



# The FRAKES Files

20-07

Director Scott R. Frakes  
April 6, 2020

Dear NDCS Teammates,

As you likely noted over the weekend, we had our first staff-confirmed case of COVID-19 at NSP. At the time the notification was made, that individual had been out of the facility for 10 days. So far, no other staff members or inmates who were around this person have exhibited symptoms consistent with coronavirus.

In an effort to further reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19, NDCS will begin initiating the following measures.

Gray face masks will be delivered to the community custody centers tonight. These are the same type of personal procedure masks that most of our staff members are currently wearing and are consistent with the state-issued clothing. Inmates should wear these any time they are out of their cells, and on the facility grounds. It is recommended community custody inmates wear their mask while going to and from their jobs in the community. Work release inmates may wear the mask at their place of employment, if their employer approves. Inmates working on detail crews will wear their mask during transportation, and while at work. But, first and foremost, they need to wear their masks at all times while they are in the facilities. If someone does not wear their mask, that person will be told to return to their cell.

CSI is currently producing khaki colored masks to be issued to inmates (also consistent with the state-issued clothing) in all other facilities. We will issue these masks facility by facility, starting Thursday morning, with all facilities receiving masks for the population by Friday evening. Once issued, inmates are required to wear their mask anytime they leave their cell.

I understand this move will cause some concern. I spent 29 years working inside prisons, and I never imagined the day that I would approve giving every inmate a mask. But this is the right and best strategy to help stop the spread of COVID-19 while we continue to operate our prison system as safely and effectively as possible. The masks will not stop OC from being effective.

CSI staff members and inmates have been working diligently to create the orange masks for staff. Additionally, I have authorized the use of personal procedure masks that meet the expectations listed below:

- They fully cover the mouth and nostrils and extend far enough to cover each side of the face, preventing droplets from being expelled
- They are appropriate for the work place. If it is not appropriate, you will be asked to wear a different mask
- You may make adjustments to the orange masks, ensuring that the ties fit appropriately and do not pose a safety issue. Some elastic has been provided to the facilities, for those who want it – but, we do not have any additional supplies of elastic

N95 respirators are not authorized at this time for regular, everyday use. NDCS does have a supply that will be available in the event staff are working with infected inmates. To start wearing them for everyday use is wasting an important health care resource. If you have personal N-95 masks in sealed packages I encourage you to reach out community health care providers and see if they are taking donations.

The cloth face masks manufactured and distributed through CSI are effective in providing a barrier from the spread of airborne droplets, which is one of the reasons the CDC is now recommending cloth masks be worn – even by people who feel healthy.

This weekend, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) launched a data dashboard that provides a daily tally of the number of people tested for COVID-19 and where all of the cases have appeared across the state. The link can be found here: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>. The information is updated twice daily. It is another good resource to help track COVID-19, specific to Nebraska.

Also, Governor Ricketts today unveiled a new “Stay Home” social media campaign. The message is simple: Stay Home, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected (see below).

The next few weeks will be critical to keeping our curve low. Be well and take care of yourselves and each other. Remember, we are all in this together!

Thank you,



Scott R. Frakes

