




STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**  
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July 1, 2021

**TO:** All DOC Staff  
**FROM:** Cheryl Strange, Secretary   
**SUBJECT:** Safe Start Corrections Update

While Governor Inslee announced on June 30, 2021 that many restrictions are lifting in the State, restrictions in correctional environments are still necessary. For example, a mask order by the Washington State Secretary of Health [remains in effect for correctional facilities](#) in areas where incarcerated individuals are present or expected to be present.

The department remains committed to mitigating the spread of COVID-19 while finding ways to resume positive activities that provide beneficial pro-social opportunities such as in-person visiting. The department will continue to follow the requirements and guidance for correctional settings from the Washington State Department of Health, Labor & Industries and the Centers for Disease Control.

On [May 9, 2021](#) the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) began to offer modified in-person visits which had previously been temporarily closed for safety reasons and to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in its facilities.

Protecting against COVID 19 in facility settings continues to be difficult on many people, including staff, incarcerated individuals, volunteers, family members, spouses, parents, and children of incarcerated individuals. We are eager to move forward in offering expanded visiting opportunities and providing detailed guidance on comprehensive Safe Start Corrections plans.

In the coming weeks, Corrections is working towards increasing the duration for each visit session from one (1) hour to three (3) hour and expanding the visiting cohorts at most facilities. As the vaccine has been approved for those twelve (12) years of age and older, visitors as young as twelve (12) years old will be invited to participate. An announcement will be made as soon as possible regarding the start date for three (3) hour visits.

Secretary Strange and the Executive Strategy Team will be undertaking a comprehensive review of COVID-19 data at all facilities on July 6, 2021 and will be working towards better addressing vaccine hesitancy. This will help enhance the department's ability to move forward with its phased reopening approach.

COVID-19 vaccination remains an important tool in resuming operations and the

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Department will continue to provide education opportunities on COVID-19 vaccination to staff and incarcerated individuals.

For more information on the resumption of in-person visitation, please visit our COVID-19 Visitation [Frequently Asked Questions](#) .