

Local Family Council COVID-19 Informational Call Notes

Details

Facility: Monroe Correctional Complex

Date and Time: 6/18/21/2021, 1pm – 2pm

Attendees

Tier Rep Travon McKoy - TRU
Lynn Barker
Julie Dagnoko
Kim Day
Dianne Durall
Laynara Ferriera
Melody Grandaw
Angela Hinton
Josephine Johnson
Diana Knesek
Stephanie Meadows
Cait Moore
Ron O'Neil
Dianna Pasta
Rob Tarver
Joanne Tadd
Emma Westerman
Wendy Wilhelm

Matthias Gyde
Domenica Campbell
Kari Styles
Bill Frantz
Lisa Anderson
Kristi Webb
Terri Cohn
Melida Ferrell
Karen Haydon
Eric Jackson
Pete Maxson
Mark Miller
John Padilla
Page Perkinson
Jack Warner
Michele Wood
Ina McNeese
Kathleen Bechler

Weekly Update

MCC has 1 confirmed case of COVID-19, that individual is a Violator from the community. MCC has had a total of 554 Incarcerated/Violators with confirmed COVID.

To date, MCC has had 157 confirmed staff cases, an increase of 1 since our last meeting on 6/4/21.

Cable Television

Cable upgrade continues. I have been getting reports of better reception although as I understand it, the work continues. I must remind you that we are still understaffed in our Electronic Technician job class and our two existing Technicians have other time driven requirements/assignments to fulfill.

Proposed Facility Closure

Since the letter received from Headquarters dated May 25, 2021 there has been no further communication or guidance regarding the proposed closures at WSRU, TRU and MSU.

I recognize that you and your loved ones who are incarcerated here have many questions that I am still unable to answer at this time.

I do know that Headquarters, including our newly assigned Secretary and her Deputy are hearing from members of the community, staff, Incarcerated Individuals, some members of our Council and the Statewide Family Council, the media and members of Washington State Legislature. I'm sure there is more, this just off the top of my head.

The concerns that have been expressed have not gone unheard and a review of all options continues.

TRU Tier Rep update

TRU has 30,000 yards of garden space in which we grew fresh vegetables to serve at Mainline. We took seeds from last year to grow vegetables this year.

Question:

Are you able to plant donated seeds from others' gardens?

Answer:

I don't believe seed donations are allowed from personal gardens, but there is a process to donate items and we have in the past accepted donations of vendor packaged seeds.

Question:

Is the population showing symptoms of not getting out for fresh air?

Answer:

We are able to get out 2 to 3 times per day, plus we also have the use of patios at TRU in which we can sit outside. If you are working, you might not have as much time for outdoors, but they try to give us as much outdoor time as possible.

Do you have to wear masks even outside? Yes.

I heard there are bees at TRU.

Yes, TRU has a beekeeping program. There are 6 individuals working with the bees and it yields lots of honey. SOU also has a beekeeping with 3 staff who are working on their apprenticeship and 1 who is a beekeeper journeyman.

WSRU has Soldier flies, a vermiculture program (worm farm), a bike and wheelchair repair program.

Pre-Submitted Questions

Question 1

Any Idea of decreasing in the cohorts and letting C and D units go to yard together?

Answer

I and others have proposed that MCC move from a single unit cohort, to a double unit cohort as we were last fall. We have also asked to raise the number of individuals allowed to participate in

recreation. At WSR for instance, the recreation yard limit is 150. As a small step forward I'm hoping we can move that up to 200.

To give you some perspective, it was initially recommended that our cohorts were limited to 3 or 5 individuals, you can imagine what that would have done to movements within the facilities and access to recreation, education, etc.

There is a real concern related to the continuing migration of the COVID-19 virus and the new strains being found, Vaccine efficacy for the new strains and so on. As always our primary goal is to stop the spread of infection within congregate settings.

Question 2

What is the timeframe on eating meals in the chow halls?

Answer

This is a tricky question as there are so many necessary functions that must occur in a short period of time. To continue to provide as much movement (access to recreation/programming/health services) the best option for all is to continue with the Grab and Go system. Again, this is directly related to cohorting and social distancing. To provide each individual 20 minutes to consume their meal in the dining hall would set back all other movement an additional hour at least.

It is more expensive for Correctional Industries to pack the meals "to go" but it is the best we can do to keep all the other services going.

When given a bit of flexibility with the cohorting, allowing individuals to eat in the dining hall will be one of the first things to consider. July 5th will be the first day with hot breakfasts.

Question 3

Any updates on volunteer programs starting back up?

Answer

Unfortunately, no update yet.

Question 4

Any update on extending free video visits, from the previous biweekly Family Council meeting (June 4th)?

