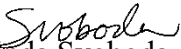





STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1100

September 17, 2020

TO: All Prisons Staff

FROM:  
Arminda Svoboda and Rohna Cole
Prisons/Health Services Incident Commanders

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Staff Serial Testing Status

Tomorrow we reach 200 days of COVID-19 response. It has certainly been one of the most, if not the most, complex incidents our Department has ever experienced. Each day we are learning something new, trying new strategies and assessing the effectiveness of our response approach.

Staff serial testing update

On June 24, 2020, Coyote Ridge Corrections Center began [weekly COVID-19 staff serial testing](#). Since this time, Monroe Correctional Complex, Washington Corrections Center for Women, Washington State Penitentiary, Airway Heights Corrections Center and Stafford Creek Corrections Center have all commenced [COVID-19 staff serial testing](#). In the coming weeks Washington Corrections Center and Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women will move forward with testing.

The Department's goal is to have COVID-19 staff serial testing implemented at all facilities by October 31, 2020. The Department of Corrections greatly appreciates its partnership with Teamsters 117 in helping to keep COVID-19 at bay through their support of COVID-19 staff serial testing.

Mitigating the spread of COVID-19

We have learned the collection of approaches is helping our department mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities. [Active screening stations](#) in conjunction with [COVID-19 staff serial testing](#), along with your efforts to encourage face coverings, adhere to PPE guidance per the [PPE Matrix](#), social distancing, hand washing, increased sanitation, incarcerated individual screening upon transport/transfer/reception, protective separation, intake separation, incarcerated individual testing, secondary screening and isolation and quarantine procedures are all proving strong approaches to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. All of these approaches together are helping us to respond more timely when a known or symptomatic person is identified, which in turn, is helping isolate exposures. As you know, much is still yet to be learned about COVID-19.

"Working Together for SAFER Communities"

Additional information

The COVID-19 Statewide Staff Serial Testing Group has worked, along with each of the first six facilities, to collect nearly 23,000 samples from staff. Naturally this brings some questions forward.

How are we tested? The current and only approved method for COVID-19 Staff Serial Testing sample collection is a nasal swab. It is not the nasopharyngeal swab that has been reported as the collection method early on in mainstream media. Many have described the sample collection as similar to running a Q-Tip on the exterior of the ear with zero discomfort or pain involved.

Who pays for the tests? The Department of Health covers the costs of testing. Last week, a small number of staff received invoices sent erroneously from one of the authorized laboratories. This was corrected immediately upon Prisons Health Services Unified Command learning of the invoices. DOC employees participating in DOC COVID-19 staff serial testing have no financial responsibility for the costs associated.

What happens to my sample? Once the laboratory completes sample testing, the sample is destroyed through incineration between three and seven days' time. No additional testing or information is extracted from the samples.

How do I learn my results? Test results are provided via a secure facility portal and staff are notified of results by either the Occupational Nurse Consultant or identified staff who have completed and signed the Confidentiality Acknowledgement form. For those staff who have not received their results within the typical forty-eight hour time frame, a 1-800 number is provided.

When does this end? At this point, there is not end date for serial testing identified for any facility. As we know that the normal flu season is approaching, we also have been informed that a second wave of COVID-19 transmission is likely. We will continue to collaborate with the Department of Health to find approaches to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

In closing, thank you for your daily efforts to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Cc:

Robert Herzog, Assistant Secretary, Prisons
All Prisons Deputy Directors