



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

November 20, 2020

TO: All Prisons Staff *Miller* *Ronna Cole*
FROM: Arminda Miller and Ronna Cole, Prisons/Health Services Incident Commanders
SUBJECT: Safe Start Visitation Update

In a decision shared on March 12, 2020, the department announced one of the hardest decisions made during the COVID-19 pandemic response. To temporarily suspend the in-person visitation program. On October 1, a memo was provided announcing the Department of Corrections (DOC) [Safe Start Visitation plan](#) to be able to reopen our visitation program in a manner safe for the incarcerated population, staff, and friends and family members. As specified in the October memo, the agency was currently in Phase 1, which includes video visitation only. As a whole, DOC remains in Phase 1 at this time, with access to video visitation.

Unfortunately, as we see a substantial increase in COVID-19 cases in communities across the state, the department has come to the hard decision that it is not safe to move forward toward any other phase of the Safe Start Visitation plan at this time. The Governor's most recent COVID-19 restrictions provided guidance for increased restrictions within the state, with a current expiration date of December 14, 2020, for those restrictions, although that expiration date may be extended. With that in mind, DOC will revisit our Safe Start Visitation plan on December 15, 2020, to determine if it is safe to move forward with implementation.

To reiterate and be as transparent as possible, there is no approved or expected start date to resume in-person visitation at this time. Though the time frame for reopening in-person visitation is undetermined, the department will continue to proactively work to ensure that the department has all processes and procedures in place and is ready to implement the reopening of visitation when it is deemed safe to do so.

DOC continues to work with external stakeholders such as the Washington State Department of Health and local health jurisdictions, as well as other agencies, to monitor situations within our facilities. Our top priority has been, and will remain to be, the safety of our incarcerated population, our staff, and our communities.

We know that family interaction and support is critical to the success for those in our care and are working to provide family support services as it is safe to do so. Thank you for your continued patience and understanding while we continue to work through this in as safe a manner as possible.

AM/RC:jmc

Cc: Robert Herzog, Assistant Secretary, Prisons
All Prisons Deputy Directors
All Superintendents

"Working Together for SAFER Communities"