



Corrections and Community Supervision

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ANTHONY J. ANNUCCI
Acting Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: All DOCCS Employees

From: Anthony J. Annucci, Acting Commissioner

Subject: Employee Utilization of Face Masks

Date: April 1, 2020

In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was detected. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses. Recently, community-wide transmission of COVID-19 has occurred in the United States, including New York where the number of both persons under investigation and confirmed cases is increasing.

The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) is responsible for the safety, health, rehabilitation, and supervision of nearly 43,000 incarcerated individuals and over 35,000 individuals on community supervision through the tireless efforts of nearly 30,000 employees. The Department's greatest concern is the safety and well-being of our employees and individuals within our care, custody, and supervision, particularly during this developing public health emergency. To that end, DOCCS has taken a number of steps in order to shield the population, including, but not limited to suspending visitation, stopping intake from county jails, limiting the internal transfer of incarcerated individuals except for medical or exigent circumstances, limiting to the extent possible the use of double bunks and double celling, and instituting social distancing in mess hall and other congregate areas and instituting mandatory staff screening at facility entrances..

Following expert guidance issued by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health (DOH), the Department has also provided access to personal protective equipment and face masks to staff associated with medical situations that would require interaction with an incarcerated individual who has tested positive or is displaying symptoms.

Since implementing these actions, the Department has had a number of staff as well as twenty of our over 43,000 incarcerated individuals test positive for the virus. Every individual who has tested positive or has displayed symptoms has been isolated and a contact trace completed leading to others being quarantined and monitored.

After extensive discussions with the various bargaining unit representatives, in order to continue to protect staff and the incarcerated population from the virus entering or leaving our facilities, **effective immediately, staff will be permitted to wear either an N95 respirator or a surgical-type mask while on duty inside of the correctional facility.** While neither the CDC nor the DOH has recommend

use of these personal protective devices in the correctional setting beyond what the Department has already provided, to the extent staff already possesses these items and will not be reducing their availability to frontline healthcare workers, the Department will not oppose their use if there is a chance that they may slow or even stop the spread of this virus from entering our facilities.

In addition, incarcerated individuals who are subject to quarantine will be issued a surgical-type mask to further reduce the risk of any secondary transmission of COVID-19.

As were previously outlined, there are simple steps that should be followed to stop the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses as follows:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, especially before you eat;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Cover your cough or sneeze;
- Avoid sharing food and utensils;
- Report any symptoms promptly; and
- If you are sick, stay home.

The Department takes seriously its duty to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those that work, and live in our correctional facilities, as well as those who supervise or are supervised in the greater community of New York. During this difficult time, the Department is appreciative of everyone's patience and understanding as we continue to face this virus together.

For further information on COVID-19 and New York's response, please visit:

New York State Department of Health's COVID-19 Webpage
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

Listing of Local Health Departments:
https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Webpage:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>