Utah Department of Corrections

Presentation to the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Interim Committee

COVID-19 Response & Protocols

June 16, 2020
Initial Response

• The Department of Corrections responded quickly and decisively to the on-coming threat associated with COVID-19

• Prisons and jails are extremely vulnerable to public health threats such as COVID-19
  • Facilities are confined and congregate environments
  • Movement or release of population generally is not an option
  • Population tends to be more medically frail and have a variety of co-occurring medical problems

• If COVID-19 enters a facility, it is easily transmitted and can spread through facilities very quickly
Initial Response

• Following the lead of the Governor’s Office and Utah Department of Health, the Department of Corrections

• Began gathering information that would be needed to develop processes and protocols

• March 10 – Deputy Director was assigned to coordinate the Department’s preparations and response to COVID-19

  • Quickly after receiving this assignment, the Department created its own COVID-19 Task Force which includes leadership throughout the Department

  • The UDC COVID-19 Task Force has been meeting every morning at 0900 and typically includes more than 25 leaders in the Department

  • The Taskforce has been tasked with developing and implementing protocols, managing resources such as PPE, making decisions related to operations, and receiving updates on the status of incarcerated individuals

• March 21 – Department established its COVID-19 Action Plan
March 23 - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its “Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities”

Reviewing this guidance, it was clear the Utah Department of Corrections had already put into place many if not most of the guidelines from the (CDC)

Primary focus of the Department of Corrections has been:

- **Prevention** – strong focus on keeping COVID-19 from entering Utah’s prison system
- **Containment** – strategies developed to ensure, if COVID-19 entered the prison system, the Department would have processes and protocols to quickly contain the virus and focus on keeping it from spreading
Immediate Actions ~ Prevention

- Personal visits with inmates’ families and loved ones – suspended (telephone provider has offered 10 free 15-minute phone calls per week)

- Volunteer services for incarcerated individual programs – suspended

- Staff and others entering the prison facility are screened
  - Temperature checks
  - Screening questions
  - Review of symptoms
  - Any staff unsuccessful in getting through this process are immediately sent home and required to work with Human Resource Management to receive clearance prior to returning to work

- A single access point to the Draper prison was created to ensure all entries are funneled through this access point

*Messaging posted throughout all facilities and centers for staff and incarcerated individuals regarding screening, protocols and general information.
Immediate Actions ~ Prevention

- Increased cleaning frequency – ensuring adequate supplies of soap and cleaning products are available – including cleaning schedules and training on appropriate cleaning (e.g. hard surfaces, phones, door handles)

- Implemented social distancing among both incarcerated individuals and staff members

- All staff and incarcerated individuals were provided a minimum of two face coverings with instruction to wear any time close contact could occur

- Group treatment and other sessions were limited to 10 or fewer individuals – again with social distancing
Immediate Actions ~ Prevention

• Stopped receiving intakes of new inmates from county jails (movement of individual contraindicated)

• Limited – where possible – transports of inmates to the University of Utah Medical Center

• Congregated most medically fragile inmates into a single facility with close access to medical care and extremely limited movement into or out of the housing unit

• Created space for both male and female inmates – both at Draper and Gunnison – to serve as Quarantine areas (for symptomatic and those possibly in contact with a COVID-19 person) and Isolation areas (for those testing positive for COVID-19)

*Newsletter provided to all incarcerated individuals
Current Operations and Processes

• Department moved to a single Intake day per week – occurs on Wednesday (now taking intakes from county jails)

• These intakes are kept in a cohort for a minimum of 14 days prior to being moved to general population

• Department of Health tests all cohorted inmates the day after the single intake day (Corrections has been provided rapid COVID-19 testing equipment and supplies – these are used in exigent circumstances and at Gunnison for their new intakes)

• Any symptomatic or potentially COVID-19 exposed inmates are housed separately in a different housing unit under Quarantine
Current Operations and Processes

- Inmates that have tested positive for COVID-19 are housed in a different facility in Isolation (different facility from both cohorted and Quarantined inmates).

- Quarantined inmates that do not develop symptoms over a 14-day period are tested just prior to moving to general population.

- After 14-days in Isolation and without symptoms, inmates must test negative for COVID-19 on two sequential tests before moving to general population.
Current Status and Issues

• To date, the Department has had three (3) COVID-19 positive inmates
  • All came from new intakes from county jails
  • Inmates were initially Quarantined or cohorted and immediately moved into Isolation upon a positive test result

• Custody and medical staff observe proper PPE protocols when interacting with either Quarantined or Isolated inmates

• Department has monitored and maintained specific amounts of PPE in inventory including N-95 & KN-19 masks, eye protection/shields, rubber gloves, gowns and Tyvek suits
Current Status and Issues

- Department is in the process of implementing video visitation to supplement phone calls, in the absence of personal visits (video visitation will be maintained once the pandemic is over)

- Opportunities have been provided for an idle inmate population, but still requires work and attention
  - Greenhouse operations turned over to the housing unit with the medically fragile population, allowing some to leave the facility and work
  - Programming and treatment services are being taken to the inmate population that is under the tightest restrictions
  - Programming and treatment services have continued, as we have been able, with other housing units – ensuring proper distancing is maintained and face coverings are used by both staff and inmates

- Temperature screenings have been suspended in administrative offices and AP&P offices – while still requiring staff to self-monitor
Questions?