



U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Prisons

Office of the Director

Washington, D.C. 20534

April 21, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR INMATE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

FROM: M.D. Carvajal, Director

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Safeguards

As Director of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), it is my responsibility to ensure the safety, security and orderly operation of 122 federal prisons, as well as the safety and security of approximately 36,000 staff and more than 170,000 federal inmates, including those housed in privately managed or community-based facilities. I want to take this opportunity to share with you, the families and friends of someone in our custody, a message about what we are doing to safeguard the health of your loved one during the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand the anxiety you are feeling.

First, I want to thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we diligently work to try and prevent the introduction of coronavirus in our facilities and as we try to stop its spread inside those facilities that have been affected. No decision, regardless of how large or small, is taken lightly or done without considerable thought.

For example, we understand the hardship of not being able to see your loved ones, but their safety, and the safety of our staff, is our priority. Stopping social visits has had a major impact on keeping you, and them, safe and we're helping to keep the community safe, too. To help compensate, the amount of monthly phone minutes allowed was increased and, while collect calls will be charged accordingly, free phone and video calls were approved. The BOP recognizes how important it is for families to keep in touch, especially during these uncertain times. You need to know how your loved one is doing and they need to know how the virus is affecting you and their community.

As we continue to revise and update our response to COVID-19 based on the most recent guidance from the World Health Organization and the

Centers for Disease Control (CDC), I must thank every staff member for their dedication to our mission, for their relentless efforts to reduce the spread of the coronavirus both inside and outside our institutions, and for their commitment to keeping each inmate safe and well.

As I write this message, 45 BOP facilities and 14 Residential Reentry Centers have been affected nationwide. Although planning and preparations have been going on since January, and BOP has fully implemented its COVID-19 Action Plan, no amount of preparation could have left our institutions unaffected. The first positive inmate case was reported on March 21, 2020, and the first positive staff case was reported the very next day. Sadly, we have also experienced the death of 22 inmates, all with pre-existing medical conditions listed by the CDC as risk factors for developing the more severe COVID-19 disease.

All individuals entering our facilities, including staff, are screened and temperature checked. This is a critical step to ensure we reduce the risk of introducing and spreading the virus inside our facilities. We also implemented various screening efforts along with quarantine and isolation procedures for the inmate population to slow the spread of the virus. As of April 1, we made the decision that all inmates, in every institution, will be secured in their assigned cells/quarters in order to decrease the spread of the virus. Again, we did not make this decision lightly, and I know it can be difficult for everyone. But just like in communities nationwide who have been required to shelter in place, we feel the safest course to prevent the spread of the virus is to have inmates shelter in place as well. These actions will remain in place until May 18, 2020, at which time they will be reevaluated.

A new measure we have implemented in managing the evolving pandemic for institutions with active COVID-19 transmission includes feeding all inmates in their units. The CDC recently provided guidance specifically for correctional and detention facilities recommending all staff and inmates be issued, and strongly encouraged to wear, an appropriate face covering when in public places and when social distancing cannot be achieved.

We are working hard to apply the authorities granted to us to increase the use of home confinement. We are aggressively screening all inmates who have COVID-19 risk factors for suitability, starting with inmates incarcerated at facilities with the greatest number of COVID-19 cases. The Attorney General authorized the use of home confinement as a priority in response to the COVID-19 pandemic late last month. Since then, the BOP has reviewed thousands of cases and successfully placed over 1300 inmates on home confinement.

All of our decisions are made with one goal in mind - keeping everyone safe and healthy. We recognize this is hard on you and your loved ones.

It is hard on all of us but we will get through it working together. Our world is much different than it was even a month ago.

I will close by personally acknowledging that you and your loved ones cooperation has made a difference during this difficult time, and I thank you. This pandemic is a global emergency and the BOP is taking proactive operational measures to safeguard each person entrusted to our care and custody. I am committed to doing everything I can to achieve our goal of keeping those in our facilities as safe and healthy as possible during this difficult time, and returning to normal operations when it is safe to do so.