



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
PRISONS DIVISION
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May 19, 2020

TO: All Incarcerated Individuals

FROM: Julie Martin, Deputy Secretary *J. Martin*
Robert Herzog, Assistant Secretary *R. Herzog*

Subject: **Phased Approach to Resume Statewide Visitation**

The department understands the importance of family relationships and the challenges presented with staying connected to your loved ones through this difficult time that the visitation program is suspended. Understandably many of you have inquired when visitation can resume.

DOC is aligned with Governor Inslee's Stay Home, Stay Healthy Order and is managing DOC locations according to the guidance provided by the Washington State Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control. This approach reduces the risk for incarcerated people who are at high risk for transmission of COVID-19 linked to congregate living conditions presented in correctional facilities.

Unfortunately, the implementation of social distancing and suspension of visitation has resulted in communicating less with the people who are most important to us. We recognize how difficult it is to have limited contact with loved ones. DOC is committed to resuming statewide visitation carefully and will utilize an informed approach in order to maintain the safety and welfare of incarcerated individuals by limiting in person contact with the public.

The timeline to resume visitation will be partly informed by Governor Inslee's [Safe Start Washington](#) plan. This phased recovery plan determines when distancing measures can be lifted and involves assessing COVID-19 activity in the state along with health care system readiness, testing capacity and availability, case and contact investigation and the ability to protect high risk populations.

Visitation will resume as a statewide initiative after Washington State has lifted restrictions to public interactions, and internal processes are in place to offset risks associated with correctional and congregate living conditions. Careful consideration must be taken to protect the health and safety of incarcerated individuals as well as employees and members of the general public who work in and visit Washington prisons.

DOC is committed to establishing a new normal routine and will continue to closely monitor the progress of the state's phased recovery plan. Once conditions are considered safe to resume public gatherings of fifty or more, DOC will communicate plans to resume visitation with social distancing measures in place.

"Working Together for SAFER Communities"