



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1110

August 20, 2020

Joanna Carns  
Office of Corrections Ombuds  
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW  
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Ms. Carns:

The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates the opportunity to respond to the OCO Report on the 'OCO Monitoring Visit to Monroe Correctional Complex- Twin Rivers Unit and Minimum Security Unit May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020' completed by the Office of Corrections Ombuds.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Response</b>
Staff were observed not wearing a mask in the control booth, an enclosed area with other staff present.	Staff and the incarcerated population have been required to wear face coverings since early March. The incarcerated population and staff have also received regular reminders from both the local and headquarters levels regarding masking and social distancing requirements. While compliance was still being worked on during this May site visit, the department emphasizes that compliance of face coverings and social distancing has improved as the agency progresses through the pandemic.
OCO observed minimal signs in the CI production areas. Staff informed the OCO monitoring team that they were having more signs made to go up in those areas.	As is stated, MCC made and placed more signs and posters in the CI Commissary/Laundry areas the same week, and these signs and posters are still posted and in place in these areas.
A noted concern was the leaky roof in the hall leading to CI.	The leaking roof at Twin Rivers Unit in the hall leading to CI has been on the Capital Projects list since Dec. 2010 and has not yet been funded by the Legislature.



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<p>Main Facility MSU Unit - OCO observed several staff members not wearing mask and bunched together.</p>	<p>Staff and the incarcerated population have been required to wear face coverings since early March. The incarcerated population and staff have also received regular reminders from both the local and headquarters levels regarding masking and social distancing requirements. While compliance was still being worked on during this May site visit, the department emphasizes that compliance of face coverings and social distancing has improved as the agency progresses through the pandemic.</p>
<p>MSU Units A, C, and D – the phone and kiosk have no barriers.</p>	<p>MCC currently has a plexiglass barrier between each phone and kiosk. Incarcerated individuals have brought to our attention that they don't feel it is adequate in height and length. Therefore the facility is researching options for a different type of barrier that would be taller and extends out further.</p>
<p>The main concerns shared from MSU were about visitation, mental health needs due to lack of access to their support systems and fear, needing new mask, and lack of communication even if tentative.</p>	<p>The department understands and is compassionate to the incarcerated population and loved ones during this time that visitation is suspended. The health of the population is the main priority of the department and because the suspension of visitation will remain in place until further notice to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the correctional facilities, the department has consistently worked to increase availability of phone calls and video visits for the population, wherever possible.</p> <p>During quarantine status for MSU, mental health conducted daily wellness checks on the units per the protocols as posted on the DOC COVID-19 response webpage. To</p>



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	<p>accomplish the task, the agency had staff from SOU assist in conducting these walkthroughs when the primary staff were not available. It was a team approach involving other mental health providers from additional sites to ensure that the mental health needs and protocols were met while having to limit group and prolonged 1:1 contact. As areas came off of quarantine, 1:1 services per social distancing protocols increased and small social distancing groups for the Crossroads program were allowed. Staff were always available for mental health crisis situations. Coping skills handouts and distress tolerance packets were, and are, made available for the population.</p> <p>Incarcerated individuals may request an additional face covering at any time, and the staff have been directed to give the requested face covering.</p> <p>The facility has locally written and distributed 15 COVID-19-related written information memos to the incarcerated population, in addition to information distributed from Headquarters. Additionally, leadership, prisons and health services staff have been reminded that this is a time where coming together is important and answering questions and concerns of the incarcerated population is a priority. Verbal response has proven to be effective for many individuals, leaves less room for misinterpretation and allows for follow-up inquiry during conversations.</p>
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<p>SOU E-Unit – Staff observed not wearing masks in the enclosed office space</p>	<p>Staff and the incarcerated population have been required to wear face coverings since early March. The incarcerated population and staff have also received regular reminders from both the local and headquarters levels regarding masking and social distancing requirements. While compliance was still being worked on during this May site visit, the department emphasizes that compliance of face coverings and social distancing has improved as the agency progresses through the pandemic.</p>
<p>Incarcerated Individuals relayed that they cannot trust staff for information. They do not receive updates about how many people have COVID and instead receive it from the news</p>	<p>The department has implemented weekly informational calls with the local family councils at all respective facilities to provide updates, answer questions, and alleviate concerns. The facilities report on the phone calls the data pertaining to their facility and these notes are posted in the housing units each week for reference from the incarcerated population. Housing units are also still holding weekly tier rep meetings where incarcerated individuals are able to ask questions and relay information pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the facility has locally written and distributed 15 COVID-19-related informational memos to the incarcerated population in addition to the informational memos distributed from Headquarters.</p>
<p>All employees in common shared areas should be wearing PPE of at least a mask.</p>	<p>Staff and the incarcerated population have been required to wear face coverings since early March. The incarcerated population and staff have also received regular reminders from both the local and headquarters levels regarding masking and social distancing requirements. While</p>



