

LOCAL FAMILY COUNCIL COVID -19 TELECONFERENCE NOTES

Larch Corrections Center (LCC)

April 30, 2020

Time: 1400 -1428

Facilitator: James C. Miller Jr. (Superintendent of LCC)

Assistant Facilitator: Jason Richer (Corrections Unit Supervisor for Elkhorn Unit)

ATTENDANCE:

Caroline Melhuish--Family Services

Gail Wingender

Molly Hunter

Paige Perkinson --Headquarters

Stephanie Sanderson

PURPOSE: UPDATE ON LCC/COVID-19

SOCIAL DISTANCING -- Supt. Miller

- Working on residents being 6ft apart from each other.
- Moving residents off the top bunks.
 - The bunks in the units were 5.5 feet apart.
 - In the 2 man rooms the bunks were 5 feet apart.
 - The distance did not meet the criteria, so we were working on making sure everyone is physically distant by 6 feet.
 - We are coming up with ideas to make that happen.

ISSUE WITH FACE COVERINGS -- Supt. Miller

- The residents were complaining that the bandanas they were issued to use as masks were making it hard for them to breathe.
 - Received correspondence from Headquarters that said that once they are covering their mouths and their nose, that it is okay.
 - Unfortunately some of the residents were covering their mouth and not their nose and some were not wearing it at all.
 - We've have spoken to residents and working with everyone to be safe.

RAPID RE-ENTRY -- CUS Richer

- Working on getting some more of the rapid re-entry residents out.
 - No concrete information concerning that as yet, but we are expecting to have information on that soon.
- The demeanor of the residents are good. Most of the men are in good spirits.
 - Working on a few of the rapid reentries.

COMMUTATION -- CUS Richer

- All the guys that were the commutation list have been released. All that is left are the guys for the rapid re-entry.
 - **Supt. Miller:** To have those guys released on commutation released on commutation, we had staff come in to work last weekend to make sure that they happened.
 - Other residents had questions as to when they would be released as well.
 - We informed them that the names were coming from Headquarters and we really don't have anything to do with that part of it.

- Our job comes in once we receive the list and they asked us to release the residents on the list, we then do our best to get them out in a timely manner.
- Just to reiterate, my staff and I do not have an input in who is released. Headquarters looked at certain criteria and then sends us a list as to who to release.

LCC -- Supt. Miller

- We are doing pretty well here at Larch.
 - The tone is good.
- Staff is pretty burnt out because of working double shifts.
- We are trying to do things to keep everyone engaged.

QUESTIONS

1. Gail Wingender:

- a. **Expressing what you said about names coming from Headquarters; is there any understanding on your end that there may be other names coming?**
 - i. **Is it just the initial group that was slated for commutation and rapid release and furlough complete?**
- b. **Supt. Miller's response** – We are just waiting. I know that they are looking at several groups, but, I don't want to tell you what I think or make something up. I don't know. We wait patiently and when they send the lists then we try to get the guys out.

2. What do you know about GRE at this point? I know that we talked a lot about this over the time, but then again, we are in totally different times. So is GRE still being handled the same as it was previously or does this Covid and rapid release take precedence?

- a. **CUS Richer's response** – In my unit (Elkhorn Unit), I do know that GRE is still going on. I also know that DOC has been exploring to expand it at this time to help get some individuals out under that program. This will also help to alleviate the capacity at the prison, so we can have more social distancing. That along with the electrical monitoring, which is part of that.

3. Do you have more specifics about that?

- a. **CUS Richer's response** – I do not have any more than that. I've had quite a few people leave under the GRE program recently. I've also had quite a few emails about upcoming GRE releases. Other than that it comes down from Headquarters and we do not make decisions here at the local level concerning that.

4. I was wondering if you have a particular contact. Would that be Angela Coker as far as at the DOC level for GRE?

- a. **CUS Richer's response** – I really do not know how to answer that, because there are multiple at Headquarters who are involved. I know Angela Coker is one of them. I do not know if she has the final say on who goes or not.

