

MODULE 9. INMATE VISITATION

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A. GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR ALL VISIT TYPES

- Depending upon factors such as local community transmission rates and institution COVID-19 epidemiological status, consider suspending or modifying visitation programs, if legally permissible. This decision is an executive level decision made by the agency’s Central Office Executive Staff.
- Post signage at the entrance to the facility and communicate with potential visitors instructing them to postpone visits if they have respiratory illness.
- The status of visitation for the agency and for each institution should be posted on the bop.gov website.
- All visitors should be screened for symptoms and a temperature taken prior to entry.
 - ➔ *Screening for COVID-19 symptoms and a temperature check should be performed by trained non-medical staff whenever possible.*
 - ➔ *If possible, a Plexiglas barrier should be installed at the location of visitor screening to prevent direct droplet exposure.*
 - ➔ *See the Visitor/Volunteer/Contractor COVID-19 Screening Tool in the [APPENDICES](#).*
 - ➔ *See [MODULE 2 – PPE](#) for guidance for performing COVID-19 screenings.*
- All visitors must wear a non-vented face covering while at the institution (from the time they arrive to the time they depart) and must maintain at least 6 feet of separation with the person they are visiting.
- A handwashing or hand sanitizing station should be established and available for use by all visitors at all visitor points of entry and exit and within the visiting room area. Visitors should be encouraged to wash their hand before and after visitation.

B. SOCIAL VISITS

- **Inmate social visits are important to inmate well-being but also create a risk for introducing COVID-19 infection into the work force and incarcerated population by civilian visitors from the community.**
 - ➔ *An agency-level decision to suspend or resume inmate social visits is made and communicated by the BOP Executive Staff based on agency- and pandemic-specific circumstances.*
 - ➔ *The current status of visitation should be reflected both on the Bureau’s public website as well as each individual institution’s website.*

- **Arrangements should be made to increase options** for incarcerated persons to communicate with their families via telephone or video teleconferences (VTC), especially when in-person visitation is limited or suspended.
- **The following criteria should be considered when making the decision to not allow in-person inmate social visitation.**
 - Visitation should not occur at institutions with a COVID-19 movement moratorium or when active institution transmission is occurring. If an institution develops active COVID-19 transmission after visitation has been scheduled, the visitation may need to be cancelled and rescheduled at a later date when transmission abates.
 - Individual inmates should not be allowed in-person visits when they are in medical isolation or quarantine.
 - Visitors who are sick, have symptoms of COVID-19, a non-contact forehead temperature ≥ 100 °F, decline symptom screen and temperature check, or refuse to wear a face covering should not be allowed to visit in-person.
- **In addition to the GENERAL GUIDANCE listed above, the following procedures should be followed to limit the spread of COVID-19 when visitation is allowed.**
 - Institutions will need to prepare in advance and develop procedures prior to starting in-person visitation.
 - Identify a specific location where visitation will occur and determine how many visitors and inmates will be allowed in that space in order to achieve at least six feet of physical / **SOCIAL DISTANCING**. State and local restrictions on group size may apply.
 - Develop an appropriate flow or staging of visitors to maintain at least six feet of physical / **SOCIAL DISTANCING** during entry to the facility, screening, and movement to the visitation room. Having a visitation schedule booked in advance is recommended to prevent crowding of visitors at all points in the visitation process.
 - All visitation with inmates should be **NON-CONTACT. PLEXIGLAS OR SIMILAR BARRIER** will need to be installed to prevent contact during the visit. Consultation with an environmental and safety compliance officer is recommended to ensure life safety and fire code requirements are met.
 - To prevent mixing of different groups of inmates, scheduled visitation by housing unit or cohort is encouraged.
 - Inmate searches before and after visitation are conducted according to policy. **PPE** for the officer performing the search includes a face covering and gloves.
 - The visiting rooms and barriers should be **CLEANED AND DISINFECTED** between individual visitors or groups and cleaned / disinfected after visitation is over. Refer to **MODULE 1 - Infection Prevention and Control**, for specific recommendations on cleaning and disinfection procedures.

C. LEGAL VISITS

Legal visits are important aspects of the U.S. criminal justice system, but they create potential risks for COVID-19 transmission from the close interactions that may occur. In addition to the many general

infection prevention measures recommended by the CDC, the BOP uses quarantine, medical isolation, and testing for COVID-19 to limit the risk of transmission.

The following recommendations apply these established infection prevention procedures and principles in a way that accommodates legal visits as safely possible.

- **INMATES IN COVID ISOLATION** should **NOT** have in-person legal visits unless absolutely necessary. Inmates in medical isolation have, or are suspected to have, COVID-19 and may transmit the infection through close or direct contact with others. Strongly consider rescheduling until the inmate has met release from medical isolation criteria or utilizing legal telephone calls and, if available, VTC.
- **INMATES IN COVID QUARANTINE** should **NOT** have in-person legal visits unless absolutely necessary. Quarantined inmates may have asymptomatic COVID-19 infection or be in the incubation period, and should delay legal visits until they have COVID-tested negative at the end of quarantine. Legal telephone calls or VTC with attorneys, if available, are recommended as alternatives.
- Considerations for in-person legal visits:
 - ➔ *In general, testing an inmate for COVID-19 immediately after a legal visit would have little utility and is not recommended.*
 - Inmates and attorneys/legal visitors should wear **FACE COVERINGS** (cloth or surgical mask) and should perform **HAND HYGIENE** (washing hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer) just before and after in-person visits.
 - Use of **PLEXIGLAS OR SIMILAR BARRIER** between inmate and attorney is strongly recommended for in-person visits. In the alternative, if a barrier is not present, **SOCIAL DISTANCING** (i.e., 6 feet apart) should be used.
 - Attorneys/legal visitors should be **SYMPTOM-SCREENED** and **TEMPERATURE-CHECKED** upon entry into the facility. Legal visitors who are sick or symptomatic should not be allowed to visit.
 - ➔ *See the Visitor/Volunteer/Contractor COVID-19 Screening Tool in the Appendices.*
 - If necessary, documents should be passed back and forth in a manner to **AVOID CONTACT** between individuals.
 - When legal attorney rooms are available, they should be utilized to allow for **SOCIAL DISTANCING** among all present in the room. If there is no legal attorney room available and if there is more than one attorney/inmate pair present, all participants should also be separated by more than six feet to the extent possible, while protecting attorney-client communications.
 - Tables, chairs, and other high-touch surfaces should be **CLEANED AND DISINFECTED** after each use.