

Local Family Council COVID-19 Informational Call Notes

Call Details

Facility: WSP

Date and Time: 6/8/2020, 2:00PM

Attendees

- Associate Supt Steve Barker, Associate Supt. Rob Jackson, AA3 Carrie Meyer, LFC Co-Chair Anna Ivanov, LFC Secretary Susan Wade, Bill Copeland, Caitlynn Robertson OCO, Paige Perkinson DOC HQ, SFC/LFC Rep Wendy Dubinsky, Dean Dubinsky, Tina Wright, Steven Kugler, SFC Secretary Loretta Pederson, SFC Co-Chair Suzanne Cook

Weekly Update

of men in quarantine 0

of men in isolation 3

118 men tested and still have only one positive from several weeks ago. There are 5 tests pending results. (these numbers were provided post meeting)

of staff screened out. 19

of staff tested positive 2

Pre-Submitted Questions

Question 1

Have there been any changes since our last meeting? How is the attitude of staff and incarcerated? Especially hearing what has been happening and what has been on the news lately.

Answer

Not really any changes to speak of. The staff and population have all kind of settled in to the routine. Everyone wants this all to be over so that we can get back to whatever the new normal will be. There has been some discussion among the population and the staff about the civil unrest, but it does not seem to be affecting attitudes or operations here. There are a few that get amped up, but we have not seen it affect our operations.

Family member stated that the men are not settling into a routine, they want their regular programs and "free" time allowances resumed to original and in accordance with the custody units they are living (for context: rec hours in Medium custody at WSP have reduced significantly in the last year and don't match Medium custody at any other facility). LFC members inquired if the Tier Rep meeting minutes are reviewed by leadership, and how the information is addressed, shared and resolved. The information is relayed through the chain of command, CUS Managers and Asst. Superintendents address during the two meetings per week held for mid-level leadership. It was added that the minutes that were received show concerns about the big yard not being available and some angst that the population is tired and weary of limited access. Staff reported that they are beginning to start up the Education programs Wednesday, June 10 with limited capacity. Unit staff are aware of Asst. Superintendent Jackson's expectations in the South Complex and are hopeful they will continue to move towards opening the other yards. These decisions are largely DOC HQ driven vs facility. A disconnect has been addressed in the information families receive from HQ and the facility.

Question 2

Given the increase of Covid-19 positive cases at Coyote Ridge and men being transferred to other facilities for treatment, could infected men be sent to WSP? If so, where would they be housed? What would be done to control the spread at WSP?

Answer

It is always a possibility that infected people could be sent to WSP, but there are no plans to do it deliberately. If it does occur, we plan to follow established protocols for responding to a positive case. Echo Unit and the IMU North are still being used for isolation areas.

Question 3

We heard DOC is starting to develop a plan for visiting to resume. Each facility may work on their own plan. Will WSP consider LFC members to be part of that team? What is the timeline?

Answer

We haven't been informed of any plans being formed for the restart of visiting and so we don't know what the timeline is for opening. At this time, we have not discussed allowing members of the LFC to be part of that team.

Sgt. Beal and Asst. Superintendent Barker are discussing visiting however, any "plans laid" could change based on what DOC HQ dictates. Once parameters are set staff will share with the LFC members. Families requested to be included in the process. It was mentioned that on the OCO weekly calls, there had been discussion of the LFC involvement in visiting, the reinstatement and or the "new norm" of visiting with each facility leadership team. Families stated how particularly important this aspect is for the LFC to be involved as it affects and controls a huge portion of families' lives. It was noted that LFC members have been involved in all kinds of workgroups with DOC and that there is no reason for us to not be included in this activity. Family voiced the request to participate in this process and that the importance of it be conveyed to Superintendent Holbrook. DOC representative Paige Perkinson added that HQ is still looking on how to handle suggestions from family and the OCO office on visitation. She stated HQ is working on the parameters and she had not heard that family involvement would not take place.

