

Updated August 13th, 2020

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

TRANSITION GUIDELINES - Field

Operational Guidelines for transition back to normal operations from the Department’s COVID-19 Response will be updated frequently to incorporate the latest scientific, medical, and governmental recommendations. Please ensure you are using the most current document.

Due to different office geographical challenges, staffing levels, and site-specific needs, District Managers will need to individualize step-down plans to meet the specific needs of each District Office.

It is equally important that step-down is handled in a measured and consistent way to manage risk level in accordance with the latest medical and scientific data, most notable direction, and guidance from the Vermont Department of Health.

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Definitions

- a. **Close contact:** For the purpose of this protocol, close contact is defined as 6 feet or less from another person or in an area contaminated by their respirations.
- b. **Vulnerable** – Vulnerable will be used as defined by the CDC as at higher risk. The CDC currently lists as vulnerable: adults over the age of 65, pregnant women, and those with heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes. Please check the CDC link as these groups may change as new medical information becomes available. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html> Staff designated as vulnerable will not be used to work Isolation or Quarantine units, nor will they be assigned to transport inmates designated for Isolation. It is staff’s responsibility to notify their supervisors of this information and, if requested, to provide documentation from their health care provider.
- c. **Mask** – Mask refers to a standard surgical mask. Masks issued to inmates must have the metal nose bridge removed.
- d. **N95 Mask** – An **N95 mask** (also called a respirator) is a **mask** that is worn over the face to prevent the inhalation of airborne particles. The **N95** designation means that the **mask** will filter at least 95% of particles 0.3 microns in size
- e. **Goggles** - goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face).
 - i. This does not include personal eyeglasses.
 - ii. If reusable eye protection is used it should be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.
- f. **Bleach Solution** – 5 (five) Tablespoons of bleach to 1 (one) gallon of water or 4 (four) teaspoons of bleach to 1 Quart (**Bleach Solution should be used within 24 hours of mixing.**)

Section 1: General Precautions

1. General Precautions

Throughout the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic the following general prevention measures should be implemented to interrupt viral infection transmission. See *Table 1* below.

Table 1. General Prevention Measures

- a. **Promote good health habits** among employees and offenders:
 - 1) Avoid close contact with persons who are sick.
 - 2) Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - 3) Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - 4) Cover your sneeze or cough with a tissue (or into a sleeve). Then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - 5) Greet without physical contact.
- b. **Conduct frequent environmental cleaning of “high touch” surfaces.**
- c. **Institute social distancing measures to prevent spread of germs** (e.g., minimize self-serve foods and group activities).
- d. **Employees should stay at home if they are sick.**
- e. **Influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended for persons not previously vaccinated.**

1. Good Health Habits

- a. Good health habits should continue to be promoted in various ways (e.g., educational programs, posters, campaigns, assessing adherence with hand hygiene).
- b. This CDC website has helpful educational posters (please see, for example, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>).
- c. Each site should continue to ensure that adequate supplies and facilities are available for hand washing for both offenders and employees.
- d. Provisions should continue to be made for employees, visitors, and offenders to wash their hands when they enter the site.

2. Environmental Cleaning

- a. The frequency of routine cleaning of surfaces that are frequently touched should remain increased. These areas can include doorknobs, keys, handrails, telephones, computer keyboards, elevator buttons, etc..
- b. Each District Manager will continue to ensure their local cleaning schedule is reviewed, and cleaning frequency increased, for the duration of this pandemic.
- c. Cleaning may be done using EPA-certified disinfecting wipes such as the “Red-capped PDI Sani Cloth Germicidal Wipes” or equivalent, as available.
- d. The CDC also indicates that most common EPA-registered household disinfectants are effective for cleaning. Use disinfectants appropriate for the surface.

- e. Bleach solution is a good alternative that is readily available (if used within 24 hours of mixing).
 - 1. Bleach solution is 5 (five) tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR
 - 2. 4 (four) teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
- f. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date.
- g. Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.

2. Travel Permits

- 1. Travel Permits may be issued to non-restricted areas and approved for the following reasons:
 - a. documented employment purposes,
 - b. medical appointments or procedures,
 - c. court proceedings or other confirmed legal matters, or
 - d. attendance at approved treatment programs.

