



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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COVID-19 has made a number of things abundantly clear. Hollywood can still make money on new movies without theaters. Foods - other than pizza - can be delivered. Detention centers and prisons in North Carolina, as well as those across the nation, have a challenging task providing healthcare to their detained and incarcerated populations.

Although these things are not new, they have been brought to the forefront. Correctional staff have gone above and beyond to align with CDC guidelines providing COVID 19 screening, outbreak management, vaccinations, etc., for their incarcerated populations and staff over the last year plus. Prisons, local detention centers, local health departments and community partners have forged new and strengthened existing partnerships to do the challenging and critical work. Despite ongoing challenges (staffing shortages, limited space, ongoing medical needs), correctional staff and local health departments have initiated many best practices and created tremendous success stories related to the mitigation of COVID-19 in our incarcerated population.

Inspired by your work, our state Department of Health and Human Services has put together a team of individuals with public health, corrections, epidemiology, and medical expertise to determine how North Carolina can assist its detention centers.

The NCDHHS Corrections Team is here to help. The team is developing resources and programs to assist detention centers with the daunting task of providing medical care to this population. Quarterly webinars, quarterly newsletter, resource manual for jail administrators, and medical documentation templates are just some of the efforts underway. We are requesting feedback and suggestions from you to ensure these items work for you. We simply want to know what could make your job easier.

Our COVID-19 Newsletter is the first product of our initiative and attached to this communication. It is meant to provide trusted updates to current guidelines as well as share best practices, resources, and facts pertaining to our state's prisons and detention centers.

Submissions are welcome, needed, and can be sent to NCDHHSCorrectionsTeam@dhhs.nc.gov.

Thank you for all you do to serve our detained/incarcerated population.

Warmest,

Anita Wilson-Merritt, MD
NCDHHS Corrections Team Lead

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CORRECTIONS & COVID-19 NEWSLETTER

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BEST PRACTICES

Throughout this pandemic response, our corrections team has interacted with multiple facilities. Many best practices were identified. Below are listed some general practices that facility administrators mentioned as being helpful in mitigating COVID.

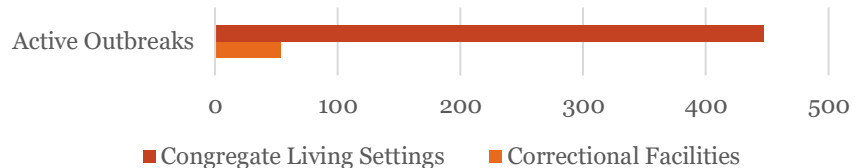
- Screening new intakes for COVID with rapid tests upon entry
- Establishing quarantine housing for new intakes apart from their regular population
- Using videoconferencing for legal visits
- Establishing a multi-disciplinary daily briefing for strategic planning
- Establishing COVID specific protocols for the facility

Please submit your facility's best practice to be featured in our next issue
NCDHHSCorrectionsTeam@dhhs.nc.gov

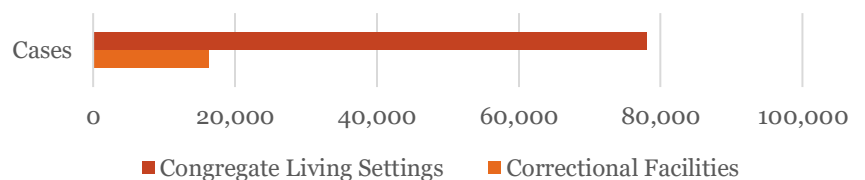
COVID-19 STATS

DHHS maintains various COVID statistics for our state to include NC correctional facilities (prisons and detention centers combined). The information provided below and other details can be found at [NCDHHS COVID19 Dashboard](#)

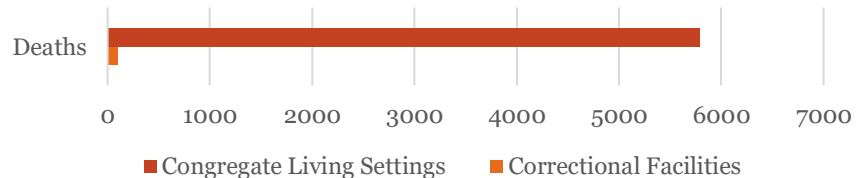
Active COVID-19 Outbreaks (as of 9/15/21)



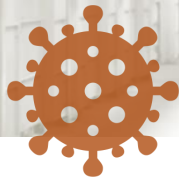
Total COVID-19 Cases (as of 9/15/2021)



Total COVID-19 Deaths (as of 9/15/21)



- Congregate Living Settings include correctional facilities, nursing homes, residential care facilities, and any other group living settings
- Correctional Facilities include federal and state prisons and local jails



RECENT SUCCESS

COVID-19 Worldwide Pandemic - that in itself is a mouthful. Every sector of life has been challenged by those words and what they mean. Corrections has been no exception. An industry already plagued with what feels like insurmountable challenges has risen to the occasion yet again, as dedicated staff work tirelessly to achieve safety for coworkers, incarcerated individuals, and themselves.

