



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

January 20, 2021

TO: All Prisons Division
FROM: Mike Obenland and Scott Russell, Prisons/Health Services Incident Commanders
SUBJECT: Safe Start Visitation Update

On November 20, 2020, we reported that our agency's Safe Start Visitation plan was temporarily suspended based on continued increases in COVID-19 cases in our communities. The department committed to revisiting that decision on December 15, 2020 and again on January 19, 2021.

Our agency's Policy Group met yesterday to review that decision. Since publication of the November 20, 2020 memo, the department has seen a significant increase in COVID-19 positive cases at a number of our prison facilities. The department continues to recognize that it is not yet safe to move forward from Safe Start Visitation Phase 1 (video visitation only). DOC will revisit our Safe Start Visitation plan again on March 16, 2021, to determine if it is appropriate to move forward at that time.

To reiterate and be as transparent as possible, there is no approved or expected start date to resume in-person visitation at this time. DOC continues to work with external stakeholders such as the WA 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.

Thank you for your continued patience and understanding while we continue to work through this in as safe a manner as possible.

MO/SR

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