



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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December 28, 2021

TO: All DOC Staff
FROM: Sean Murphy, Deputy Secretary
SUBJECT: Omicron Coronavirus Variant

As most of you are aware, the Omicron coronavirus variant has led to an astonishing increase in cases. In less than a month it has gone from not detectable in our country to accounting for the majority of all cases nationally. We are starting to see a rise in cases among our staff and an impact on DOC facilities.

The extremely high rate of transmission is cause for concern and requires increased vigilance to keep our staff and population safe by continuing to do what we know reduces risk, like physical distancing, hand hygiene, staying home if you have any symptoms, testing per protocol, and masking. It is highly encouraged that everyone get their COVID-19 booster vaccine if you haven't already. The [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) tell us that getting our booster is important in ensuring our continued protection against serious illness and death.

However, even mild cases pose risks to our system. Therefore, the department recently expanded the directive to staff outside of our 24/7 facilities to also wear a surgical mask at all times unless alone in an office with the door closed. We know that wearing a well fitted surgical mask greatly reduces the risk of transmission and is one of the most important measures we take to protect staff and the population, which is why it is taken so seriously.

There are various ways you can choose to improve the effectiveness of routine masking:

1. Steps can be taken to ensure your surgical mask has a good fit, such as "[knotting and tucking](#)"
2. Double up and wear two surgical masks
3. Wear your own KN95 or KF94 mask under the surgical mask.
4. Wear an N95 respirator under your surgical mask. Of note, if you are in an area that requires an N95 respirator, then you must be medically cleared and properly fit tested for the brand of N95 being worn.

Please note if you do test positive for COVID-19, please fill out DOC form 03-110, Workplace Denial Form, and follow the forms instructions for reporting your positive test. If you are unable to complete the form, contact your direct supervisor who will complete the form for you.

Although this is not the news I hoped to share this week, I believe we can get through these times if we work together. We have prepared and continue to prepare for the ongoing challenge of the pandemic and therefore, I remain optimistic in staff's ability to adapt and respond. Thank you once again for rising to each new challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Working Together for SAFER Communities"