

Department of Public Safety - COVID-19 – Frequently Asked Questions (4/07/20)

The Department of Public Safety is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of staff, the public and those under our supervision. The following information will help address many commonly asked questions regarding PSD's response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and preventative steps we are taking to help protect the health of our employees, prisoners and those in the community. (Note: Schedules and information are subject to change at a moment's notice as the overall situation and the State's response to COVID-19 changes day by day.)

Q: Where is PSD getting their information on Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- PSD Health Care Division staff have continuous open dialogue with the Hawaii Department of Health (DOH). PSD is working with the Governor's Office and DOH to monitor the COVID-19 virus and its potential impacts to our organization. These decisions are dictated by information provided through the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/) and the Hawaii DOH <https://HawaiiCovid19.com> or <https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019/>.

Q: Where can I find up to date information regarding COVID-19?

- State updates are located on the Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) webpage: <https://HawaiiCovid19.com>
<https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019/>
- You can also get connected through 211.
- For updates having to do with the Department of Public Safety: <http://dps.hawaii.gov/blog/2020/03/17/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources/>
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/).

Q: Is PSD allowing visitors at this time?

- Effective 3/13/20 and until further notice, all correctional facilities suspended inmate personal visits. At this point this action does not impact the continuation of other scheduled official and attorney visits. Schedules are subject to change as the overall situation and the State's response to COVID-19 changes day by day.

Q: How can I contact my loved one while visiting is suspended?

- PSD's inmate telephone system minutes are increased to accommodate more inmate calls to family.

Q: Does PSD have a plan to handle a COVID-19 outbreak?

- Our Health Care Division has gone to great lengths to make sure a comprehensive plan is in place to safeguard the health of all inmates and staff in our facilities. PSD's Pandemic Response Plan can be found on our webpage: <http://dps.hawaii.gov/blog/2020/03/17/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources/>

Q: What procedures are PSD's correctional facilities using to keep them clean?

- Institutions are cleaning numerous times a day, including disinfecting housing units, bathrooms, eating areas, doors, stairwells, countertops, etc.

- Health Care staff have been reminding inmates of proactive ways they can help prevent the spread of germs including covering their coughs and sneezes, frequent handwashing, sanitizing their common living areas, refraining from sharing cups and utensils with others, and limiting close contact.
- An educational video on COVID-19 has been shared with the facilities as well as the intake service centers. All current and new inmates are asked to watch the video which gives them educational instruction on COVID-19, measures of prevention, and handwashing instructions.
- Educational posters reinforcing good hygiene and germ prevention have been posted in all common areas.

Q: Does PSD provide hand-sanitizer for inmates?

- The Department of Public Safety does allow hand sanitizer for staff and inmates.
- All adults in custody have access to soap and water, sinks, and handwashing stations. The [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) recommends washing hands with soap and water whenever possible because handwashing reduces the amounts of all types of germs and chemicals on hands. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can reduce the number of microbes on hands in some situations, but they do not eliminate all types of germs the way handwashing does. Like the CDC, we are encouraging all adults in custody to wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds.

Q: How does the no large gatherings mandate apply to adults in custody that sleep in dorms?

- Current housing situations will remain in place. The facilities will be following the CDC/DOH guidance on social distancing, masking, and isolating patients with COVID-19 disease who can receive supportive care within the institutions.

Q: If an adult in custody does contract the virus what are the procedures?

- PSD will be following the CDC/DOH guidance on social distancing, masking, and isolating patients with COVID-19 disease who can receive supportive care within the institutions. Patients who are too sick to remain within the institution will be sent to local hospitals for further evaluation and treatment.
- PSD's Pandemic Response Plan can be found here: <http://dps.hawaii.gov/blog/2020/03/17/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources/>

Q: How does PSD determine who will be tested? Will testing be provided for prisoners who request it or show symptoms?

- If an adult in custody is showing [signs and symptoms](#) of flu or other respiratory illness such as COVID-19, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath, they will be tested as healthcare providers direct. DOC uses CDC/DOH guidance on appropriate criteria for testing. Those being tested and/or awaiting results will be isolated from the general population.
- If an adult in custody is showing signs and symptoms of flu/COVID-19, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath, they will be issued a mask to keep them from coughing/sneezing on others and taken to the facility health care unit for evaluation.
- If the evaluation suggests they patient might have the flu or some other infectious respiratory condition, they are isolated for further testing and treatment.
- If the patient meets the criteria for a possible COVID-19 case, that person would remain in isolation and the Department of Health would be immediately contacted for further instruction and possible testing.

- Patients who are too sick to remain within the institution will be sent to local hospitals for further evaluation and treatment.

Q: Do the correctional facilities have coronavirus tests?

- The PSD Health Care Division pandemic response plan requires all testing for COVID-19 at correctional facilities to be conducted in consultation with a healthcare provider.
- If an inmate presents with symptoms of a respiratory illness, PSD Health Care Division's staff will perform an evaluation, including testing for COVID-19 and common infectious respiratory illnesses such as Influenza.
- PSD's Health Care Division conducts onsite specimen collection using the nasopharyngeal swab and submits the nasopharyngeal specimen to Clinical Lab Services for laboratory testing. Inmates undergoing COVID-19 testing are immediately placed in medical isolation and inmate close contacts are placed in quarantine.

