



U.S. Department of Justice


Federal Bureau of Prisons

Office of the Director

Washington, DC 20534

April 8, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR THE INMATE POPULATION

FROM: 
M.D. Carvajal, Director

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Pandemic

I would rather be able to address you directly, however, that is not practical at this time. Instead, I am writing this letter to tell you what we are doing as an agency to safeguard your health during the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to thank each of you for your understanding and cooperation as we diligently work to try and prevent the introduction of coronavirus in our facilities and to stop the spread of it in the facilities that have already been affected. It is critically important that each and every one of us take this seriously - together we will all get through this.

Let me share some information with you and dispel any rumors you may have heard. Despite the planning and preparations that has been ongoing since January 2020, and the implementation of the first three phases of our COVID-19 Action Plan, the BOP had its first positive inmate case on March 21, 2020, and the first positive staff case the very next day. Unfortunately, I am also saddened to report, as of today, we have had eight COVID-19 inmate-related deaths. On March 26, 2020, we implemented Phase 4 requiring all individuals entering our facilities, including staff, be screened and temperature checked. This was a critical step to ensure we reduce the risk of introducing and spreading the virus inside our facilities.

The Executive Staff and I have made decisions that directly impact each of you. No decision, regardless of how large or small, is taken lightly or done without considerable thought. Stopping social visits has a major impact on you and your loved ones. But, by doing so we are keeping you, your family, and the community safe. We

increased your monthly phone minutes to help compensate for the lack of visits and by Thursday, April 9, 2020, telephone calls will be free to you for the duration of this emergency (please note, however, collect calls will still be charged to the receiving phone number). We recognize how important it is for you to keep in touch with your families, especially at this time. They need to know how you are doing and you need to know how the virus is affecting them.

Access to legal counsel remains a paramount requirement but, like social visiting, the BOP is reducing the risk of exposure created by external visitors. As such, while in general, legal visits will be suspended for 30 days, case-by-case accommodation will be accomplished at the local level and confidential legal calls will be allowed in order to ensure inmates maintain access to counsel. Limiting facility-to-facility transfers, and other inmate movement, as well as implementing screening and quarantine and isolation procedures, have been essential to slowing the spread of the virus. The nationwide modified operations implemented to maximize social distancing and limit group gatherings, such as staggering meal times and recreation, have also been helpful. However, the growing number of quarantine and isolation cases in our facilities indicates we need to do more.

Accordingly, on April 1, 2020, another decision was made that directly impacts you. For a 14-day period, inmates in every institution have been secured in their assigned cells/quarters to decrease the spread of the virus. Again, we did not make this decision lightly, and I know this can be frustrating for all of you. But just like in communities nationwide who have been required to shelter in place, we feel the safest course to prevent the spread of the virus and keep you healthy is to have you shelter in place as well. After 14 days, this decision will be reevaluated and a determination will be made as to whether or not to return to modified operations.

All of our efforts are toward one goal -- keeping everyone in our prisons, both staff and inmates, safe. We are still in the early stages of this virus; it is not even near the peak in the United States. With that said, I need your continued patience, understanding, and cooperation. I need you to communicate with staff openly and honestly. We need to know how you are feeling -- both physically by telling staff if you are feeling sick, coughing or running a fever, and mentally, if you are anxious or scared.

I am also asking that you keep yourselves and your areas as clean as possible. On April 4, 2020, the CDC issued updated guidance encouraging all persons to use masks in public, as such, masks have

been issued to you. There are universal precautions that we must all follow - we are sharing many of the same areas. Please remember to always:

- Wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and wash your hands thereafter, or use the inside of your elbow.
- Observe social distancing as much as practical in our environment.

These are not normal times. Our world is much different than it was a month ago. We recognize this is hard on you, but remember it is equally hard on everyone. Staff are experiencing many of the same feelings as you, your family, as well as myself.

I want to close by personally telling you that your cooperation has made a difference during this difficult time. Please continue to be patient and understanding. Wash your hands frequently, cover your coughs and sneezes, and avoid touching your face. Maintain an appropriate social distance as often as you can. And, equally as important, communicate with the staff about how you are feeling, ask questions, and share your concerns. This pandemic is a global emergency and the BOP is taking proactive operational measures to safeguard each of you that are entrusted to our care and custody. I am committed to doing everything I can to help keep all of you healthy and safe.