



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
PRISONS DIVISION
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TO: All Prisons Staff

FROM: Julie Martin, Deputy Secretary *Julie Martin*
Robert Herzog, Assistant Secretary *Robert Herzog*

RE: Face Covering Use by Incarcerated Individuals

Since the issuance of face covering kits to the incarcerated population statewide, there have been many questions brought forth regarding the wearing and appropriate use of the face coverings. Recognizing that various individual situations occur related to the face coverings it is not possible to cover every type of situation our staff may encounter. This memo provides additional advice on how to address issues regarding the face coverings. While the instructions provided in the issued kits are recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the most important thing is that individuals are covering their nose and mouth when outside of their cell, or six feet away from their assigned bunk.

There are instances where thoughtful discretion is advised. Individuals recreating in the yard or those working in a maintenance area may temporarily remove their face covering. As long as social distancing is maintained, it is appropriate to allow someone some leeway. In closed areas such as dayrooms, the face covering should be worn at all times. When social distancing is not maintained, reminders as opposed to punitive actions should be the primary response.

If you see an individual using their face covering for other than which it is intended, the individual should first be given a verbal warning to correct the behavior, with a Behavior Observation Entry (BOE) entered into OMNI.

If you encounter someone wearing a face covering they have decorated in a way that depicts violence, derogatory statements, security threat group markings or symbols, or other offensive images, the face covering should be immediately confiscated, a BOE should be entered, and a new face covering should be issued.

With professional discretion and verbal skills, these situations can be addressed in an appropriate fashion. As noted, the primary concern is that the individual is covering their nose and mouth in an effort to protect themselves and others. If your professional intervention is met with extreme hostility or disruption, please contact a supervisor immediately for assistance.

We thank you for your continued patience and professionalism, and appreciate the continued dedication and dependability being shown by so many of you. We will get through this difficult time together, and will be a stronger team for the lessons we learn from all of this.

“Working Together for SAFER Communities”