

COVID-19
PREPAREDNESS
AND RESPONSE
IN PLACES OF DETENTION
INFORMATION PACKAGE



COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN PLACES OF DETENTION

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Introduction

The coronavirus outbreak that began in late 2019 (COVID-19) has evolved rapidly and globally. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and a pandemic on 11 March 2020 indicating global spread of a new disease.

Addressing COVID-19 requires critical preparedness and a prepared response, particularly within places of detention (prisons). Prison staff play a crucial role in contributing to the effort of preventing the spread of the disease, promoting safer prison environments, and responding to outbreaks in a timely and effective manner.

Purpose of the information package

The information in this package is intended to support prison administrators and staff. It has been developed to ensure the safety and security of staff, prisoners and the public in the efforts to prevent COVID-19 from entering the prison and mitigate the impact in case of an outbreak. The package provides communication tools with clear and concise information and visuals.

In this context, PREVENTION is critical. All efforts must be taken to keep COVID-19 out of the prisons. Preventative measures will most likely result in significant disruptions to ordinary prison routines and require the administration to make difficult decisions that may restrict or limit prison operations and activities. Responding to a COVID-19 outbreak once the virus has spread in the prison is a significant challenge – particularly in overcrowded conditions. All efforts shall be made to avoid this situation – in line with relevant policies and provisions and in accordance with and upholding human rights standards in prisons.

Overcrowded, cramped and unsanitary prisons present significant risks of COVID-19 spreading rapidly among prisoners and staff. Decongesting prisons and reducing prison populations must therefore be a priority. In this regard, please e-mail dpo-jcs@un.org to obtain the “Guidance on Prison Decongestion in United Nations Mission Settings” developed by the Justice and Corrections Service of the Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peace Operations.

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How to use this information package

This information package draws upon different sources, including the World Health Organization "Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention Interim guidance" and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) "Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities".

The information presented in this package adapts the above comprehensive guidance into practical, ready to use material. It is not exhaustive and may need to be tailored to your particular context. For additional information/guidance please refer to the resource documents mentioned above or guidance relevant to your region.

Disclaimer

This information package has been developed by the Justice and Corrections Service (JCS) in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, United Nations Department of Peace Operations and the Division for Peace, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in collaboration with the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, and in consultation with the Justice and Corrections components of United Nations Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions, UNDP, and UNODC. JCS would like to give special thanks to Health Through Walls, the International Corrections and Prison Association, Penal Reform International and the Group of Friends of Correction for providing specialized advice on health and administrative related matters in prisons. All Graphic design and illustrations were completed by Juan Sebastián López -Morphart- / www.morphart.co

Preparedness is crucial in effective crisis management. We strongly recommend using this information and suggested communication tools to brief prison staff on how to respond to COVID-19. Consider conducting several briefs, discuss a variety of COVID-19 scenarios in order to ensure that all staff members have a solid understanding of measures to be taken to prevent and respond to COVID-19 in your prison(s).

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	FORMAT	TITLE	AUDIENCE	USE IN
1	Checklist	Prison checklist	Prison administration	Prison admin preparedness planning
2	Poster	Virus general information	All	Place in various locations throughout the prison
3	Poster	Basic precautionary measures	All	Place in various locations throughout the prison
4	Pocket card	Prison staff brief	Prison staff	Share with prison staff
5	Poster	Prisoner brief 1 & 2	Prisoners	Place in prisoners' areas
6	Poster	Visitor brief	Visitors	Briefing provided to visitors. Place at main entrance and in visitation area
7	Briefing note	Communicating with prison staff	Prison administration	Share with prison administration
8	Briefing note	Communicating with prisoners	Prison staff	Share at staff briefings and post in staff area
9	Checklist	Responding to and managing cases	Prison administration / staff	Share at staff briefings and post in staff area

The layout of the visuals is suitable for any ISO-sized paper (A4, A3, A2). Images and text have been separated so the layout can be adjusted depending on the requirements. To print, export the files as PDF or PNG and send to the printer. For borderless printing, the image may be scaled to fit the printable area and trimmed along the edges.

