

Statewide Family Council COVID-19 Informational Call Notes

**Some questions were grouped together as they were asked by more than one person.
If specific questions about individuals were asked, they were removed.
If you have specific questions about your loved one, please contact your local facility.**

**Please do not share Local Family Council or Statewide Family Council Informational Calls
Phone-In Information with others, especially via social media.
These are internal DOC communication lines, and are not for public posting.**

Call Details

Facility:

Date and Time: 9/24/2021, 14:00 PM

Attendees

1. Lisa Flynn,
2. Loren Taylor,
3. Monica Ritter,
4. Paige Perkinson,
5. Jeremy Barclay,
6. Rachel Bisbee,
7. Gwen McIlveen
8. Heather Williams

No Pre-Submitted Questions

Weekly Update

9. Rachel wanted to know how to address questions regarding proof of vaccination status/required testing for visitors when the staff does not have to answer the visitor's questions on their own vaccination status. Lisa brings up the Governors mandate regarding all staff being required to be vaccinated by October 18. Also, the rapid antigen testing is being required by all visitors beginning Sept 24, regardless of vaccination status.
10. Lisa will address questions regarding the memo regarding visitors and volunteers. DOC is hoping that the RAT will allow for volunteers to come back into the facilities. [Update 10/11/2021](#): *It appears that most facilities are looking at November 1st as a viable time to bring back volunteers, starting with religious volunteers.*
11. To accommodate our normal operations, we are experiencing critical staffing shortages in some facilities and have had to close some program areas temporarily. This varies from facility to facility, unit to unit, shift to shift. [Update 10/11/2021](#): *Contingency planning from HQ continues to ensure the safety and security of our operations since we understand staffing as we near October 18th vaccine mandate deadline.*
12. Jeremy brought up that there was recently a I/I death due to COVID at WSP, so that it wasn't a surprise as this information is released.
13. Rachel asked if there is a reason why the unvaccinated I/I are not receiving the RAT for regular visiting. RAT is provided for the I/I for EFV's. Lisa will follow up on this.
14. Loren has some concerns regarding PPE and cell searches. It is being reported that cell searches are being performed with staff not wearing proper PPE when doing cell searches. There is an understanding that staff is stressed out and working hard, but there is a lot of additional stress being put on the I/I population as well. The morale is low and causing friction and a level of unprofessionalism.

15. Rachel brings up an issue at AHCC, where 6 staff members were visiting in an office without masks in the K unit, the senior living unit. She also brought up contingency plans regarding the staffing shortages that are expected due to the vaccination mandate. Is it part of the contingency plans to reach out to staff that has retired to see if they are able to fill in as needed. Lisa shared that Assistant Secretary Obenland is confident that we will be okay as we approach the October 18th date. There may be a temporary shortage of staff for programming, but this is just temporary as we get through this change.
16. Gwen brought up the concerns regarding the staffing shortages, vaccination mandates, etc and the idea of a letter to address some of these issues and concerns. She also brought up the hope that visiting could increase the visits to twice a month rather than once a month, possibly a waiting list for those who would like two visits a month.
17. Loren brought up the concern regarding the changes in death announcements and not releasing any information to the press. Jeremy responded by saying that he and Lisa do not know the direct answer for this and that the Joint Operations Center (JIC) would better be able to answer that. Loren will forward her questions to Jeremy to pass along.

Comments/Closing

- Lisa will follow up regarding the RAT testing for the I/I population for regular visiting
- Lisa will encourage a positive message regarding stress in the facilities and among staff

Follow-up Questions

1. Why is DOC not rapid testing incarcerated individuals before they go into visits? *If family or the incarcerated individual themselves request testing prior to the visit for the incarcerated individual, clinically that would be reasonable and we would support that, especially since we don't know if the visitor is higher risk or if the visit will include unvaccinated children. We don't think testing of the population from to the visit needs to be done routinely as the main goal of testing of visitors is to prevent entry of COVID into a congregate setting. Testing is not routine for face-to-face visits in the community either, but other precautions are still in place like masking, hand hygiene, and ideally vaccination to protect everyone.*
2. Since visit numbers are so low, can families schedule a second visit if the facility has room later in the month? *DOC is currently prioritizing basic operations to get through the October 18th deadline. Once that deadline passes, facilities and clinical teams will look at revisions to the Safe Start plan to consider this option and others.*
3. What are supervisors doing to ensure officers are wearing PPE while doing cell searches? Complaints that this is not occurring continue. *Each facility continues to send out the updated PPE Protocols and COVID guidelines to staff, and reminder emails regarding wearing of appropriate PPE, to include gloves. Supervisors are also continuously reminding staff that per the PPE Matrix gloves are required during cell searches, and they need to either change gloves after each cell or sanitize their gloves after each cell. The facilities have also created stations inside the living units that have instructional signs regarding required PPE (gloves are listed) and a supply of the appropriate PPE needed for each area, to include gloves.*
4. What is executive staff doing to remind staff to remain positive despite mandates, outbreaks and closures so they don't take it out on individuals? *Sec. Strange has sent out video messages to encourage staff during this difficult time. In addition, facility administrators continue to conduct walk-about to check on personnel. Understanding that stress levels are high and uncertainty causes frustration, administrators and supervisors are constantly reminded to check on their personnel and field concerns quickly.*