



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
TIMOTHY C. WARD, COMMISSIONER
Office of Public Affairs
Joan Heath, Director

Contact: Joan Heath
joan.heath@gdc.ga.gov

NEWS RELEASE

Friday, March 13, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Georgia Department of Corrections Suspends Visitation Statewide

Steps Being Taken to Mitigate COVID-19 Exposure Risks

FORSYTH, Ga. - While the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) has no known cases of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) at this time, we are closely monitoring the ongoing developments of COVID-19 here in Georgia, and we are taking proactive steps to help ensure the health and safety of our staff, offenders and visitors.

Following today's directive issued by Governor Kemp, the GDC has suspended visitation at all correctional facilities statewide. The visitation suspension will be in effect through April 10, 2020. Offenders will continue to have access to their loved ones via mail, phone calls and GOAL devices. Offenders will be allowed one phone call per week, per inmate at no cost.

To help further prevent the potential spread of COVID-18 in our facilities, the following processes have been implemented:

- Consulting with designated liaison from the Dept. of Public Health
- Increased frequency of sanitizing high population areas, including transport buses/vans
- Screening of any individual entering our facilities
- Added hand sanitizing stations
- Temporarily suspended facility tours
- Offender questionnaire-based screening upon intake
- Designated sanitation officer for each facility

As we continue to gather information from Governor Kemp's office, the Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control, we have bolstered our existing infection control policies and are prepared to act on any additional steps that may need to be taken, should the need arise.

"We are taking this situation seriously, and along with maintaining public safety, we are committed to minimizing any health risks associated with COVID-19," said Commissioner Timothy C. Ward. "All precautionary steps we are taking are being done so in the best interest of our staff, visitors, and the offenders in our custody."

Additional protocols may be implemented as the situation warrants, and the GDC will communicate updates via our website and social media channels.

For accurate and reliable information about COVID-19, visit to <https://dph.georgia.gov/novelcoronavirus> or <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

###

About the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC)

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) has one of the largest prison systems in the U.S. and is responsible for supervising nearly 54,000 state prisoners. It is the largest law enforcement agency in the state with approximately 10,500 employees. For more information on the GDC, call 478-992-5247 or visit <http://www.gdc.ga.gov>