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PRISON CHECKLIST



PRISON ADMINISTRATION

Contact the Director General of Prisons / Commissioner of Prisons and gather all available guidance to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contact the Ministry of Health or equivalent, or the local WHO representative and obtain information on:

COVID-19 guidance;

Reporting requirements;

Possible support options to the prison (test kits, PPE for staff, medical isolation rooms for prisoners showing symptoms of COVID-19).

Discuss with vendors the continuity or bulk purchase of food, water, medication, soaps/disinfectants, and other necessary supplies.

Prepare information on your prisoner population:

Identify at risk prisoners with or without underlying medical conditions (i.e. pregnant women, parents detained with children, prisoners who are diabetic, asthmatic, or obese, prisoners who suffer from tuberculosis, immunosuppression, or severe malnutrition). Also consider the elderly who are at risk of serious complications if infected with COVID-19;

Discuss with Ministry of Justice or other relevant authorities potential prison decongestion initiatives. The release criteria should be determined by relevant judicial authorities (i.e. at risk prisoners, detainees with inappropriate/incomplete legal papers; persons serving a sentence for lesser/petty/minor/non-violent offenses; persons with less than 6 to 12 months remaining in their sentences).

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PRISON CHECKLIST



- Discuss the reduction of the number of new admissions with relevant law enforcement authorities.
- If within your authority, consider any early type release of prisoners.

Establish two separate emergency registries:

- Entry / exit registry for all people coming in and out from the prison (including prison staff / visitors / vendors / service providers). This information will be valuable for eventual disease tracing;
- Observation registry for recording prisoners demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19 and identifying prisoners who were in close contact to that prisoner. Update at least twice a day (opening and closing). Include the following categories:
 - No suspected symptoms;
 - Symptoms;
 - Confirmed Infection (if possible);

(A sample format for the registries is provided at the end of the checklist)

- Discuss plans to manage prisoner unrest and prison security incidents, including large scale riots and attempted escapes. Consider establishing contacts with local police or security forces for possible support.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAINTENANCE

- Develop a process and space to screen all persons entering your prison. Screening stations should be outside the entrance to the prison. Any person (staff /visitors/vendors/service providers) showing symptoms of COVID-19 or who has been in contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID19 MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER the prison.

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CHECKLIST



Establish a mandatory hand washing station for staff, prisoners, and visitors at the entrance and throughout the prison to allow for regular washing of face and hands.

Identify location to isolate prisoners with symptoms of COVID-19. The location should be in a separate building inside the prison. If such space is not available in existing buildings, consider temporary solutions such as large tents located away from areas regularly frequented by prisoners.

Consider establishing a 14-day quarantine area for all new admissions. If they show no symptoms of COVID-19 after 14 days, transfer to the general population.

Develop an emergency procedure to manage prisoners demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19. Include elements of accessing PPE, providing the prisoner with a face mask, and escorting the prisoner to a designated isolation area. Prison staff should be aware of this procedure and be briefed / trained on the procedure.

Increase frequency of cleaning regimes within the facility:

Disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched - especially in common areas;

Also disinfect objects / surfaces not ordinarily cleaned (e.g. cell doors /
 bars, doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, toilets, toilet handles, recreation equipment, kiosks and telephones, blankets, and clothing).

Ensure proper ventilation by removing obstacles that impede air flow from windows, grills and doors, fences, and gates.