Despite the challenges they face, many facilities have had success in their efforts to mitigate spread of COVID-19. In this newsletter issue we highlight Chatham County Detention Center. This facility, under the leadership of Sheriff Mike Roberson and Captain Tammy Kirkman, has managed to survive without an outbreak thus far. Captain Kirkman and her staff have implemented procedures within their 110-bed facility and worked with community partners to minimize their detainees' and staff exposures.

Screening for new intakes begins in their sally port and includes a 14-day quarantine with twice daily temperatures taken by their staff nurse. After movement of any quarantined detainee, the space used is disinfected to minimize potential exposures. All common areas are sanitized at least twice daily. County judges and their district attorney's office have used virtual court hearings when possible. When asked how it has been possible to accomplish this achievement with limited resources and staff, Captain Kirkman simply stated, "all of us in Chatham are working together."

Michael Zelek, Chatham County Public Health Director, attests to the teamwork. He states, "from our side, we are grateful for the strong partnership and open communication we have with them." He continues by adding that from day one, staff has taken COVID seriously which has contributed to their mitigation success. Their partnership is evident as public health Nurse Bonnie Dukeman goes onsite regularly to the detention center to provide detainee vaccinations.

We want to send a virtual Hi-FIVE to Captain Kirkman and her staff for their exemplary work and dedication.

*NCDHHS Corrections Team is here to help...
Contact them today to see what they can do for YOU!!*

NCDHHSCorrectionsTeam@dhhs.nc.gov

GUIDANCE UPDATES

CDC last updated all their corrections guidance June 30, 2021. Links to the guidance and a summary of the changes are noted below.

Testing guidance

- Fully vaccinated people should participate in broad-based testing conducted during an outbreak. They do not need to participate in routine screening testing when there are no cases identified in the facility.
- Fully vaccinated inmates may be exempted from movement-based screening (i.e., testing on intake, before transfer, and before release), but facilities may choose to include them in this screening if there is an outbreak at the facility or community transmission is high.



- If someone who tests positive on intake and is immediately isolated without any exposures to the rest of the population, broad-based testing does not need to be conducted.
- Facilities should consider implementing routine screening testing among all inmates and staff who are not fully vaccinated or among a select group according to criteria it designates. CDC recommends at least weekly screening when [community transmission](#) is substantial or high. The guidance includes a table to guide the selection of a subgroup for screening testing.

Recommendations for quarantine duration

- Fully vaccinated inmates do not need to quarantine on intake, after transfer, or after exposure. They should still be tested following exposure or if symptomatic.
- Fully vaccinated staff do not need to quarantine or be excluded from work after exposure. They should still be tested following exposure or if symptomatic.
- 14-day quarantine is still recommended.

New Section on considerations for modifying prevention measures

- Discusses how to step back COVID-19 prevention measures in response to declining transmission.
- Recommend removing control measures in a stepwise fashion while continuing screening testing to ensure cases don't increase.
- Specifies essential control measures that need to remain in place, including screening testing.
- Suggest that prevention measures could also be modified for fully vaccinated people only, while unvaccinated people would still adhere to all prevention measures. (For example, group programming, resuming in-person visitation, work release programs)
- Reiterated that all people in correctional facilities need to wear mask at all times when indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

NCDHHS Corrections Team is available to assist with interpretation of new guidance and/or applying them to your facilities.

RESOURCES

- ACA Webinar on COVID Mitigation in Correctional Facilities: https://youtu.be/Avm_E582V7U?list=PLsbUXnhObg9fA_LK3rPVy7COs7eeo-qDg
- NCHHS COVID Resources Webpage: www.nchhc.org/COVID-Resources
- NCDHHS COVID Corrections Guidance: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#correctional-facilities>
- CDC COVID Corrections Guidance: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/index.html

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