

## COVID-19 Guidance for Idaho Correctional and Detention Facilities: Work Release

8/18/2020

### Background

Correctional facilities are high-risk settings for COVID-19. COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred at correctional facilities nationwide, including in Idaho. Idaho correctional facilities may operate work release programs for eligible offenders. These programs enable offenders to work at businesses and other locations while residing at a low-security correctional or detention facility. Work release programs have social and economic benefits and help offenders prepare for positive transition into the community; however, work release programs pose potential SARS-CoV-2 transmission risks. Work release programs have the potential to introduce SARS-CoV-2 from the community into a correctional facility and cause or exacerbate a COVID-19 outbreak in the facility. Dormitory-style sleeping quarters, common in low-security facilities where work release offenders are housed, increase the frequency and duration of contact among offenders, which can contribute to rapid spread of the virus among this population. Conversely, if a COVID outbreak is occurring at a correctional facility, work release programs could lead to transmission among workers at businesses and other work sites in the community, as well as directly to the public when offenders work in public-facing jobs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities,” (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html>), accessed 8/11/2020, includes the following statements regarding work release:

**Prevention** (to prevent introduction of the virus and reduce transmission inside a facility)

- *Consider suspending work release and other programs that involve movement of incarcerated/detained individuals in and out of the facility, especially if the work release assignment is in another congregate setting, such as a food processing plant*

**Management** (if there is an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 inside the facility)

- *Suspend all transfers of incarcerated/detained persons to and from other jurisdictions and facilities (including work release), unless necessary for medical evaluation, medical isolation/quarantine, health care, extenuating security concerns, release, or to prevent overcrowding.*

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health (DPH) supports the CDC guidance on work release programs and recommends the following:

- For periods and situations when work release can be continued, correctional and detention facilities should conduct temperature checks and symptom screening of offenders prior to their departing to work sites. Offenders with a fever or who have symptoms of COVID-19 should not depart.
- Offenders participating in work release programs should wear cloth face coverings when unable to maintain physical distancing of six feet from others or when traveling in a vehicle regardless of physical distancing. Use of cloth face coverings in group settings in enclosed rooms is encouraged, even if physical distancing is maintained.
- In counties experiencing community spread of COVID-19, suspend work release to high-risk settings (e.g., meat and poultry processing facilities and produce processing plants).

- Consult with the local public health district for assistance with determining which counties are experiencing community spread and with identifying high-risk businesses.
- Suspend work release to sites of any type where a COVID-19 outbreak is occurring. Local public health districts generally determine if an outbreak is occurring; however, if the work release site management is made aware of two or more workers who have received a positive test result for SARS-CoV-2 virus (not an antibody test result) collected within the previous two weeks, the work release site management should notify the correctional or detention facility. At that time, the correctional or detention facility should immediately suspend work release to that site and consult with local public health district officials to determine if offenders should continue to attend work there.
- Ensure that work release program agreements are updated to include:
  - Work-release sites (e.g., businesses, government agencies) are required to notify the correctional or detention facility if an outbreak is identified at the work site or if two or more workers at the work site have received a positive test result for SARS-CoV-2 virus (not an antibody test result) collected within the previous two weeks.
  - Work release sites are required to notify the correctional or detention facility if any work release employees are identified as close contacts to a person infectious with COVID-19 at the work site.
  - Communication and cooperation with the local public health district or DPH to share information on work placement sites.
- When an outbreak of COVID-19 is identified at a correctional or detention facility:
  - Suspend all work release programs from an affected facility until all reported close contacts of COVID-19 cases have been tested and quarantined.
    - Close contacts include anyone who within 2 days before symptom onset, or for asymptomatic persons, 2 days prior to test collection date, of a person with SARS-CoV-2 infection:
      - Shared a sleeping area (in dormitory-style housing, this includes all residents of the dorm)
      - Worked at the same work release site and shared the same air space or was within six feet for 15 minutes or more
      - Rode in the same vehicle
      - Was within six feet of the infected person for at least 15 minutes in any other setting not listed above.
  - Notify work release sites of any potential exposures to a person who tested positive for COVID-19 who worked during the 2 days before symptom onset until release from isolation criteria are met. Let work site location managers know if workers will be unavailable because of isolation.
  - Consult with the local public health district or DPH if assistance is needed with testing, contact tracing, or isolation.

Corrections professionals may contact their local public health district or the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Communicable Disease Prevention at 208-334-5939) with any questions or concerns.

## Resources

CDC guidance for COVID in correctional facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html>