5. Stephanie Sanderson: One of the things that was brought up to me was in regards to DNR. So I guess when the guys go out to DNR they are wearing plastic shields and some of them are not liking them. I understand that they must have some type of protection. I think personally that it is good that DNR is actually supplying them with something, but I think they are thinking that they should have the cloth masks over their face versus the plastic. What are the plastic going to do to their face and if there are germs in the

air that would not protect them. I guess they had brought it to the supervisor that they would rather have cloth masks than plastic and the response was if you don't like it, then hire an attorney.

i. I know the Superintendent and work really close with him. I will have that conversation with him. I definitely doubt that someone would be so rude in that sense, but I will have that conversation with him and next week I will have a response for you.

b. **Mr. Tester's response:** This is the first time that I have heard of this. I will talk to my guys and ask about that. My guys have been given directions to wear the face shields and encouraging the cloth masks as well. It is another step to protect everybody. This is the first time that I have heard about this and I will ask some questions and I will definitely look into it because that is unprofessional and something that we tolerate.

6. **Stephanie Sanderson:** Can you confirm if they are just wearing the plastic shields in the crummy or is that also as they work? We weren't clear about that.

a. **Mr. Tester's response:** They are not. If we can achieve social distancing they are allowed to take them off. But here at the facility, all over the facility we are all required to wear PPE regardless of if we are 6ft or closer. But, my biggest concern is when we get them in at the back of that bus. So that is why we are encouraging the face shield and the cloth/mask. But once we get off and we can achieve the 6ft distance, we are having them take those off.

7. **Gail Wingender:** I don't know if you have any information about this at all, but we haven't been able to come visit our son. We had our first video-gram last Sunday and finding it extremely difficult to schedule those because all the times are taken up. I was just wondering if there are limited number of kiosks available for those video-grams because of the social distancing or is it just a matter of everybody is trying to contact that way. I just don't know anything about it.

a. **Supt. Miller's response:** We have 4 machines for video visiting and because everyone's visiting has been suspended until further notice, we are having more and more people wanting to get on.
i. We had one break last week, but we got that one fixed; so hopefully that would help a little bit more.
ii. Right now we have around 430 residents and everyone is trying to figure out a way to get on.
iii. I do apologize for that, but it is first come, first served.

8. **Stephanie Sanderson:** Do you have an update on how the garden is going? Did you add more people since the last time?

a. **Supt. Miller's response:** Actually, what happened to the garden is that we ended up having rain up here and it got pretty muddy. We ended up taking a couple of days off. We have the seeds that we will be using; however, until we actually get seeds in the ground, and have people out there working different shifts, we will probably have the maintenance crew and approximately 12 people working in there.

9. **Stephanie Sanderson:** The feedback that I am getting is that, the guys are loving the movie night or the new movies. I think it is a good boosting of the morale. So I just appreciate that you guys have been doing that and it is not going unnoticed that the guys really are appreciating it and so that's good.

a. The tutoring that is going on and the classes that is starting back up, is great too.
i. **Supt. Miller's response:** Yes. We have that starting back up and the Dean from Clark College got up here and got things going. We have tutoring going.
ii. We have a program up here and a lot of the other facilities have it as well. But I know that we are the ones that spear headed it where now they can actually come and before it was them, receiving a GED, which is great. So we have the program up here where they can

receive their high school diploma. So a lot of these guys are pretty focused on that because it just feels better to say that, 'I have a high school diploma.'

10. **Supt. Miller:** A few weeks ago I asked that you asked your loved ones to give you feedback as to what your loved ones are feeling when they are not around me or not around the CUS' etc. I heard back from Stephanie, but, I am hearing all this good stuff, like, thank you for doing this, or thank you for moving people around. Are you guys hearing the same thing or are you hearing things that concerns you or have these guys concerned?
 - a. **Gail Wingender's response:** I feel like if there was something from my loved one that he was concerned about, I would be comfortable with sharing that information.

11. **Supt. Miller:** If you do hear something let us know. I would like to know what is going on the inside and the outside. In that way if there are changes that needs to be made, we can look into it. I am not going to tell you that we would change everything, but if we don't know about it then there isn't anything that we can do about it.

12. **Gail Wingender:** I know my son with the lack of being able to get a haircut. Do you know when that would be able to occur again with social distancing?
 - a. **Supt. Miller's response:** I know that everybody has shut that down and so we are waiting on when we can start opening things back up. I also know ha a couple of guys to me and asked about getting their hair cut. As of right now, we are just not there and I don't have a date as to when it will come back. As soon as I know, I will let you all know as well.