Travel pursuant to the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS) will remain unaffected.

3. Phase 1

1. Contact Standards for Level 4 & 5 Cases

- a. Weekly risk management check-ins via phone contact with offender which includes the follow questions:
 - I have some information for you regarding COVID-19 in your community. May I share with you?
 - Do you have cloth masks for you and your family? We would be happy to supply you with some. *Is there a free mask distribution in your area?
 - If you need to be tested, please know it is free. There are testing centers available to you.
 - Site to access list of testing sites- <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/popups>
 - The District Manager can fill out the form on this site to be notified when testing sites pop up in their area.
 - Rides are available if you need a ride. The number to call is 833-387-7200. Please call 2 days before the ride is needed.
 - If you would like any additionally information on COVID-19 or if you need to be connected to a testing site or hospital, you can dial 211.
 - There is also food available through Vermont Give always <https://www.vtfoodbank.org/coronavirus-services-for-individuals/coronavirus-food-distributions>

- b. Two collateral contacts will be conducted each month with an emphasis on contacts with victims, partners, and law enforcement. These contacts will be by phone or in porch/outdoor areas where social distancing can be maintained.
- c. Two field checks will be conducted each month. Checks may be scheduled field appointments or unscheduled. See details below.

2. Field checks will be defined as follows:

- a. Field staff will work in pairs.
- b. Checks will be conducted in outdoor open-air areas such as driveways, porches, front yards, outdoor public areas, and outside work locations while maintaining social distancing guidelines.
- c. All staff performing field checks will wear a microfiber or cloth mask.
- d. Dispatch will remain closed. Staff will need to utilize local and state law enforcement when necessary to assist with arrest and safety concerns.
- e. Offenders deemed to be residing in areas believed to be unsafe for field staff, such as motels or homeless camps, should be staffed with the District Manager or designee to develop a plan to meet contact standards safely.
- f. No Alco-Sensors will be conducted.
- g. No Urinalysis testing will be done.
- h. DM has the ability to adjust contact standards on a case by case basis.

3. Household Investigations

- a. Staff will resume the practice of conducting household investigations.
- b. This will not include in-home checks, but will be restricted to interviews on porches or outdoor areas where social distancing can be maintained.
- c. DCF checks will be conducted.

4. Response Supervision

- a. Effective immediately all response supervision cases will be moved to the Telephone Response Supervision. The following cases are excluded from TRSP:
 - i. Sex Offenders, Listed Offenders and Domestic Violence Offenders
 - ii. Other than the above the District Manager has the discretion to add or remove offenders from TRSP
- b. All incoming response cases will be assigned to telephone reporting.

5. Parole Board Process

- a. All hearings will be held virtually using Skype.
- b. Each Field office will need to arrange a space and process for offenders to attend these meetings at local sites utilizing the standards in the Field Protocol for offender office visits.

- c. Information for attending individual hearings will be located on the final schedule for the hearing site and outlook meeting invitations will be sent to staff scheduled for hearings.
- d. Cleaning of equipment and space will be done in between each hearing according to cleaning protocols outlined in the most updated Field Protocol.

6. Victim Services

- a. Victim Services Staff (VSS) may elect to work at least one day a week in their designated home base office subject to the below standards.
- b. They will be mandated to follow all [Field Protocols](#) relating to COVID-19 which includes being subject to the normal screening process prior to entering the site.
- c. There must be a designated office space for them which is not shared space.
- d. Each individual staff member will only work in their designated home base P&P site; they may not visit multiple sites.
- e. Staff will not meet with victims in person.
- f. The VSS will communicate with the District Manager (DM) or designee, and the DM or designee must approve the VSS's in-office schedule prior to commencing work at the P&P site. Any changes must be discussed with the DM or designee.
- g. Victim Services Staff are not, at this time, obligated to work in person at the office. This is provided as an option, not a requirement.

*The Restitution Office is under limited capacity and may not reply with balances to include in parole summaries. If you do not have the restitution amount, please enter "amount pending" into that area on the summary. The Parole Board Office is still receiving statements from the Restitution Office prior to hearings.

Refer to all [COVID-19 Field Guidelines](#) for cleaning, transporting, and proper PPE.

