



The FRAKES Files

20-10

Director Scott R. Frakes
May 1, 2020

Dear NDCS Teammates,

As a state and as a nation, we are in the midst of what could be characterized as a transitional period for the management of COVID-19. We are anxious for people to return to work and get the economy back on its feet. At the same time, those steps must be measured against maintaining the safeguards that will continue to protect our communities from further illness. One model from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) has identified May 11 as the peak for COVID-19 cases in the state. The peak is point where the number of new cases begins to go down. It is not the end of the pandemic.

Despite relaxation of some of the restrictions in our communities, NDCS remains focused on continuing those strategies that have been in place since the onset of COVID-19. We are not prepared to reduce the staffing footprint in our buildings at this time, nor relax the standards when it comes to disinfecting, universal health precautions or the wearing of masks. We will continue to screen all individuals who come into our buildings. Social distancing remains the norm and activities that involve our inmate population will continue to be restricted, for instance, no haircuts, large group gatherings, visitation, etc.

NDCS has had four staff members test positive for coronavirus. It is entirely likely that others will follow. I have been very encouraged that the number of sick calls (in general) across all facilities have been relatively low. I think this speaks to the seriousness with which our teammates have approached management of potential exposure at work, and also, at home. We have done an excellent job of flattening the curve in NDCS. My hope would be to continue that trend to the greatest extent possible.

As tempting as it may be to socialize, spend time with friends, go shopping and engage in other activities, I am strongly advising caution. I cannot dictate how people spend their time off. I am committed to keeping people safe. Please be vigilant about exposure to other people – on and off the job. Continue to self-assess your symptoms as you come to work each day. Report any illness to your supervisor and be sure to follow the reporting protocol if you test positive for COVID-19.

Yesterday, a memo was distributed to staff members about the precautions that will be utilized with anyone who travels out-of-state overnight. You will need to contact your immediate supervisor before returning to work so that an appropriate determination can be made about the need to self-quarantine.

As we have to this point, we will take a measured, controlled approach to determining the appropriate time for resuming normal operations. It will do no good to relax our standards and then have an onslaught of COVID-19 cases. We are still very much in the midst of this pandemic, and we must proceed as such.

Scott R. Frakes

