

Memorandum



Date: May 14, 2020

To: Audrey M. Edmonson, Chairwoman
and Members of the Board of County Commissioner

Supplement to
Agenda Item No. 2(B)(4)
May 19, 2020

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

A blue ink signature of Carlos A. Gimenez, written in a cursive style, positioned over the name in the 'From' field.

Subject: Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department COVID-19
Mitigation Efforts

The following report is provided in response to information requested during the Board of County Commissioner's meeting on May 5, 2020 regarding the Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department's (MDCR) efforts surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Departmental Background

At the onset of the first case of COVID-19 in Miami-Dade County, MDCR began immediate steps to mitigate possible transmission into its detention facilities. Many of the proactive steps undertaken by MDCR predate the issuance of the Interim Guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the COVID-19 for Correctional Facilities published on March 23, 2020. In fact, MDCR convened a meeting with its Command Staff on March 11, 2020 to discuss operational readiness to respond to the eventual impact of COVID-19 in its jail facilities. MDCR also held a mandatory meeting with Command Staff on March 25, 2020 to review each recommendation of CDC's Interim Guidance and ensure immediate implementation.

Restricted Access to MDCR Facilities

MDCR immediately determined that restricting and controlling access to MDCR detention facilities was essential to mitigate the introduction of COVID-19 into its detention facilities and protect the health and well-being of employees and inmates. Such efforts began on March 12, 2020 and are as follows:

- Inmate visitation was immediately cancelled. In order to minimize this impact, MDCR requested two free telephone calls from the inmate telephone provider to encourage continued communication with loved ones, which began on March 17, 2020. Since 2019, MDCR has been working on a video visitation project which is now in the pilot phase and during this time inmates will be afforded one free 15-minute video call weekly. This is in an effort to further encourage inmates to remain in communication with their loved ones.
- Volunteer and religious programs were cancelled to eliminate the entry of the general public into jail facilities.
- Professional visitation from attorneys and court-appointed evaluations were restricted to behind glass to ensure social distancing practices were followed.

- Confinement of persons sentenced to weekends was suspended. Increased the use of videoconferencing throughout facilities for court proceedings, attorney visits, and court-ordered physician interviews to minimize inmate movement system-wide.

Mandatory Wellness Testing

In conjunction with limiting access to its detention facilities, MDCR began initial mandatory wellness screenings including temperature checks, on March 12, 2020, of all new arrestees for exposure to COVID-19 before entering facilities. Any arrestees with possible exposure to COVID-19 were sent to Jackson Memorial Hospital for testing. As of March 20, 2020, newly arrested persons are quarantined and anyone remaining after first appearance hearing, remain in quarantine for 14 days until housed in general population. Specific housing has been designated to quarantine inmates identified as persons under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 or for inmates who test positive. MDCR has also installed thermal body temperature machines to automatically scan and alert staff if an inmate has an elevated body temperature to allow for large scale temperature checks.

Beginning March 17, 2020, MDCR implemented mandatory wellness screenings of MDCR and Corrections Health Services (CHS) staff. A three-question assessment was developed in conjunction with CHS to identify employees with a fever or respiratory symptoms, those who recently traveled to any Level 3 country, as identified by the CDC, in the past 14 days, and/or those in contact with someone with possibly infected with COVID-19 in the past 14 days. Employees exhibiting a fever were not permitted to work and directed to contact health officials. Upon completion of the initial screening, daily temperature screenings are conducted on MDCR and CHS personnel prior to entering detention facilities.

In addition, MDCR initiated temperature screening procedures on March 20, 2020 for law enforcement officers transporting newly arrested persons to the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center before entry into the law enforcement officer (LEO) lobby. In the event an officer's temperature is elevated, the officer must wait outside until the inmate is accepted into MDCR custody.

Enhanced Cleaning and Sanitation of Facilities and Personal Cleanliness

MDCR has an established comprehensive cleaning schedule for its facilities to ensure sanitary conditions are maintained. As early as March 10, 2020, MDCR further enhanced its sanitation protocols and instructed more frequent and rigorous disinfecting of high touch areas such as telephones, tables, chairs, handrails, doorknobs, handles restraints, bars, bathrooms and telephones. MDCR also purchased industrial grade fogging machines for all facilities to disinfect each housing area weekly, at a minimum, and installed air purifiers at facilities to sanitize the airflow. MDCR continues to ensure that sufficient inventory of necessary equipment and supplies such as hand soap, sanitizer and disinfecting products are maintained to clean and disinfect facilities.

