




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

December 29, 2020

TO: All Incarcerated Individuals
FROM: 
Geneva Cotton and Scott Russell,
Prisons/Health Services Unified Command Incident Commanders
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Test Information

The Prisons/Health Services Unified Command is working to ensure that incarcerated individuals have the most up to date information available pertaining to COVID-19 transmission and testing.

The molecular test, often referred to as a PCR test, is currently the only type of diagnostic COVID-19 test being administered to the incarcerated population. The test is conducted with a nasopharyngeal or nasal swab and diagnoses active COVID-19 infection. According to the [United States Food and Drug Administration](#), the molecular test is highly accurate and recent information from the [Harvard Health](#) indicates the rate of false negative tests varies depending on how long infection has been present and the false positive rate is close to zero.

The Department has developed testing protocols to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. During an outbreak, facilities may test incarcerated individuals twice in a row to ensure positive COVID-19 individuals are identified quickly and separated from those receiving negative test results.

We appreciate your understanding and willingness to work together to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Our goal is to continue to provide you with information and updates to reduce confusion and concerns. Please remember to wear your face coverings, socially distance, follow proper hand washing practices, and remain compliant with cohort groups and schedules.