

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.

Questions as of April 6, 2020

1. **Why is the facility in a lockdown? Does it automatically mean there has been an outbreak?**
No. Facilities implement lockdown for many reasons. The purpose is to limit movement, limit contact and slow things down. With a virus that spreads so easily, lockdown can be an effective tool to limit the interactions in the building and enhance social distancing which will slow and/or hopefully stop the spread of the virus.
2. **My loved one doesn't have a mask, but staff do, why?** Yet, they may not have one yet. The purpose of the mask is to limit the spread to others. Since staff leave the building having contact with others, it is important that we limit their ability to spread any potential virus to your loved one which is why they received them first. All inmates will be issued masks before the end of the week. All NWSCF inmates have been issued masks.
3. **My loved one got a mask and doesn't want to wear it, what do I tell them?** They are required to wear it. The purpose of the mask is to limit their ability to spread anything to someone else. The mask also provides a level of protection to your loved one as they are near others. **Wearing masks is being mandated by the AHS Secretary's office.**
4. **What about programming?** We are preparing to resume modified facility risk reducing services using the GTL system and practice work. The plan is to resume the week of April 20 with those inmates who were scheduled for their last quarter on April 6.
5. **What can I do if I am having issues with GTL?**
 - a. Ensure you have a good internet connection. Need high speed internet not DSL
 - b. Use Google Chrome versus Firefox, Internet Explorer, AOL etc.
 - c. Allow the website to use the camera and microphone.
 - i. "Click" the icon next to URL bar in Google Chrome to display basic permissions.
 - ii. The Google Chrome browser provides an "A option" for advance settings.
 - iii. A new window will open, choose "allow" option for camera and microphone.
 - iv. After closing the advanced settings window, **refresh the page**

6. **How does my loved one contact GTL? How do I?** All issues should be reported directly to GTL Support. Your loved one can contact Erica Johnson via RequestLink on the tablets. You need to contact GTL Support directly at 855-208-7349 or visitorsupport@gtl.net. IMPORTANT: Reporting an issue needs to include exact dates/times/facility/inmate info in order to properly troubleshoot any potential issues.
7. **What do I need to have to do video visits from my phone?** In order to have an internet video visit on your Android device, you must download Renovo Vismobile as well as "GTL - Internet Visit Add on" app. An icon will not appear for the "GTL Internet Visit Add on" app. Some friends/family may not have seen this note/downloaded the add on and therefore cannot participate in the actual visit from their Android device.
8. **How do I prepare for a scheduled video visit?** Prior to visit, go to "Internet Visit Tester" in the visitor login to schedule/participate in visits. There is also a "Proceed with Tester" button which allows you to test whether your video and audio work successfully. Also follow the below steps,
 - a. You will need a webcam, either internal (built into the monitor) or external (plugged into your USB outlet).
 - b. Identify if you have a microphone attached to your computer. Many computers have a built-in microphone. To locate, click Control Panel in your start menu then Sound. In the Sound menu click Recording. If you do not see any options, you will need to purchase microphone. Headsets can be purchased with both microphone and headphones. In addition, many webcams come with a built-in microphone.
 - c. Ensure that your webcam and microphone is attached to the computer and the devices' firmware has been installed.
 - d. Close all other programs that might use your webcam. This can include web chat programs, such as Skype, Windows Live Messenger or programs that came with your webcam.
 - e. Locate the speaker volume. To do so, click the speaker icon in the lower right-hand corner of your screen. Adjust to an appropriate level. You will need to use either headphones or speakers.
 - f. [Check your internet speed](#). For best results you will need at least 400kbps download and upload.
 - g. For best results, use headphones to help cut down on noise echo issues.

Questions as of April 3, 2020

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.