MDCR has emphasized hand washing and disinfecting of high touch areas since the emergence of COVID-19. MDCR staff were permitted to bring their own hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes to clean their work surfaces. It is important to emphasize that despite reports, MDCR has always provided bars of soap and a personal towel to inmates free of charge, and general population inmates are encouraged to shower daily. Industrial grade

cleaning supplies have always been available in housing units for supervised use by inmate workers to clean and sanitize units. These conditions are governed by the Florida Model Jail Standards (FMJS) which issues standards that Florida jails must follow to meet constitutional standards. MDCR is inspected by FMJS annually and has consistently met these FMJS standards, as reported to the Board annually.

Personal Protective Equipment

MDCR has equipped MDCR staff and inmates with personal protective equipment as appropriate. MDCR initially provided its staff protective masks to keep on their person and utilize when appropriate. As the COVID-19 situation evolved, MDCR mandated the use of personal protective masks by all MDCR staff and inmates on April 3, 2020. Face shields, goggles, Tyvek sleeves and gowns are provided to staff assigned to isolation/quarantine units. The use of personal protective equipment is consistent with CDC guidelines.

Social Distancing Practices

MDCR recognizes the necessity to practice social distancing to minimize the transmission of COVID-19. In order to reduce the inmate population, MDCR has worked closely with the State Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, and the Eleventh Judicial Circuit to release inmates via early sentence release, Monitored Release and Pretrial Services Programs. In fact, the Monitored Release Program has a total 1,064 persons on house arrest, an increase of 31% from the 2019 average of 815, with 461 placed since March 12, 2020, and Pretrial Services has 2,084 persons on non-cash release, with 534 placed since March 12, 2020. These efforts have resulted in a 25% reduction of the inmate population from the 2019 average of 4,329 to 3,248. MDCR is currently at 67% of its current capacity.

MDCR has also emphasized the importance of social distance among MDCR staff and inmates. Posters are placed throughout all facilities to encourage social distancing among inmates and staff. A meeting with inmate representatives was convened on March 18, 2020 with CHS personnel to discuss COVID symptoms and the importance of precautionary measures such as hand washing and social distancing. Additionally, correctional officers are actively managing daily inmate functions such as head count, meal distribution, medication distribution and uniform/linen exchange by limiting the number of inmates allowed in line and directing inmates to stand six (6) feet apart utilizing indicators located on the floor of each unit. Inmates are instructed to skip a chair while seated at the medical clinic. As a reminder of the importance to continue social distancing, hand washing, and the mandatory use of masks, an overhead announcement is made hourly at facilities equipped with an intercom system. Recreation is scheduled to ensure one housing area utilizes the recreation area at a time to prevent cross contamination between inmate cohorts. In areas where inmate tables are available in a common area, the tables have been paired to allow a maximum of 4 inmates to seat in a table of 8. Inmate bunks in dormitory areas have been staggered in a zig-zag formation to further maximize the distance between inmate beds.

COVID-19 Testing

CHS conducts COVID-19 testing based on established medical protocols. Before the greater availability of COVID-19 testing, MDCR inmates identified as possibly being infected with COVID-19 were transported to the hospital for testing and if asymptomatic

were returned to MDCR and kept in medical isolation pending test results. CHS is now administering COVID-19 tests for any inmate displaying COVID-19 related symptoms and inmates in close contact with others who have tested positive. CHS continues to follow the testing protocols consistent with the CDC. Additionally, MDCR, in consultation with Jackson Health System's Infectious Control and CHS, facilitated the large scale COVID-19 testing of inmates by CHS to identify asymptomatic COVID-19 positive inmates in order to place them in isolation and to identify close contacts to place them in quarantine. This large-scale testing initiative occurred in conjunction with having inmates shelter in place since April 25, 2020, with minimal movements between housing areas. CHS also conducted large-scale COVID-19 testing of MDCR staff to determine its impact and identify asymptomatic yet COVID-19 positive employees to remain home in isolation. Despite MDCR's immediate and comprehensive approach, COVID-19 positive cases have emerged among its staff and inmates. Below are the results of COVID-19 testing as of May 11, 2020:

Status	MDCR Staff	Inmates
Tested	1,028	1,166
Positive	103 (21 returned to work)	481
Negative	889	685
Pending	36	0

Alternative Inmate Housing

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, MDCR evaluated the feasibility of reopening its two closed facilities (The Training and Treatment Center and The Women's Detention Center) in order to increase the system-wide capacity and minimize the number of inmates in housing areas.