4. Polygraphs- to begin September, 2020

1. The Polygraph Examiners will review and adhere to the current Field Guidance.
2. This will include social distancing, sanitation of equipment and use of PPE as required when exposed to examinees, including use of the following:

- a. Gloves
- b. N95 Mask
- c. Goggles

Scheduling

1. Scheduling of examinees will be done with their PPO over the phone.
2. When scheduling an examination with an offender, the PPO will complete Attachment 1 with them by phone (omitting the physical temperature check.)
3. Examinations for offenders reporting symptoms will be postponed.

Entry to P & P

Both examiners and offenders will be screened upon entry to the P & P office in accordance with the Field Guidance, to include completion of Attachment 1 or 6 and a physical temperature check.

Performance of Testing

1. Hand washing, sanitizer and disinfectants will be utilized by the examiner, per the Field Guidance.
2. Social distancing will be practiced to the extent practical, but some physical contact between the examiner and examinee will occur. This will be minimal while placing and removing polygraph components onto the examinee's person.
3. Given the required closer contact, the offender will be provided a microfiber mask and will wear this during the exam.

Attachment 1 Parole Violation Hearings

Contingency Guidance during COVID-19

Effective August 1, 2020

The purpose of this guidance is to establish a process for the completion of Parole violation hearings where the offender has not been incarcerated based on the behavior. Field offices will adhere to this process until further direction or guidance is given.

1. The District Manager of each Probation and Parole Office will:
 - a. Designate a room within the office where a parole hearing can be heard;
 - b. Ensure that this space has internet access;
 - c. Ensure that required computer equipment is in place to hold a remote hearing; and
 - d. Ensure that security staff are available should the Parole Board revoke parole.

2. The assigned Probation and Parole Officer will:
 - a. Ensure that the offender is notified of the date, time, and location of the hearing;
 - b. Ensure that the offender is briefed on the video conferencing process; and
 - c. Confirm the location of each hearing with the Parole Board Administrative staff.

3. Violation Hearings will be held at Field locations for the following offenders:
 - a. Those cases where an emergency arrest did not occur;
 - b. Those cases where the offender was emergency arrested and released by the Parole Board pending the hearing; and
 - c. Those cases where the field office is seeking condition modification.

4. Violation Hearings at Facility locations will occur for all cases where an emergency arrest has occurred and the offender continues to be incarcerated

5. The backlog of cases due to COVID-19 requires additional considerations. All sites will conduct a local case staffing on any parole violation that has been delayed and take one of the below actions:
 - a. Withdraw the violation and continue supervision;
 - b. Convert the violation to a graduated sanction; or
 - c. Schedule the violation to be heard by the Parole Board.

All hearings will be conducted at the direction of the Parole Board and will require the use of video conferencing software. This will likely be via Skype; however, this could change at the Board's direction.

Attachment 2 -Criteria for Resuming COSA meetings at local Probation & Parole Sites

CJCs wishing to resume COSA meetings must submit a written plan, in accordance with the below criteria, to the District Manager for approval. District Managers may consult with the Field Operations Manager as necessary when reviewing these.

The following criteria must be met for DOC to support the return of in-person COSA meetings:

1. COSA meetings may be scheduled virtually for all, or some, participants when feasible.
2. In person meetings should be scheduled in a large, well-ventilated space.
3. Outdoor or other available meeting space may be an option to meet social distancing requirements.
4. There will be no COSA team visits to the facility until further notice.
5. The room will be cleaned and disinfected prior to the meeting according to [CDC guidelines](#).
6. The room should be set up to allow participants to socially distance (6 feet) during the meeting.
7. If there are documents or papers that need to be reviewed, these should be created in advance, with enough copies for each person to have an individual copy (preventing the need to pass documents between participants).
8. Prior to entering the meeting space, all participants will complete [Attachment 1](#). Anyone with a positive screening on this assessment will not be allowed to enter.
9. All participants are to wear cloth face coverings which include surgical masks, or equivalent during the meeting.
10. CDC approved hand sanitizer will be available to all participants.
11. Food and beverage are to be limited to a beverage only.
12. A clear written record will be preserved of all persons physically in attendance (for potential contact tracing). This list will be provided to DOC upon request.
13. At the conclusion of the meeting, the room will be cleaned and disinfected, see guidelines referenced in #5 above.