

Federal Bureau of Prisons COVID-19 Action Plan

Agency-wide Modified Operations

 Federal Bureau of Prisons COVID-19 Action Plan
Updated 3:09 PM ET, March 13, 2020

(BOP) - The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) manages a nationwide correctional system involving 122 prisons located throughout the country, which are of various security levels and specialized missions. The BOP has been planning for coronavirus (COVID-19) since January 2020. Phase One activities included guidance from the Health Services Division regarding description of the disease, where the infection was occurring and best practices to mitigate transmission. An agency task force was working in conjunction with subject matter experts in the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and reviewing guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The BOP has been coordinating its COVID-19 efforts using subject-matter experts both internal and external to the agency including guidance and directives from the WHO, the CDC, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Office of the Vice President. BOP's planning is structured using the Incident Command System (ICS) framework.

As a result of these ongoing efforts, the BOP, after coordination with DOJ and the White House, is implementing Phase Two of our COVID-19 response. Effective immediately, the following national measures are being deployed by the BOP in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, acknowledging the United States will have more confirmed cases in the coming weeks and also noting that the population density of prisons creates a risk of infection and transmission for inmates and staff. These national measures are also being put in place to ensure the continued effective operations of the federal prison system and to ensure that staff remain healthy and available for duty.

SOCIAL VISITS: Social visits will be suspended for 30 days, at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. To ensure inmates maintain social ties, the BOP will allow for additional inmate telephone communications. Inmates will be allowed 500 (vs. 300) telephone minutes per month.

LEGAL VISITS: Access to legal counsel remains a paramount requirement in the BOP but like social visiting, the BOP is mitigating the risk of exposure created by external visitors. As such, while in general, legal visits will be suspended for 30 days, case-by-case accommodation will be accomplished at the local level and confidential legal calls will be allowed in order to ensure inmates maintain access to counsel. Attorneys seeking an in-person visit with their client or a confidential call should contact the institution Executive Assistant (see email address on the relevant facility bop.gov page) or contact the appropriate Consolidated Legal Center for the BOP institution (see page 54 of the [Legal Resource Guide](#)). If approved for an in-person visit, the attorney will need to undergo screening using the same procedures as staff.

INMATE MOVEMENT: All inmate facility transfers will be suspended for 30 days, at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. Exceptions are allowed for forensic studies, writs, Interstate Agreements on Detainers (IAD), medical or mental health treatment, and release to pre-release custody. Other case-by-case exceptions (e.g. for judicial proceedings) may be approved by BOP Regional Counsel. Admission of new inmates will continue.

OFFICIAL STAFF TRAVEL: Official staff travel (with the exception of relocation) will be suspended for 30 days, at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. Any exceptions may be approved by the Deputy Director of the BOP.

TRAINING: All staff training, with the exception of basic staff training for new employees at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and the local facility, is suspended for 30 days at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. Any exceptions must be approved by the Deputy Director of the BOP.

STAFF HIRING: Staff hiring initiatives will continue.

CONTRACTORS: Contractor access to BOP facilities will be restricted for 30 days to only those performing essential services (e.g. medical or mental health care, religious, etc.) or those who perform necessary maintenance on essential systems. Contractors who require access will be screened using the same procedures as staff prior to entry.

VOLUNTEERS: Volunteer visits will be suspended for 30 days, at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. Exceptions will be approved by the Deputy Director of the BOP. Alternate means of communication (e.g. telephone calls) will be available for inmates who request to speak privately with a religious advisor. Volunteers who are approved for access will be screened using the same procedures as staff prior to entry.

SCREENING OF STAFF: Enhanced health screening of staff will be implemented in areas with "sustained community transmission" and at medical referral centers. Sustained community transmission is determined by the CDC and will be indicated on the map on this [resource page](#) where state community transmission indicates "Yes." Such screening includes self-reporting and temperature checks for the next 30 days, at which time the process will be reevaluated.

SCREENING OF INMATES: The BOP [manages an infectious disease management program](#) as a matter of routine. To address the specific issues involving COVID-19, the BOP uses the following practices:

- All newly-arriving BOP inmates are being screened for COVID-19 exposure risk factors and symptoms.
- Asymptomatic inmates with exposure risk factors are quarantined.
- Symptomatic inmates with exposure risk factors are isolated and tested for COVID-19 per local health authority protocols.

TOURS: Tours will be suspended for 30 days, at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. Any exceptions will be approved by the Deputy Director of the BOP. If approved, participants will be screened using the same procedures as staff prior to entry.

MODIFIED OPERATIONS: For the next 30 days, the BOP will implement nationwide modified operations to maximize social distancing and limit group gatherings in our facilities. For example, depending on the facility's population and physical layout, the institution may implement staggered meal times, recreation, etc. These modifications will be reevaluated in 30 days.

The BOP is coordinating with the U.S. Marshals Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement on these initiatives to ensure that those agencies can adjust for impact to their operations. BOP will also be sharing this guidance with its private prison contractors.

More information regarding COVID-19, and the BOP's response, can be found on the new [resource page](#).

- [Print Page](#)
- [Email Page](#)