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PRISON CHECKLIST



PERSONNEL / STAFF

- Communicate with prison staff that COVID-19 prevention and response procedures will temporarily impact the ordinary prison routine.
 - Ensure prison staff have all the necessary information / fully understand the COVID-19 prevention and response procedures.
 - Screen all staff before they enter the prison. DO NOT ALLOW ENTRY if a staff member shows or has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19.
 - If a staff member has been in contact with an individual infected by COVID-19 or with symptoms related thereto, consider assigning them duties with no or limited contact with prisoners and other staff for a period of 14 days (i.e. external patrol or towers).
 - Encourage staff to be extra observant and communicate with the prisoners. Look for prisoners with COVID-19 symptoms and be aware of any unusual suspicious prisoner behaviour as a result of restricted movement and activities.
- Minimize the movement of your staff amongst prisoners without compromising the security and care objective of the service:
- Assign staff to a specific group of prisoners for their entire shift to limit possible spreading of disease. Do not do typical post rotations;
 - Limit the amount of direct contact staff have with prisoners. Have staff observe and communicate with prisoners from a distance (in towers, from behind the fences/gates/grills);
 - Assign a limited number of staff to work in your isolation ward. Provide them with the necessary PPE;
 - Modify tasks of staff belonging to risk groups (similar health criteria) and limit contact with prisoners and other staff;

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CHECKLIST



Prepare for staff shortage:

- Inform staff why it is important that they do not come to work if they show any symptoms of COVID-19, and put into place procedures so they can be paid and are not penalized in other ways for being absent;
- Determine the least amount of staff you need to operate your prison. Have a contingency plan to call on other uniformed personnel to temporarily support a massive staff shortage (police, military, other uniformed personnel);
- If acceptable in your context, consider training prisoners to temporarily assist with the care and support of other prisoner groups.

Prepare for prisoners unrests / riots (due to limitations imposed).

Prepare and train staff on how to use PPE.

PRISONERS

- Communicate with prisoners the temporary impact of COVID-19 on ordinary prison routines (including visits and other services).
- Stress the importance of protecting the health of staff, prisoners, and the community.
- Show the prisoners the information posters and explain the information and verify that the prisoner understands the content.
- Encourage prisoners to report any symptoms of COVID-19 to a staff member for the health and well-being of everyone.

Consider reducing the number of prisoners gathering in groups, attempt to reduce movement of prisoners and avoid mixing individuals from different prisoner groups (particularly at-risk prisoners). This may require re-organizing:

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PRISON CHECKLIST



- Rehabilitation activities / vocational training / work;
- Religious services;
- Recreational activities;
- Prisoner movements (internal / external);
- Outdoor time in shifts / limit mixing the different sections.

VISITORS (INCLUDING VENDORS / SERVICE PROVIDERS)

- Communicate with visitors the impact of COVID-19 on regular prison visits. Ensure they see and understand the information posters.
- Consider limiting physical visits and consider other means of communication with visitors, service providers etc.
- Provide access to virtual / telephone visits options. If moving to virtual / telephone visits, disinfect electronic equipment regularly.
- If visitors bring food, clothing, or medication to prisoners, ensure there is an accountable process to safely accept, disinfect if possible and distribute to prisoners
Use the separate emergency registry recommended to track all persons entering and exiting the prison.
- If visits are still allowed, put in place screening processes DO NOT ALLOW any person showing or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or refusing to be screened, to enter the prison , or has been in contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID19.
- Communicate with the visitors and discourage physical contact / visits in the interest of their own and the prisoners' health and the health of their family members and community.

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PRISON CHECKLIST



- Set up a wash station for visitors at the prison entrance and exit and provide facemasks if possible.
- Ensure the visitation space allows enough distance (2 meters) between prisoners / visitors.
- Use the separate emergency COVID-19 registry recommended to track all persons entering and exiting the prison.

EQUIPMENT / SUPPLIES

- List equipment / supplies needed to contain COVID-19 spread (see below).
- Increase your supplies of food, water and medication.
- Identify equipment providers / supply chains. Bulk purchase and put into storage if possible.
- Foresee specific protection gear and routines for sensitive areas (reception, medical facilities, kitchen, laundry, etc.).
- Consider using the prison industry to produce masks and other useful equipment. If possible, consider making hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (where permissible based on security restrictions).

