November 2, 2022

TO: All Prisons Staff  
    All Reentry Staff  
    All Incarcerated Individuals  
    All Interested Parties

FROM: Danielle Armbruster, Assistant Secretary, Reentry Division  
      Donald Holbrook, Assistant Secretary, Men’s Prison Division  
      Jeannie Darneille, Assistant Secretary, Women’s Prison Division

SUBJECT: Ending quarantine in prison and reentry facilities

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has updated their guidance to remove quarantine from COVID-19 clinical guidance for 24/7 facilities. As a result, the Washington State Department of Corrections in collaboration with DOH has updated its clinical guidance to discontinue the use of quarantine in our prisons and reentry settings except in high-risk units.

This is the first step in transitioning the Department’s response to COVID-19 from a transmission prevention strategy to a risk mitigation strategy. This approach will increase overall access to programming, recreation, medical and dental services, and improve the mental well-being in our facilities. It further supports and encourages individuals to immediately report symptoms and seek medical attention without fear that their actions will have a negative impact on the rest of the population.

This means that effective immediately, incarcerated individuals that are not in high-risk living units such as Inpatient Units, SAGE (CRCC) and WSR (MCC), will no longer be required to quarantine. Previously, patients who were asymptomatic, but had been exposed to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients were placed on quarantine status.

Clinical has developed the attached COVID-19 Quarantine Removal Plan to help guide you through this process. This contains step by step guides on all of the areas impacted by the removal of quarantine, including but not limited to screening, testing, intake separation, cohorting, opt-in/opt-out strategies and more.

Prison and Reentry facilities that currently have living units on quarantine, with the above exceptions, may immediately lift the quarantine-related restrictions in place. Superintendents and Reentry Supervisors, please work with your staff to ensure they are prepared to make this change.

“Working Together for SAFER Communities”
You can expect to see this change included in the next update of the Safe Start plan and the COVID-19 Screening, Testing and Infection Control Guideline. Currently there are no other changes to the COVID-19 protocols, however we expect to see an update to the CDC guidance for Correctional and Detention facilities in the near future. Once the CDC update is released and reviewed by DOH additional changes may be implemented.

For staff members, if you have any questions on this change, please pursue those through your chain of command.

cc: Sean Murphy, Deputy Secretary

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