Question 4

We continue to hear complaints about the bandana face coverings and how difficult they are to breathe through, especially when exercising. Thus, men are not wearing them appropriately, pulling them below their nose, etc. Is there a plan to utilize better face coverings? We have heard CI is producing face coverings at other facilities in addition to what SPL is producing. Will men at WSP get access to them beyond those in isolation, quarantine or working in the kitchen? If not, why not?

Answer

We are currently replacing facial coverings as needed for the entire incarcerated population. These facial coverings are being made in the SPL and other places. These masks are available to all incarcerated who ask for one and have the need. Yes, masks must be worn even when people maintain a 6-foot distance. It is not ones' nature to be alone and pretty soon, they start to congregate. For safety, we still need to be wearing the masks even when 6-foot social distancing is in place. Staff stated the population was told that they did not have to wear the facial coverings when out in the yard, as long as they continue to social distance themselves. They are currently replacing facial coverings as requests are received from the population. The facial coverings that are being made in

the SPL were originally being given to the IMU, kitchen staff and those in isolation but they are now being distributed throughout the institution on an as-needed basis. It was asked how the population know this? Could it be an “infomercial “on Channel 12 or 13? Staff stated in meetings with CUS staff and ICP’s it has been reiterated and will continue to inform staff of the availability. “After 98 days, over three months if the men want one, they know how to get one.”

Question 5

What is WSP doing to address the following concerns?

- Unresponsiveness to non-COVID19 medical requests that have needed to be addressed for months.

Answer

There was a back-log of medical visits but they were unrelated to COVID-19. There are transports going to area medical facilities every day and they continue to work on catching up those medical visits, our entire community has been awaiting non-emergent surgeries.

- Insufficient access to yard time, which has an effect on prisoners' pent-up energy, mental health, and physical health.

Answer

We struggle with characterizing the time out as “insufficient”. We are providing the population as much access to yards (both big yard and unit yards) as allowed in accordance with the limitations of COVID-19 guidelines. We are trying to do this fairly and equitably. We are also working with the education department to begin opening up education programming in the next couple of weeks. Our shift commander works with the population and uses common sense to let more incarcerated individuals out to yard when permissible and when there is enough staff. We are trying our best to increase the programming.

Family inquired as to what was conveyed at HQ, that they did not dictate the number 50, and that each facility can authorize the allowance parameters locally. Staff indicated they are following the CDC guidelines as protocol, using facial coverings, 6ft. social distancing and “social gathering limitations”, but added they are not using a “clicker”, counter on the allowable number of men out at times, there is some common sense being used on allowances.

Question 6

In what ways is WSP planning to expand either visiting hours or space if there are going to be any sort of reductions to future visiting associated with new COVID-19 protocols? In general, WSP needs to address the insufficient access to visiting at WSP compared to other facilities in the state. It is long past time for a second visiting space to be opened, especially if COVID-19 imposes further restrictions.

Answer

We don’t know. We have to offer visiting based on the needs of the population and balanced with the resources at our disposal. We currently have no options for expanding visiting. It is a capital request to add space for any programs and it is a Biennial budget request to add FTE staff positions to increase any programs. Yes, the information that we send up our chain of command should be available through public disclosure from the Office of Financial Management.

The Superintendent and an Executive team, including Asst. Superintendents and Program Managers, put forward the budgetary requests for the facility. It was asked if a Public Disclosure request was submitted to HQ, would titling it “list of all Capital Projects” be the correct path for answers into what priority is made for adding additional visiting facilities? Family added that the visitation room in the West Complex is closed due to Event scheduling. Perhaps events should transition into an area outside of the dedicated visiting room. Discussion was had related to the new Programming building being a possibility, however, the issue with that would be distance from visiting to location. It was asked what it would take to move forward with events held elsewhere on the facility grounds. Staff stated that a couple of groups had requested and had held events outside of the visiting room, in the south complex.

Question 7

Is WSP getting a new WiFi carrier so my spouse can use a JPay player in his cell?