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	<p>compliance was still being worked on during this May site visit, the department emphasizes that compliance of face coverings and social distancing has improved as the agency progresses through the pandemic.</p>
<p>As incarcerated persons are currently discouraged from gathering in the dayrooms due to social distancing guidelines, implementation of greater activities in their room should be considered.</p>	<p>The agency is allowing each facility to implement their own local activities and in-room recreation that best fits their facility. The Monroe Correctional Complex Twin Rivers Unit (TRU) held a video game tournament from Mid-July to early August for the population, all cells were equipped with a TV and a movie channel was implemented for free for the entire population. These are just some of the examples of creative ways the institution has been able to implement greater activities for the population.</p>
<p>Consider outside or social distanced activities for those in TRU that cannot socially distance in cells or dayroom.</p>	<p>Incarcerated individuals in TRU have access to the gym and yard where they can socially distance during recreation times. The recreation specialist has created programs in which they may participate. Additionally individuals are allowed access to the patio area in front of the unit, where they can interact while practicing appropriate social distancing.</p>
<p>Consider giving weekly situation reports to all incarcerated persons related to current COVID-19 cases at the facility, status updates on the phased return to visitation and programming, self-care mental health-based activities they can apply at this time, etc.</p>	<p>The department has implemented weekly informational calls with the local family councils at all respective facilities to provide updates, answer questions, and alleviate concerns. The facilities report on the phone calls the data pertaining to their facility and these notes are posted in the housing units each week for reference from the incarcerated population. Housing units are also still holding weekly tier rep meetings where incarcerated individuals</p>



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	<p>are able to ask questions and relay information pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the facility has locally written and distributed 15 COVID-19-related informational memos to the incarcerated population in addition to the informational memos distributed from Headquarters.</p>
<p>Consider mental health walk throughs throughout the entire facility weekly or engaging in the wellness program.</p>	<p>Mental health staff are following the WA State DOC COVID-19 Mental Health/Psychiatry Response Guidelines which have specific requirements for individuals on quarantine or medical isolation status.</p> <p>SOU maintains a residential treatment unit, which involves face-to-face mental health contact. Socially distancing groups and individual services continued.</p> <p>WSRU - Incarcerated population was provided a memo to ensure they were aware of mental health services and wellness program. Specifically with instructions on how to access Mental Health services and a distress tolerance packet was made available to them on the units.</p> <p>MSU – Incarcerated population was provided a memo to ensure they were aware of mental health services and wellness program. Specifically with instructions on how to access Mental Health services and a distress tolerance packet was made available to them on the units.</p> <p>TRU - Outpatient services continued</p>



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	<p>abiding by social distancing guidelines. When units are on quarantine, staff conduct the necessary walk-through and rounds per protocols. Packets of coping skills materials were made available to those on quarantine or when requested for outpatient.</p>
<p>The tiles and mold pose a safety hazards in TRU A-unit. Although the facility staff has done what is in their power to do, a comprehensive plan on what can be done should be developed and increase safety measures to prevent slips of falls in that area.</p>	<p>This is a year round problem for the cement slab flooring at TRU A-Unit, as it has ground water from an underground spring coming up between the slabs. Any mold present is limited in scope, quantity and is located in the expansion joints themselves. This area is cleaned several times a day.</p> <p>A Capital project request has been submitted requesting an engineering review and for a mitigation plan to be created.</p>
<p>Staff should consider providing additional mental health support and activities for persons in the quarantine and medical isolation areas, such as hobby craft and art materials, a working television and radio for every cell, access to popular reading material such as current magazine and books, and as much access as possible to communication with their families and loved ones.</p>	<p>Mental health staff are following the WA State DOC COVID-19 Mental Health/Psychiatry Response Guidelines which have specific requirements for individuals on quarantine or medical isolation status.</p> <p>Mental health staff are also frequently handing out puzzles and Sudoku games. Correctional staff are able to issue playing cards, radios and game players to the population. Incarcerated individuals have the opportunity to check out books donated from the Monroe library and when they are moved due to quarantine or medical isolation status, they are allowed to bring two boxes of property with them, to include their JPay player for those that own one, address book, etc. All</p>



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	individuals on quarantine or medical isolation are able to make phone calls three times per week.
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Staff in all capacities are working extremely hard to keep the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus from our facilities, and limited to, and treated within, the one minimum security unit in which it does exist. The Department's work is conducted with an understanding that each day may present a different challenge and our teams are dedicated to performing their jobs and fulfilling our mission to the best of our ability.

The Department of Corrections continues to appropriately align its practices to reflect the guidance of the CDC and Department of Health (DOH) to ensure the health and safety of the incarcerated population and staff in the Washington correctional facilities. The department will continue being part of the solution, adjusting protocols and precautionary measures being taken accordingly during this uncharted time.

Sincerely,

Steve Sinclair, Secretary  
Washington Department of Corrections