



# The FRAKES Files

20-02

Director Scott R. Frakes  
March 6, 2020

Dear NDCS Teammates

If you have been within ear or eyeshot of any media outlets these past few weeks, you have no doubt heard about coronavirus (COVID-19). The amount of coverage has led to an “infodemic”, the spread of unreliable information. The nature of COVID 19 made it likely it would make its way to the United States. The disease has headlined local and national news this week with stories of stockpiling, quarantines, prevention, and unfortunately, deaths. At this time there are no confirmed cases in Nebraska.

When uncommon or new strains of diseases become apparent, it is understandable that we all sit up and take notice. But, there is often a fine line between precaution and panic, and I want staff members to feel a sense of control and not urgency or anxiety as we continue to hear and learn more about COVID-19.

When we first heard we might be in for a bad flu season, NDCS leadership (including health services, wardens and our emergency preparedness team) started making preparations for the onset of illness, among both staff and inmates. We have a plan at the ready that deals with management of a pandemic. Facilities have been stockpiled with masks, hand sanitizer and other items. We will continue to re-supply those items as necessary.

We have encouraged everyone to get vaccinated (against the flu) and we continue to get regular updates about how many individuals are developing the flu at each facility. If staff members are ill, they should remain home until the possibility of transmission has passed.

Some of the most effective things we can do to prevent the spread of any virus are also the easiest.

- Wash your hands 20 seconds or more with soap and water. Do it frequently.
- Keep surfaces disinfected.
- If you supervise inmate porters, make sure they are following proper disinfecting procedures, and that they are working throughout their assigned shift.
- Cover coughs (if possible, cough into a tissue and throw the tissue away)
- Keep your hands away from your face.

I know it sounds strange and many of us don't even realize we do it – but, whenever we wipe our eyes, scratch our noses, wipe our foreheads, or rest our hands near our mouths or cheeks, we have a greater chance of spreading germs to our mouth, nose and eyes. As with many diseases, it appears that older adults and those with underlying health conditions are more likely to be impacted by coronavirus.

I encourage everyone to assess their sick days and consider appropriate plans if the virus becomes so virulent that schools must be closed. I am attaching to this communication the list of helpful resources put together by the Department of Health and Human Services.

If inmates become sick, we will take necessary steps to contain the virus as much as possible. We will continue to remind visitors and our volunteers to reconsider coming into the facilities if they show symptoms of illness. The Correctional Leaders Association (CLA) is gathering information from states pertaining to steps they may be taking to address coronavirus. NDCS Medical Director Dr. Deol will be one of the panel presenters at a special webinar next week, focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on correctional systems.

The best defense we have at this point is following the common sense preventative steps that we have emphasized since the onset of the flu. While I encourage all to be informed, I also know how easy it is to be overwhelmed by excessive and sometimes, erroneous information.

Do your best to stay healthy. Encourage good housekeeping practices in your work space. If you supervise inmate porters, make sure they are following proper disinfecting procedures, and that they are working throughout their assigned shift. Get plenty of rest. As new information becomes available, we will continue to share it.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Frakes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott R. Frakes