**MDOC COVID-19 MEASURES**

Prisoners’ temperatures are being taken IF prisoners are potentially symptomatic. Prisoners are being screened including temperatures being taken for all newly committed prisoners and parole violators who arrive at the Reception Center intake, all prisoners returning from outside hospitals, all prisoners returning from court writ, and all prisoners working gate pass assignments.

The MDOC must get approval to administer the actual test kits so MDOC is referring any suspected cases to DHHS for a decision. If DHHS orders testing, MDOC would complete the testing and send the kit to the lab in conjunction with DHHS protocols.

All cleaning efforts have continued in all prisons which includes the use of bleach as approved by the MDOC Director during this pandemic.

MDOC has designated all prison staff as essential during this time and all are reporting, including programming staff and education staff.  They have some limited interruptions in programming due to Influenza quarantines at some facilities (presently the list of 10 prisons I sent last week), but programming is otherwise operating normally. MDOC reports that staff are very committed during this time and MDOC is not seeing significant absences within its operations.

GTL (the phone vendor) will be providing 2 free 5-minute calls to each prisoner each week. Prisoners may also make calls for which they pay themselves and there is no current restriction on phone and email kiosks.  JPay (the email vendor) will be providing 2 free e-stamps each week so prisoners can send loved ones 2 free emails a week.  FYI, GTL had a system problem late last week that limited some prisoners to a single phone call each day. That problem has been fixed.

MDOC believes it has the situation well in hand, but it is obviously working to confront new challenges as they arise.  One of the most important things that would be helpful for the MDOC is to help people in the community understand that the current restriction on visiting their loved ones is vitally important to protect the well-being of the entire prisoner population and it is consistent with the Governor’s call to limit large group assemblies. As I’m sure you can imagine, a communicable disease of this nature can spread like wildfire in close quarters like our prisons.