Answer

I reached out to Natasha Samuels at JPay and she was not able to provide me with a decision moving forward into July.

Question 5

I am hearing that items in the commissary are constantly running out. How can we make sure that enough items are being brought in so the orders can be filled?

Answer

The stimulus money the incarcerated received increased commissary and FPP orders substantially. Based on supply and demand, our supplier has run out of some items and fill them as fast as possible. Correctional Industries maintains the data of receipt of goods and while you may hear that items "run out

constantly” the truth is that we are receiving three-four truckloads of products a day on average at the CI warehouse. We are filling orders as fast as possible and our supplier is sending us product as fast as possible.

Question 6

Guys are hearing that contact visitation will be reopening at the beginning of August. Can you give us any updates regarding visitation and EFV's?

Answer

I do know that discussions are occurring at Headquarter regarding the next steps with Visiting. As we have discussed before, our current system of non-contact Visiting is under-utilized, Headquarters is aware of this, and it is not limited to just MCC.

What changes we may expect, and a date of implementation has not been decided on.

I'm happy to report to everyone that our Extended Family Visitor Trailers have been vacated.

Question 7

Another thing I've been told is there are now not going to be any closures till after the beginning of the new year. That way things can be monitored and see which facilities and units are best to be closed. Do you have any updates regarding this?

Answer

We try to stamp out rumors as quickly as they crop up. There has been no final decision regarding facility closures.

You will or may hear that some individuals have had what we refer to as “Holds” placed on them to prevent transfer. This is a mechanism that is used, for instance, when an individual has on-going medical, educational, or legal issues that require them to remain at a specific facility.

In the face of a facility closure, if that were to happen, the incarcerated would be transferred to a location that could best serve those needs.

Additional Questions

Question 1

Who can we talk to about increasing co-horts?

Answer

The Superintendents are hopeful there will be a meeting regarding this next week. We are working on a way to get more work hours for CI while doing co-horts. We hope for progress with this. More to come.

Question 2

Is visiting being reconsidered to allow longer visits?

Answer

I am being told that opening up more time is being discussed at the Headquarters level. They are looking at what to do about no shows and working out a way for it to run smoothly and allow more time for visits.

Question 3

Are the barriers going to come down soon? Some of our loved ones are telling their visitors not to visit until the barriers are gone.

Answer

I don't think the barriers are going away yet, but I will share any information as I get it.

Question 4

I am concerned about the privacy for confidential phone calls with attorney and therapists.

Answer

Legal calls are made on the unit phones by appointment. If someone has an attorney call to arrange they should work with their counselor. Work with medical for therapist appointments using telehealth in a private setting.

Note: A document outlining Attorney calls was sent in a separate email to the Family Council Members.

Comment

Ina makes it easy to connect and we appreciate you.

Question 5

I hear there are rumors that anyone who has 5 years or less with DOC should be looking for another job. Hearing this is scary. What is going on?

Answer

About two weeks ago we had a Place Safety Muster meeting at WSR. Our Lieutenant invited HR to discuss the proposed facility closures and how that may impact staffing. Our HR manager talked about what happens when a Reduction In Force (RIF) situation takes place. I don't know the 5-year scenario, but rumors started spreading of the Reduction in Force topic. We still do not know the full impacts and won't until a final decision is made.

Question 6

There were emails from Counselors asking where individuals were living prior to incarceration. What is this about?

Answer

There is a statewide program to find out if release addresses were investigated. This is a Headquarters project. The Governor is looking at redistributing dollars to comply with Legislative Bill 2 SSB 5287 "Counting prisoners back home." For more information the bill should be available on-line.

Question 7

Is there an update on new JPay units? I have been waiting 2 months and it still hasn't shipped.

Answer

We will reach out and try to get more information.

Question 8

Any information on Fundraisers? I heard that TRU has no one to help with it.

Answer

CPM Miller is transitioning into retirement. CPM Cohn will temporarily oversee some of the TRU CPM duties. I'm not sure if Fund Raisers are part of that but we can look to see what help can be provided to support TRU in that effort.

Question 9

When ordering food, they are often out of items. How can we reorder or substitute if items aren't available?

Answer

To my knowledge there is not a system in place to offer an alternative or substitute if an item is out of stock. I'm told by CI that the warehouse fills other facility orders first, and MCC last.

Question 10

What about those who signed up but didn't get their vaccination yet?

Answer

Medical staff are working with the population to the second vaccination in the time range. Anyone who has not received the vaccination and missed out on the sign up should send a kite to medical to arrange the for the vaccination.

Comments/Closing

Thank you everyone. We will talk to you in 2 weeks. Have a good weekend.