

Frequently Asked Questions

Friends, Family & Offenders

We know that many procedures have changed. We have many options and obligations under the law and are changing our model constantly to ensure that we are following all state and federal guidelines in order to keep everyone safe. We are looking at ways to deliver as many online options as possible so that folks can stay connected and participate. We are doing all we can to keep everyone informed to this rapidly changing situation.

We will provide regular updates in this document and via tablets to the inmate population. Please continue to check for additions and changes. Below are the most common questions.

1. **Does early release mean early max out?** No. Early release means that you would be released under field supervision.
2. **If they are granted release, how would my residence be approved?** A Probation and Parole Officer will reach out regarding their residence to determine if it is approvable or not according to policy.
3. **Do I need a release to talk to you?** No, we need a release to **answer** you. If you want to be able to get information, you must have a release form signed. Please ask your loved one **directly** to ensure there is one in place. We **will not** initiate one on your behalf as it is inappropriate. They determine who they want us to talk to.
4. **Are there separate releases for medical and corrections?** Yes. If you are inquiring about medical issues, please communicate directly with your loved one and have them submit a sick slip regarding a release of information so that medical may speak with you. This will not be a priority for medical staff and will be managed accordingly. If there is an emergent need and request from your loved one, medical will ensure process is followed.
5. **What is happening with programming?** We are exploring several options to support resuming program services in the facilities. We are exploring adaptations to the model that will ensure that any changes follow the goal of safety for the offenders and the community. We are examining options to deliver services online.
6. **What if I have a specific question and need to talk to someone?** Please contact Jennifer Sprafke at jennifer.sprafke@vermont.gov
7. **My loved one has a medical condition that I am concerned puts them at risk. What are you doing about that?** We continue to provide care according to the current community standards. The sick slip process has not changed nor has our response to medical concerns. Our nursing and medical staff provide care 24/7 as usual. We can use telemedicine to consult with outside

specialists when needed. There has been no interruption in nursing, medical or pharmaceutical processes.

8. **Who is eligible for early release?** We have a team evaluating folks on a case by case basis looking at minimum release dates, program requirements, victim concerns, risk to self, risk to community, medical need, additional risk factors, etc. This is being done daily taking all factors into consideration. Your loved ones are not forgotten. We do not want one more person at risk than must be. We also have a responsibility to them, you, and the public. If your loved one is eligible, they will be informed and able to let you know.
9. **Is there soap and hand sanitizer available?** Yes. There is hand sanitizer and soap in the units for folks to use.
10. **Are you really cleaning? Are you using bleach?** Yes. We have staff and inmates cleaning every minute of every day. There is no area untouched or ignored. All facilities having cleaning schedules and are ensuring that areas are sanitized to ensure the safety of everyone in the building.
11. **I tried to call medical at the facility and at central and no one is answering or will call me back! What can I do?** Be patient. Advise your loved one to use the sick slip process, there has been no change in the delivery of services. Anytime a nurse is on the phone they are unable to provide care. Please understand that we are managing a very critical medical situation as is everyone in the nation right now. The facility HSA (Health Services Administrator) and departments Director of Nursing are responsible for managing the health and wellbeing of everyone in our care and custody. This is a very critical time and they are working so hard to keep your loved ones safe. If they are unable to get back to you right away, it is because they have an enormous amount they are managing. We have not had a positive test result for inmates because of the diligent work that medical and security staff are doing.
12. **Are there dental services available?** No. In keeping with the current community standards, routine dental care **is not** being provided. However, if an inmate is having a dental concern, they should submit a sick slip and will be evaluated by a nurse and **if necessary**, a provider will be contacted. Antibiotics can be prescribed if necessary, which aligns with community dental care IF there is an **emergent** situation the inmate **may** be transported for care only if necessary.
13. **My loved one is in segregation because of this. When will they get out?** Anyone who comes into the facility is being placed in intake quarantine per the CDC guidance. This allows them to be monitored for any potential symptoms. We are conscious of the current community spread of COVID and have taken this step to further protect our inmate and staff population. Before joining the general population, they will remain in quarantine for 14 days, evaluated by medical and be cleared out of quarantine after the 14 days if they do not develop symptoms.
14. **Can I talk to them while they are in intake quarantine?** Yes. We are not restricting tablet access while in quarantine. We are aware that there are some connectivity errors at some sites and are working to address this.
15. **Will you be ending the free calls since there is no visitation?** No. The department has no immediate plan to end free calls. Connection is very important, and we support that. GTL (the video visitation and communication provider for the Department) continues to offer one free

video visitation as well as two free 5-minute calls per week to all inmates within the system. We want you and your loved ones to be able to stay in touch.

16. **Can I visit?** No. Until further notice there is no visitation
17. **What are you doing with the folks in Mississippi?** We are in regular communication with Mississippi to keep updated on their progress. TCCF is following the same CDC guidelines for facilities that Vermont DOC is following. They are conscience of the health and safety of the inmates and their staff as best as possible under such extreme conditions.
18. **Is Mississippi following the same cleaning guidelines that you are?** Yes. They are following the CDCs guidelines.
19. **Will COVID-19 bring my loved one come back to Vermont?** The department is following national guidelines regarding social distancing and, “staying put.” The department is evaluating all cases whether in state or out of state to determine best placement, movement and/or release.
20. **Is there recreation available? What can they do in there?** Yes, there is recreation, but group activities are limited. We are limiting the number of folks who participate in any one activity at a time. No contact sports are allowed. There are games, cards, books, television, etc., all available in the units.
21. **Can folks go outside to the yard?** Yes, the yard is available for outside time. Due to social distancing requirements, we are limiting the number of inmates out at one time. This may mean that each person is getting less time outside to ensure that everyone is able to go outside.
22. **Are volunteer services running?** No. All volunteer services are cancelled until further notice. There are volunteer letters posted in the day rooms. Some volunteers have sent materials for distribution to those that attend their groups. The facilities have a wide range of TV programming that includes some religious programs. Volunteers are also able to communicate via tablet if they have it set up.
23. **What happens if my transitional house closes? Will it?** We do not currently have an answer to this question. Our hope is to keep folks in the community to ensure everyone’s safety and keep folks out of our facilities. The department will work with you to ensure all available community options and services are explored.
24. **Would I go back to jail if I get sick in a transition house and have nowhere else to go?** The State is implementing COVID-19+ recovery housing at Goddard College for vulnerable populations, including individuals under DOC supervision who have been exited from DOC-funded Transitional Housing congregate settings due to Coronavirus.
25. **Are services available for domestic and sexual abuse survivors?** Yes. Please Visit the National Resource Center for reaching Victims (<http://reachingvictims.org/>) for a list of webinars that can be accessed. The statewide hotlines and shelters are still taking calls and open.