PPE / SUPPLIES NEEDED TO CONTAIN COVID-19 SPREAD

- Suggested PPE supplies:



- Facemasks (see below for more details)



- Eye protection



- Disposable medical gloves











- Disposable gowns / one-piece coveralls

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PRISON CHECKLIST



Other supplies for daily clinic need, such as:

-  Tissues;
-  Liquid soap when possible / if bar soap must be used, ensure that it does not irritate the skin and thereby discourage frequent hand washing;
-  Disposable hand drying supplies (paper towels);
-  Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (where permissible based on security restrictions);
-  Cleaning supplies, chlorine wash, disinfectant;
-  Household gloves and boots;
-  Equipment for disinfecting areas (such as portable sprayers - only to use if prisoners are NOT in the area);
-  Body bags or alternatives (large heavy plastic trash bags or plastic);

Words about facemasks:

N-95 or FFP2 masks are recommended for front line staff in direct contact with prisoners with or suspect of having COVID-19. This type of mask, when fitted properly around the face, reduces the likelihood of breathing in droplets from a contagious person. Surgical-type masks should be worn by the person with COVID-19 disease or symptoms. These masks help to catch the droplets that an infected person might expel. Given the global shortage of masks, alternatives could be considered but likely not as effective. Construction masks or homemade masks made of cloth or bandanas could be considered and produced by the prison industry.

COVID-19 | COMMUNICATING PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE WITH PRISON STAFF IN PLACES OF DETENTION



- Communicate with staff and prisoners, using verbal commands / providing verbal direction from a distance instead of using physical contact. Explain by showing / demonstrating.
- Increase vigilance, observe, and interact with prisoners to get more information about possible symptoms of disease and signs of unrest among prisoners.
- Register or report all possible symptoms of disease in prisoners and other staff.
- Limit direct contact with prisoners if possible, conduct visual searches on low-risk prisoners.
- Provide verbal and body language direction for low-risk escorts.
- Don't approach or stand directly in-front of prisoners, reduce the risk of prisoners coughing or breathing directly on you.
- Do prisoner counts from a distance if possible.
- If you need to physically handle/direct prisoners, wear gloves, eye protections and a face-mask if possible or wash your hands before and immediately after if no gloves are available.
- Do not conduct area searches without gloves. If no gloves are available, limit touching areas and ensure you wash your hands before and immediately after searching.
- Ensure at least 2 meters distance between you and the prisoner when interviewing, counselling, admitting, or discharging prisoners. If in an office, use the desk and chairs to create distance.
- Clean your equipment several times a day with disinfectant - if available (including radio, phone, handcuff, handcuff keys, etc.).
- If possible, change clothes and shoes before going home.
- Remind staff on the special vulnerability of prisoners and their duty of care as well as operations in accordance with human rights standards.

COVID-19 | COMMUNICATING PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE | WITH PRISON IN PLACES OF DETENTION | STAFF



WHAT

- COVID-19 is a potentially deadly virus that must be taken seriously.
- The prison administration is doing everything possible to protect staff, prisoners, and the community.
- If you are showing symptoms of the virus (fever, runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, discomfort or tiredness), do not come to work but contact the prison director or designate. Self-quarantine yourself for 14 days to protect your family, colleagues, and prison population. Call a health center / nurse / doctor if possible.
- Ordinary routines in the prison will temporarily change. Restrictive measures (lack of movement, restricted ability to socialize in groups, limited/cancelled visitation) may cause frustration and anxiety amongst prisoners. Communicate and explain that restrictive measures (such as reduced or cancelled visits) are put in place to protect them and their family members.
- Monitor the prisoner population, identify and report immediately if there is any prisoner unrest, aggressive protest, or any violent behaviour.
- Safety and security are paramount during this time; however, this is best achieved by communicating with prisoners, respecting their dignity, and understanding their frustration during this time.

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HOW

- Disclose information, including any measures taken, as soon and as accurately as possible
- Do not minimize or exaggerate the level of risk.
- Lean toward sharing more information, not less, to prevent people from thinking something significant is being hidden.
- Identify worst-case scenarios.
- Let your staff know that you understand their concerns and will try to address them.
- Be a role model. As prison manager / administrator, you are exposed to the same risks as prison staff and prisoners. Take the opportunity to model appropriate behaviour:
 - Remain calm;
 - Recognize the severity and complexity of the risk;
 - Remain strong and steadfast;
 - Encourage and demonstrate altruism, hope and resolve;
 - Demonstrate exemplary behaviour by following advice and regulations, by washing hands and protect yourself and your staff and the prisoners.

