



# The FRAKES Files

20-05

Director Scott R. Frakes  
March 25, 2020

Dear NDCS Teammates,

Thank you all for your dedication, hard work, and commitment to public safety. Because you are willing to do your job, the citizens of Nebraska are much safer.

## Information Sharing

I recently shared with external stakeholders the agency pandemic plan and other communications related to how NDCS is managing COVID-19. I have participated in three separate videos now – providing information to staff, inmates and their family members concerning recent developments. I know that the wardens have also communicated directly with staff members and inmates about issues relative to their facilities. Some detailed information, as you know in our business, is held close to the vest. That's out of an abundance of caution and safety. I encourage all of you to keep asking those questions that will allow you to do your jobs daily. In circumstances like we currently find ourselves, we may not always fully understand the why of what is happening, but it is essential to know how to carry out the work assigned.

## Flattening the Spread of COVID-19

Universal health precautions have certainly become a “thing” of late. But in the field of corrections, we've been utilizing these practices for at least 35 years. Our first response to COVID-19 is precisely what we should be doing every single day, keeping everything clean.

So far, the strategy of flattening out the spread of this virus seems to be working well, including in our own facilities. Everything that we can do to slow the rate of infection, is an opportunity to ensure we have the proper health care, PPE and staff resources to treat people. No doubt, everything we learn from this experience will help us to manage future outbreaks. We did very well in managing the onset of flu this season. We can improve our chances now through aggressive sanitation efforts and screening upon entry.

## Management Strategies

Below is a list of some of the strategies we are using to manage COVID-19 in NDCS:

- Free soap for all inmates, frequent reminders to wash hands and clean their living areas
- Having inmate porters work hard and effectively. Good performers will receive a bonus. Poor performers will find themselves unemployed. Their good work will lower everyone's risk of exposure
- Reducing movement in and out of facilities. That includes suspending inmate visitation, limiting contractors, volunteers, etc., and making sure anyone who does enter is screened
- Staff members who are symptomatic or potentially exposed to COVID-19 are directed to self-quarantine
- Medical transports have been limited to essential trips only. Procedures that can wait will be rescheduled for a later date
- Limiting external travel as well as travel between facilities as much as possible

- Utilizing social distancing wherever we can, including cancelation of training, in-person meetings, and other staff gatherings. STA Pre-Service will continue while we work to fill vacancies. Those trainees are people who must complete STA prior to working inside a facility without an escort
- Production of hand sanitizer will soon be underway, which will be made available to all teammates as quickly as possible. Staff members will be allowed to bring this NDCS-approved sanitizer inside facility perimeters, but it will be very important that it does not get in the hands of the inmates. At 60% (120 proof) alcohol, it is flammable and it is an intoxicant
- Expanding technology-based activities to keep inmates busy and out of trouble
- Developing facility-specific quarantine plans for inmates diagnosed with symptoms by health care staff
- Continuing to manage inmate movement consistent with staffing resources, operating conditions, and the behavior of the population

NDCS has the tools, skills, and knowledge needed to manage any significant incident. This pandemic is unique in terms of speed and scope. While our written plans and checklists don't spell out things in step-by-step detail, the collective wisdom of the 2,150 people who make up NDCS ensures we can adapt and respond to anything that comes our way.

Keep taking care of yourselves, and each other.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Frakes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Scott R. Frakes