). You can [subscribe](#) to a COVID-19 Bulletin we publish three times a week.

We are working on creating a method for families to be able to subscribe to updates directly from individual prison facilities and will continue to work with the Statewide Family Council and Local Family Councils to find more ways to share information clearly and locally.

***“Working Together for SAFER Communities”***

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has added support resources to attend local COVID informational calls and work with the facilities to communicate with families more specifically. Local facilities are working with tier representatives to relay feedback from incarcerated individuals. We continue to be interested in hearing your ideas for improving how we share information.

Medical isolation and quarantine have been especially difficult during COVID outbreaks when incarcerated individuals have limited access to communicate with their loved ones. Mental Health staff are on site in prison facilities making rounds at least twice a week.

I am very mindful of the struggles and challenges you and your loved ones are facing. I continue my facility rounds, listening to those in our care and custody as do others on the DOC leadership team. We also continue to hold local facility COVID 19 calls for families.

Lastly, we continue to offer vaccine, including boosters to incarcerated individuals. I encourage you to talk with your loved ones about the importance of vaccination if you haven't already. While vaccines do not prevent COVID 19, they do reduce the risk of hospitalization and death.

Fondly,



Cheryl Strange, Secretary  
Department of Corrections