



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

January 14, 2022

TO: All DOC Staff

FROM: Sean Murphy, Deputy Secretary

Julie Martin, Chief of Staff

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Response and Staffing Challenges

Your safety is important to us. We are all dedicated to the mission of having a safe and humane correctional system. Thank you for continuing to work hard to keep our correctional system safe and humane. The significant staffing issues facing our prisons is one that has never been experienced before. Many frontline prison employees have shared their concerns regarding the lack of staffing and the amount of overtime they are enduring. We hear you and understand the impacts to you, your families, and those in our care and custody.

We want you to know what steps we are taking to address staffing shortages throughout our prison and reentry centers.

Currently, Superintendents have been directed to:

- 1) Evaluate custody staff in screening/testing areas and when appropriate, replace with non-custody staff and return custody staff to their position.
- 2) Evaluate custody staff in non-permanent appointments in non-custody positions and end their non-permanent appointment when appropriate.
- 3) Using staff on modified duty to complete screening, testing, and mapping.
- 4) Based on knowledge, skills, training, and abilities, using management to cover posts to help reduce mandatory overtime and/or areas with critical shortages.
- 5) When using non-custody volunteers, assess their knowledge, skills, training, and abilities and deploy them to appropriate areas to assist. For example, a volunteer Classification Counselor with 15 years of previous experience as a Correctional Officer may be used in a housing unit teamed up with a Correctional Officer.

Staff from our other Divisions are volunteering to assist as needed. We will place them in areas based on their knowledge, skills, abilities, and training.

We will curtail movement and programs as necessary but are cautious because this can create other safety issues and hinder re-entry success.

All visitation for prisons and work release facilities has been temporarily suspended and visiting staff will be redeployed to work posts in other areas. We are also creating a hybrid screening process for prisons to address the number of staff needed for active screening.

Our division leaders will continue to meet daily with staff to help strategize on how we can best move forward. We know these are challenging times and we are committed to working alongside all of you to provide a safe and humane correctional environment.

“Working Together for SAFER Communities”