



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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Dear Families of Incarcerated Individuals,

I'm excited to share we are starting to see signs of declining COVID-19 cases counts amongst our incarcerated persons and staff. The frequent movements with individuals into isolation and quarantine have been uncomfortable, and difficult to endure, but the declining numbers of COVID 19 show this strategy works in keeping large numbers of people from getting very seriously ill. We're also beginning to see a decline in staff absences which will help ease some of the delays in recreation and program services. Governor Inslee has announced that next week he will be lifting the outdoor mask mandate, hospitals will be able to resume elected surgeries, and the National Guard can stand down from deployment in community hospitals. If the trends of the last two years repeat, we hope to see a significant improvement in conditions as we approach spring.

Like businesses and other public agencies, DOC continues to feel the effects of critical staffing shortages due to COVID-19, but our recruitment efforts are showing some positive results in some key areas of the state such as Monroe, Coyote Ridge and Airway Heights. We're hoping to see an increase in applicants for roles working in our facilities, especially in areas of custody and health services, which will have positive impacts for those who are incarcerated.

The roll out of comfort measures I authorized--funded by the Incarcerated Individual Betterment Fund (IIBF)—has begun. This includes JPay account and commissary credits, hygiene kits, sleep masks, men's deodorant, weightlifting fee waivers and greeting cards. Our phone vendor is also providing \$10 phone credits. During my visit last week to the Monroe Corrections Center (MCC), I learned firsthand about the numbers of incarcerated individuals on quarantine or isolation status who did not have access to a television in their cells. As a result, I've asked a team to implement a plan for loaned television sets to those in isolation and quarantine, funded out of the IIBF. The order for these TVs has been placed and we hope to see delivery to facilities soon. In all, I have authorized over one million dollars from the IIBF fund to support meaningful items that incarcerated individuals as well as families have identified.

I receive many questions from families and others. We see these as important opportunities to provide information, promote understanding, as well as gauge where there are concerns or communication needs. We have added the most common questions and answers to our Frequently Asked Questions on the COVID section of our DOC website. While much of this information is tied to policies and procedures, we're committed to using a 'plain talk' approach, wherever possible.

One way families can ask questions and receive information is by attending the local facility COVID informational calls conducted by most facilities that are in outbreak status. These calls allow you to ask questions of staff at the facility where your loved one is located. To find out more about these and how you can participate, [click here](#). Nearly one thousand people have subscribed to our DOC COVID Bulletin, which has a high-level view of data and outbreak status. To subscribe, [click here](#).

The data gives us optimism to consider when we may safely resume recreation, programming and most importantly, visitation. We monitor this data daily. We're not there quite yet, but the signs are hopeful.

Fondly,



Cheryl Strange, Secretary
Department of Corrections