

Georgia Department of Corrections COVID-19 FAQs for Friends and Family

Is GDC accepting new offenders into facilities? If so, what precautions or screenings are in place for inmates arriving at GDC facilities?

The GDC suspended all non-essential offender movement across GDC facilities on March 11, 2020. As we begin transitioning into a modified movement process within our system, a strategic plan has been developed to ensure priority is placed on taking precautionary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and offenders. Beginning May 18, 2020, all points of offender entry into our system will be Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison (GDGP) for male offenders and Lee Arrendale State Prison (LASP) for female offenders. All new arrivals (intakes) and court return offenders will be administered a COVID-19 test. Offenders who are symptomatic will be placed in a designated medical isolation unit while awaiting test results. Non-symptomatic offenders will be placed in 14-day security quarantine while awaiting test results. Those offenders receiving negative test results will resume the normal diagnostic process.

What is the GDC doing to ensure the well-being of staff and inmates?

- Ongoing notification and education of staff and inmate population, including educational materials/video now available on GOAL devices
- Enhanced sanitation at all entry points to include additional hand sanitizer for staff
- Screening protocols implemented to include attestation of no known illness and temporal temperature screening prior to entry for all persons, to include staff
- Quantities of hand soap and hand sanitizer have been increased at all facilities.
- Enhanced sanitation and cleaning protocols at all facilities, and for all transportation vehicles, to include designating additional Sanitation Officers
- Enhanced screening process for offenders
- Enhanced diagnostic intake screening for offenders entering GDC custody
- Suspended non-essential offender movement across GDC facilities, effective March 3, 2020, until further notice
- Suspended all facility tours until further notice
- Waived \$5.00 medical co-pay for offenders exhibiting COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, effective March 13, 2020, until further notice
- Suspended volunteer visits to facilities until further notice
- Sneeze/cough masks have been distributed to all staff and offenders
- Ongoing treatment of all state facilities with chemical fogging as an added sanitation measure
- Disinfecting shoe mats placed at all facilities for use by all individuals upon entering or exiting the facility

Are inmates being tested for COVID-19?

Offenders who exhibit signs and symptoms for COVID-19 will be referred to a medical provider who will evaluate the offender and make any referral for diagnostic testing. Beginning May 18, 2020, all points of offender entry into our system will be Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison (GDGP) for male offenders and Lee Arrendale State Prison (LASP) for female offenders. All new arrivals (intakes) and court return offenders will be administered a COVID-19 test. Offenders who are symptomatic will be placed in a designated medical isolation unit while awaiting test

results. Non-symptomatic offenders will be placed in 14-day security quarantine while awaiting test results. Those offenders receiving negative test results will resume the normal diagnostic process.

What happens in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the offender population?

If the offender screens positive for COVID-19, the offender will be provided a mask, and escorted by an officer wearing personal protective equipment (i.e., mask and gloves) to a medical screening location where a provider will complete the screening exam. Offenders who screen positive, or are suspected to have COVID-19, will be placed in the designated medical housing unit and will remain for the required 14-day quarantine period.

During the quarantine period, if an acute community hospitalization is necessary or in the event of an emergency medical condition, the offender will be transported to the designated medical facility.

All staff and inmates who were in direct contact or prolonged close contact will be notified and directed to quarantine following guidelines provided by the Department of Public Health (DPH).

What happens in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 with a staff member?

All staff and inmates who were in direct contact or prolonged close contact will be notified and directed to quarantine following guidelines provided by the Department of Public Health.

Is the offender population receiving additional cleaning products for sanitizing their cells?

We have enhanced sanitation and cleaning protocols at all facilities, and for all transportation vehicles, to include designating additional sanitation officers. All state facilities undergo a mandated chemical fogging process a minimum of 2x/month, as an added disinfecting measure.

Do you know when visitation suspension will be lifted?

The GDC will implement a modified visitation schedule beginning November 21, 2020. Visits will be made by appointment only and will be in keeping with social distancing guidelines. Instructions related to scheduling appointments and additional details are forthcoming. Note, the date is subject to change and is dependent upon state and facility positivity rates leading up to November 21st.

How can family and friends maintain contact with their loved ones while visitation is suspended?

In an effort to ensure the offender population is able to maintain important communication w/ family and friends, effective immediately and until further notice, the GDC and its partners increased no-cost inmate communication resources, one (1) free calls per week, and two (2) free e-stamps per week. Also, mail services have not been affected at this time.

Are inmates allowed legal visits?

Non-contact attorney visits will tentatively resume on November 21st. Details are forthcoming.

Are any inmates being released early?

The Board of Pardons and Paroles is the only entity within the State of Georgia with the authority to grant early releases.

Are medical and dental appointments being cancelled?

At this time, elective/non-critical medical and dental procedures are being scheduled on a limited basis, in consultation with GDC's statewide Medical Director, and within recommended CDC guidelines.

Are inmates allowed to go to their outside work detail?

Outside inmate work details have been suspended.

Are the classes and programs being cancelled?

Programming began on a limited basis on July 1, and classes are being conducted following strict social distancing guidelines as recommended by the CDC.

Can we still order/send offenders a Spring SecurePak?

Yes, SecurePak is on schedule.

Are inmates allowed to get items from the commissary?

Yes, the commissary remains open at all facilities.

Will my loved one still be allowed to release if their date comes up?

Yes. Any offender being released from GDC custody will undergo a screening for COVID-19 symptoms, to include temporal temperature check. If the offender exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, the GDC will notify the local Department of Public Health of the county to which the offender is being released, who will then provide guidance to the individual for follow-up.