The Training and Treatment Center (TTC) has a rated capacity of 822 inmate beds and its main buildings were built in 1953. Due to its age and deteriorating infrastructure, the TTC was closed in June 2016. A recent inspection of TTC indicted that extensive repairs are necessary before the facility can be used to house inmates even temporarily. The needed repairs would take approximately 12 to 18 months and are cost prohibited given the age and condition of the facility as summarized below:

- A and B Blocks require the renovation of bathrooms, replacement of windows, interior paint, and replacement of air conditioning units
- C Block requires the replacement of windows, repair of drainage system, interior paint, and replacement of air conditioning units and boilers
- F Block requires the renovation of bathrooms, replacement of windows, and interior paint
- Units 1 through 6 were built as temporary wooden structures in 1984 which are well past their useful life, have termites, leaky windows and deficient plumbing systems

The Women's Detention Center (WDC) was built in 1974 and has a rated capacity of 203 inmate beds. Due to its aging infrastructure and extensive issues with its plumbing system, the WDC was closed as a detention facility in 2012. In May 2014, it was repurposed as administrative offices of the Pre-Trial Services and Monitor Release Bureaus. An inspection of floors 2, 3, and 4 of the WDC indicates that extensive repairs are necessary to house inmates even temporarily. The needed repairs would take approximately 12 to 18 months and are cost prohibited given the age of the facility as summarized below:

- Renovation of all inmate bathroom areas
- Replacement of cast iron piping throughout the entire facility as pipes are cracked requiring the demolition and reconstruction of the affected areas
- Replacement of numerous air handling units on floors 2 through 4
- Replacement of the roof as identified in 40-year recertification inspection

The extended timeline and significant amount of required repairs of both facilities do not allow for their use to house inmates. Additionally, the Department of Justice Monitors considered that TTC did not meet the minimal constitutional standards for inmate confinement. MDCR also considered utilizing temporary housing tents in the event additional inmate housing was necessary during this pandemic. However, temporary housing tents provide minimal security safeguards and are only suitable for inmates with low level offenses. Ongoing efforts of criminal justice partners to reduce the inmate population are concentrated on low level offenders. With 93% of the inmate population charged with felonies, temporary housing tents are not a viable option.

Managing the COVID-19 Situation

MDCR is managing the COVID-19 situation in a comprehensive manner through strict oversight, clear and continuous communication, and the development of policies and procedures. MDCR established a COVID-19 Incident Command Center and dedicated Response Line on March 31, 2020 to provide a centralized hub to closely monitor COVID-19 related matters with oversight by Senior Staff. The Incident Command Center is responsible for the following:

- Tracking employees tested for COVID-19
- Obtaining documentation for positive tests
- Tracking employees taking leave related to COVID-19
- Answering questions and concerns from MDCR staff
- Identifying close and community contacts
- Identifying inmates and housing units impacted by COVID cases

MDCR also developed a COVID-19 Database to capture important information regarding employee testing for COVID-19, identify the impact of related vacancies, and provide accurate reporting and tracing of COVID-19 cases.

Communication and messaging regarding the COVID-19 situation with employees and inmates has been continual. This has been accomplished by informing staff through email communication, ReadyOp Emergency Management Communication system, weekly COVID-19 updates, memoranda, and a Director's video. The Director's video communicated to staff the seriousness of COVID-19, the proactive steps MDCR is undertaking to keep staff and inmates safe, and what preventive steps each employee must take. A social media campaign has been developed, MDCR Cares and Stay Safe, Create Space, to reiterate the importance of calling the COVID-19 Response Line, practicing social distancing, maintaining personal hygiene, staying home if sick, and cleanliness of the facilities. Social media posts and pictures are posted weekly. Command staff personnel have been touring the facilities and talking to both staff and inmates to communicate the steps MDCR has taken to address COVID-19, emphasize the importance of preventative measures such as the mandated use of protective masks, strict social distancing, and hand washing, as well as to address concerns.

Correctional Counselors have increased their rounding in housing areas to further address inmate concerns. An open letter from Director Junior was provided to each inmate further reassuring them of MDCR's priority to protecting their health and well-being. MDCR has also developed a Departmental Standard Operating Procedure for pandemic and has updated its Pandemic Plan.

MDCR has been aggressively managing the unprecedented COVID-19 situation and continually re-evaluates its operations to address the evolving nature of this pandemic. MDCR remains committed to its mission of the safe, secure care custody and control of individuals in its custody while preparing them for a successful return to the community. Their commitment to this mission fuels their efforts in ensuring the health and well-being of its staff, medical personnel, and the inmates in its custody.

Should you require additional information, please contact Daniel Junior, Director, Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department at 786-263-6019.

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