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**PREPAREDNESS
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WITH PRISONERS**



WHAT

- COVID-19 is a potentially deadly virus that **MUST** be taken seriously.
- The prison administration is doing everything possible to protect you.
- Measures are temporary. The more we comply with the instruction provided by the prison administration, the quicker the situation will be resolved.
- If you are showing symptoms of the virus (fever, cough, shortness of breath), contact prison staff as soon as possible and follow instructions.
- The prison's ordinary routines will temporarily change in order to protect everyone from this virus getting into the prison and impacting you. Ask a prison staff what has changed.

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**PREPAREDNESS
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WITH PRISONERS**



HOW

- Use simple and consistent messages.
- Don't over-reassure.
- Don't lie or be dishonest.
- Treat the prisoners with dignity and respect. Consider their vulnerable situation.
- Be a role model. As prison staff, you are exposed to the same risks as prisoners. Take the opportunity to model appropriate behaviour:
 - Remain calm;
 - Recognize the severity and complexity of the risk;
 - Remain strong and steadfast;
 - Encourage and demonstrate altruism, hope and resolve;
 - Demonstrate exemplary behaviour by following advice and regulations, by washing hands and protect yourself and the prisoners.

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RESPONDING AND MANAGING CASES



- As soon as an individual develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should wear a face mask and should be immediately placed in isolation in a separate space from other individuals, preferably in a separate building inside the prison.
- If you have limited space at the prison and cannot move prisoners around, consider contacting a local health facility or consider procuring tents that can be set up in the recreation area.
- Proceed, if possible, with preventive isolation of all known contacts (according to COVID-19 categorization).
- Minimize the number of staff in contact with infected prisoners, particularly staff belonging to at risk groups.
- Disinfect the cell of the person who is suspected or confirmed of having contracted COVID-19 thoroughly.
- Keep the individual's movement outside the COVID-19 isolation space to an absolute minimum
- Ensure that the individual is always wearing a face protection when outside of the medical isolation space, and whenever another individual enters. Masks should be changed at least daily, and when visibly soiled or wet.
- During isolation, the isolated person should be under medical observation at least twice a day, including taking body temperature and checking for symptoms of COVID-19 infection, i.e.

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN PLACES OF DETENTION

RESPONDING AND MANAGING CASES



- Facilities should make every possible effort to place suspected COVID-19 cases under medical isolation individually. Grouping should only be practiced if there are no other available options.
- If grouping is necessary, attempt to separate confirmed cases (tested) from suspected cases (showing symptoms). Ensure everyone wears face protection and attempt to have all prisoners respect the 2 meters standard.
- Prison staff should be designated to monitor these individuals exclusively where possible and these staff should be given priority for the use of PPE.
- Detainees placed in medical isolation must have access to adequate food, toilets, and other requirements.
- Maintain medical isolation until all the following criteria have been met:
 - For individuals who have been tested to determine if they are still contagious:
 - The individual has been free from fever for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND
 - The individual's other symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND
 - The individual has tested negative in at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart.

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For individuals who have NOT been tested to determine if they are still contagious:

- The individual has been free from fever for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND
- The individual's other symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND
- At least 7 days have passed since the first symptoms appeared.

If a prisoner who is a COVID-19 case is released from custody during their medical isolation period, contact public health to arrange for safe transport and continuation of necessary medical care and medical isolation as part of release planning.

If you have a death in custody:

- A cadaver is likely a vector for COVID-19 for many days!
- Seal the cadaver in a body bag or suitable alternative such as heavy plastic bag or plastic roll;
- Consider using a refrigerated room as a temporary morgue;
- If no other options, consider cremation, within 12 hours, but as much as possible be in accordance with the wish and religious protocols of the deceased or their family;
- Record, with photos if possible, and report the death to the proper authority and follow the death in custody procedure.

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Justice and Corrections Service

Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions

United Nations Department of Peace Operations

jcs@un.org

Division for Peace

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

ptp@unitar.org

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