Q: Does PSD provide flu vaccines to adults in custody?

- The PSD Health Care Division (HCD) has an established process to offer each adult in custody an immunization against influenza (respiratory flu). An adult in custody may decline to receive the immunization at any time, including at the time of the appointment.

Q: What are you doing for the elderly and vulnerable people in custody?

- PSD Corrections Division is identifying the especially vulnerable population within the institutions and intensifying the efforts to reduce potential exposure and transmission. If an adult in custody becomes ill and exhibits flu like symptoms, then we follow CDC and DOH guidance for supportive care.

Q: Is my loved one eligible for early release?

- Early parole release is a limited option to advance the release date of a prisoner with a severe medical condition including terminal illness, or who is elderly and permanently incapacitated. The PSD Corrections Division works with the Hawaii Paroling Authority to provide required information in statute and rule to those in custody requesting early release.

Q: Will April releases be impacted?

- As of this notice, scheduled releases will proceed as usual.

Q: Is programming being altered at your prisons and jails?

- Each facility is addressing their unique needs accordingly. All non-essential programming is temporarily suspended.

Q: With the suspension of some programming, what will the adults in custody be doing all day?

- Adults in custody who have work opportunities inside the institutions will continue to participate in those.
- Inmates will be allowed more out-of-cell recreation time.

Q: Will there be a disruption or delay in transports? What about my loved one who had a routine doctor/dental/other health appointment in the community?

- Transports to court will continue for court scheduled in-person appearances.
- Essential medical specialist transports, hospital and emergency transports will continue as needed.

Q: Are transfers happening between institutions and from jails?

- Currently, essential transfers between institutions, and to and from jails for intake and court are occurring as scheduled. We are conducting enhanced screenings of all inmates upon intake and release. Staff also screen all transports and transfers between institutions. Schedules are subject to change as the overall situation with the virus changes day by day.

Q: Will cancelled events be rescheduled?

- Events like weddings, graduations, special visiting and other events will likely be rescheduled and we will know more when we reassess the visiting suspension. We know events are extremely important to adults in custody and their loved ones, and we will do everything possible to ensure these events happen once it is safe to do so.

Q: How many adults in custody are there under Hawaii's Correction's Division supervision?

- You can find end of the month population reports on our website here: <https://dps.hawaii.gov/about/divisions/corrections/>

Questions related to the Hawaii Paroling Authority

Q: Is the Hawaii Paroling Authority Parole Board still having public hearings?

- The Hawaii Paroling Authority board suspended all parole hearings. Hearings are tentatively scheduled to resume 4/3/20 (That date is subject to change depending on circumstances.)
- Signs have been posted outside for parolees and inside for HPA staff with the latest updates on scheduling and office visits. An information hotline was established for the general public. That number: 1 (808) 253-1642.

Questions related to Public Safety Staffing

Q: Roughly how many people are employed for the Department of Public Safety?

- There are approximately 2,700 employees (Uniform and non-uniform) in the Department of Public Safety.

Q: Are you able to provide examples of who "essential" and "non-essential staff" would be within your department?

- Department of Public Safety uniformed Corrections and Law Enforcement Officers are considered essential workers and will continue to report to work as scheduled. Other civilian corrections, law enforcement and administrative staff are deemed essential on a case-by-case basis. The Department's administrative and division leadership are currently working out plans for non-uniform corrections, law enforcement and administrative division employees, to determine who is considered essential and who may be working from home.

Questions related to Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Q: Are Sheriffs still conducting eviction actions?

- The PSD Sheriff Division is suspending all eviction activities as part of the Department's COVID-19 response efforts. The temporary hold on eviction action is effective immediately. The suspension will be reevaluated at a later date.

Q: Are all evictions halted?

The Department of Public Safety can only speak for the Sheriff Division involvement. We can't speak for the eviction process as a whole. Sheriffs have temporarily suspended their eviction-related activities.

The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) is providing answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to assist homeowners and renters and with inquiries regarding the Landlord-Tenant code.

This FAQ along with more information regarding the Hawai'i Landlord-Tenant code is available at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/ocp/landlordtenant/>. A direct link to the FAQ is here: <https://cca.hawaii.gov/ocp/landlord-tenant-faqs/>

For rights of landlords regarding evictions (for any reason) and responsibility of paying utility bills and related shutoffs, please inquire with the State Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA). Landlord/Tenant questions are handled by the DCCA Office of Consumer Protection's Landlord/Tenant hotline, (808) 586-2634.

https://cca.hawaii.gov/ocp/landlord_tenant/

The Judiciary's website also has more information on the eviction process here: https://www.courts.state.hi.us/self-help/landlord/tenant_claims

For a list of independent civil process servers: <https://dps.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Civil-Process-List-2.27.20.pdf>

Q: What about court appearances? Do I show up?

- For any questions related to the courts and other Judiciary proceedings please visit: <https://www.courts.state.hi.us/>.