Answer

Jpay has a dedicated Wi-Fi carrier. At this time we have not been informed of any new contract providers. Anna will let the project team know that information updates need to be forced down to the facilities.

Question 8

Is WSP going to fix the broken phones for more inmates to make phone calls?

Answer

In reviewing the OCL meeting notes, you will see that the population reports broken equipment, including phones to their unit manager/sergeant. They in turn notify our staff of the need for a work order for the phones. When phones are identified as in need of repair, we provide the phone provider with information on broken phones for them to repair as needed.

Question 9

What is the ETA on visitation?

Answer

We don't know, there has been no update or information ...when we are told to move forward by HQ.

Question 10

Is it true that the full crew at SPL will resume work this week? What are some other ways WSP is easing restrictions currently in place? Volunteers, weight pile, etc.?

Answer

No. We have increased the numbers going to work in SPL areas this week but it is not a “full crew”. No volunteers/weight piles/etc. based on direction from HQ. We are increasing the numbers by 20 – 25, this fully depends on the accessibility and if some are able to work outside. Full team is estimated to be 145 people.

Question 11

EFV unit capacity vs utilization - update

Answer

Sgt. Beal and Associate Supt. Barker have a meeting scheduled with Supt. Holbrook to discuss this topic tomorrow. There are several security and logistic issues that must be addressed before another unit can be operational. The Incarcerated Individual Benefit Fund (IIBF), formerly OBF is prepared to move money that was set aside for special events to next year's expenses or repairs since the money has not been used this year due to the COVID.

Family stated that any use towards the benefits of the EFV would be welcomed and is a great use of funds. In addition, due to the fact that July DOC enters into a new budget and next year there will be added scrutiny and accountability to spending, it would be best to utilize the funds on hand for any and all improvements.

Update: Supt. Holbrook, Associate Supt. Barker, and Sgt. Beal met. Supt. Holbrook agreed that we could move forward with opening a second EFV once the security and logistical issues are settled. The laundry facility seems to be an issue related to it is a shared item. Staff is looking at stackable washer/dryer units for two of the units. Custody levels are also an issue. The allowable use of minimum and medium level population and how to coordinate assignment and scheduling without conflict.

Question 12

Tier rep meeting minutes – update

Answer

Today the LFC Chair shared through email to the LFC members the Tier rep minutes for review. Family indicated that after reading the minutes that it is apparent that the population has no idea what is happening with JPAY and any updates that are available. It was discussed how information related to JPAY to the population? Staff stated that it is discussed at Superintendent Meetings and information is trickled down through staff to the population. Staff mentioned there has not been a Superintendent meeting since Jan/ Feb, although there are calls between Superintendents. All topics may not be on agendas or the current focus. Anna continued to discuss the IITS status and update information related to upgrades and slight changes that JPAY has reported to DOC HQ. A better picture, better sound are two of the items that should show improvements on video visits. Family stated that the minutes report frustration by the population and staff. It was noted that tier rep meetings have a lot of items from CUSs marked for follow up. Families are hearing that there is no actual follow up. Staff stated that unfortunately this is something that staff can be found guilty of and does occur, that actions are taken, yet may not added to or updated through the minutes. Anna continued that by her virtue of involvement in several programs and teams with DOC, she has access to reports that come out of facilities. She added she found staff to be sympathetic to the problems with JPAY and assisting with escalation of JPay tickets. However, she stated that the burden on staff handling JPay issues appears to be overwhelming.

Comments/Closing

- Status of resuming regular LFC meetings at WSP? It was noted by SFC Rep that families are pushing for the meetings to resume, however at this time nothing has been decided and it is important to take your issues and questions to the facility at local level.

- WSP staff stated they were advised that these teleconferences are for COVID-19 information updates and sharing and not LFC meetings. Staff were not supposed to provide OCL meeting minutes and in fact not supposed to have to keep notes. Family had previously requested the OCL minutes be provided. Therefore supplied. Staff notes that the only units that did not provide the OCL minutes were the IMUs (which don't have OCLs) and the Residential Treatment Unit (Mental Health).