



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Public Health

NCDHHS Corrections Team

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE BRANCH

Lessons Learned: COVID-19 & NC Detention Centers

In focus groups conducted in September and October of 2022, jail administrators and public health workers employed by local health departments or a third party medical provider provided insight into best practices and lessons learned related to jail operations and communications during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2022, a follow-up online survey was shared with jail staff and administrators, resulting in 61 responses to provide deeper insight into the focus group findings. These respondents work in small, medium, large, and mega jails across the state. This summary highlights findings from the effort and key takeaways.

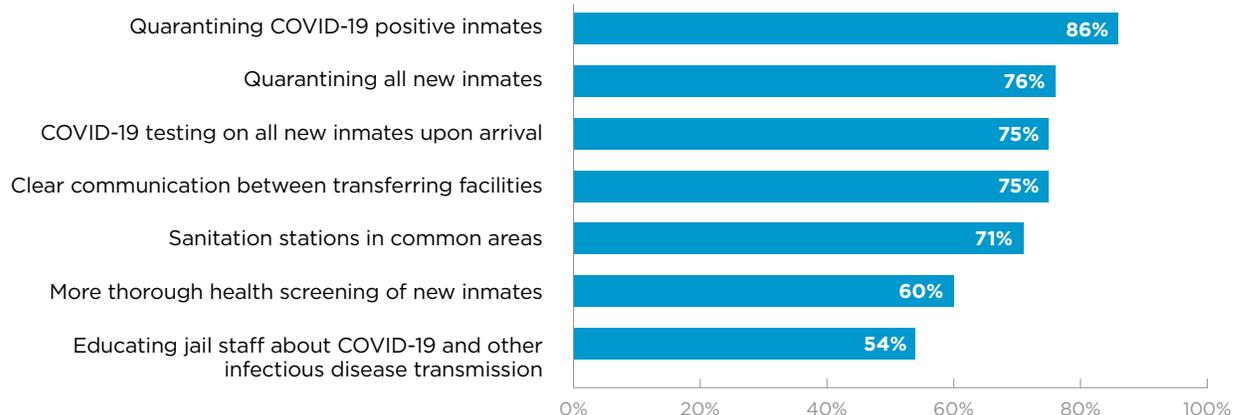
TAKEAWAYS & INSIGHTS : Reflections About COVID-19

COVID-19 caused widespread personal impact, with **78%** reporting burnout.

Staff shortages caused great difficulty, with **92%** mentioning staff turnover as a challenge.

Safety measures were often limited by circumstances outside of staff control.

Many of the newly implemented practices were viewed as favorable.



Communication proved to be key with **95%** saying it was extremely or very important for implementing best practices and working around barriers.

Custom guidance for jail settings was essential to avoid confusion among staff, detainees, and the public.

Peers, other jails, and health officials were crucial resources—with **89%** saying that information-sharing among these groups was extremely or very important.

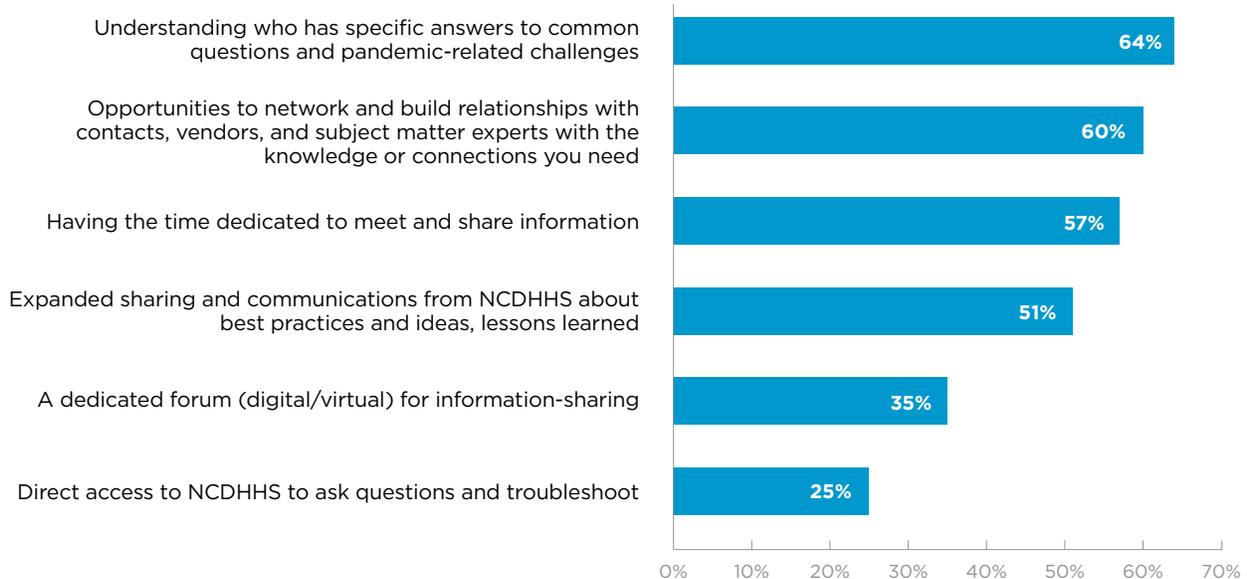
Effectiveness of information-sharing can be improved in practice and relationships are critical to successful communication.

TAKEAWAYS & INSIGHTS : How to Move Forward

The Corrections Team is viewed as a partner in connecting the dots and an important facilitator of relationships.

Frequent and relevant communications are valued, emails being the most popular preference among **91%** of respondents.

Peers are an important resource when time permits. Respondents identified ways that information-sharing could be more effective:



SUMMARY & OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 Staff desire more opportunities to be heard and more venues to share their needs.
- 2 NCDHHS Corrections Team can be incredibly valuable in finding answers and supporting relationship-building.
- 3 Peer learning is seen as a valuable way to see what works in other facilities and share solutions.
- 4 The more intentional communication the better, especially in times of crisis.
- 5 Ensure that guidance and information is tailored to jail facilities and procedures.



Partnerships and communication are viewed as essential to efficient operations during crisis response.



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