



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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January 8, 2021

TO: All AHCC Staff
FROM: James Key, Superintendent
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Update

I want to take the time to give an update on the status of our response to the COVID-19 outbreak at AHCC. As we move into our second month of response to this outbreak we continue to see positive test results coming in for different areas of the facility. The most recent series of positive test results have come from K-Unit. This has unfortunately set us back some in our road to recovery from our COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, we continue to manage medical isolation and quarantine status individuals in the Minimum Security Unit (MSU). Once the COVID-19 positive individuals have recovered and protocols for quarantine status are met, we hope to transition the units to recovered status and begin working toward normal operations. This will be a huge win for us and will reduce the levels of frustration for both staff and our incarcerated population, and give hope to the other areas of our facility.

I have received feedback from staff that indicates that we have areas of our incarcerated population that have not been following the mandatory use of face masks, social distancing and other COVID-19 requirements that have been put in place. I want to remind everyone that these standards have not changed and it is important that we be just as diligent in following these expectations as we have prior to the outbreak. The issue of social distancing and mandatory face masks are to ensure that our staff are safe. I would hope that after our most recent and very difficult response to the outbreak, that these experiences highlight the importance of these basic expectations and the importance of following protocols. We must continue to explain and enforce the importance of the standards with our incarcerated population every day. Without their full compliance we cannot move forward with other recommendations for outside yard, and grab-and-go mainline.

Some of the reasons for our continued diligence in following these standards is to make sure that we do not present the opportunity for others to be exposed to COVID-19. The fact is that we are still currently dealing with an outbreak of COVID-19 at AHCC. Individuals who are not using proper PPE presents a safety risk to staff and those they come into contact with, which can also impact the status of entire living units. As much as we would like to have the flexibility in how we manage this incident, we don't have the space capacity or resources to do so.

Over the course of this next week you will see a number of moves taking place. These moves are being done to accomplish a number of goals, which include putting medium custody and MI3 custody individuals back into custody appropriate housing and in preparation for what we hope will be a return to more normal operations. We will also move recovered individuals out of the gym area and into vacant bunk areas in R-Unit A-side and K-Unit. This is being done to create space in the gym for positive patients from K-Unit. Once this is complete, we will be able to move all positive patients from recovered units and transition the unit back to full recovered status again. We will be working on this process throughout the weekend after we have received enough volunteers from the Recreation area.

This has been a very difficult time for all of us and I know that there have been a great deal of frustrations that have been expressed recently. This has been the singularly, most difficult time in my career in corrections and has presented the most challenges that I have ever seen and managed within a correctional environment. It is also one of the most inspiring times in my career, in which I have seen so many staff take on additional responsibilities and become leaders, take the impossible and make it possible, and show a level of determination and commitment that I didn't think was possible before. I cannot tell you how proud I am. I look back on this long journey and shake my head in wonder at all that we have accomplished. It is monumental time and for most of you it will be a career defining moment. At some point in the future everything else we do will seem that much easier because of the experiences that we have had with this incident. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to one another.

It is my sincere hope that in the near future we will be in a better place to see some normalization of our operations at AHCC. It is my goal to be able to move to a place in which we can have the restricted movement lifted, and resume work programs and other programming opportunities. We can only get to this point by working together and being committed to the same goals. Thank you for your compliance and understanding.