

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 31, 2020

To: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) All Staff
California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS) All Staff

From: 
R. RALPH M. DIAZ
Secretary
CDCR


J. CLARK KELSO
Receiver
CCHCS

Subject: COVID-19 CONTACT TRACING AND TESTING FOR EMPLOYEES

We are nearing six months since our entire operations were abruptly impacted due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. New routines have taken priority as we work together to keep our entire CDCR/CCHCS community safe. One of the largest response efforts includes COVID-19 testing and contact tracing for both staff and the population.

These functions are critical steps to help prevent further transmission of the virus by quickly identifying and informing people who may be infected and contagious, so they can take steps to not infect others. We recognize there is a critical and immediate need to improve the existing CDCR/CCHCS employee COVID-19 prevention and response program in order to rapidly identify individuals who are either infected or exposed to COVID-19, and to take appropriate measures to decrease the likelihood of further transmission to employees, their families, and the population.

To immediately address this, two immediate actions are underway.

First, as an initial step to enhance staff testing and contact tracing, CDCR/CCHCS are creating a new Employee Health Registered Nurse position at each institution, along with required support staff, in a phased roll out. The goal of these positions is to provide immediate direction and assistance to employees related to COVID-19 concerns as well as other communicable disease prevention and response programs.

The Employee Health Registered Nurse, will be responsible for rapidly identifying employees who are either infected or exposed to COVID-19 or other communicable diseases and taking appropriate measures to decrease the likelihood of further transmission in the institution.

This position will ensure that all information pertaining to the employee is maintained with utmost confidentiality and is collected in concordance with data privacy and confidentiality standards. Additionally, this position will serve as liaison with the institution return to work coordinator to assist exposed employees with the Return to Work process prior to returning to work.

Four institutions have been identified for initial implementation: San Quentin State Prison, Folsom State Prison, California Health Care Facility, and California Medical Facility. These positions have been filled and training is presently underway for implementation the week of August 31, 2020. The remaining institutions will roll out shortly thereafter.

The second action underway is to determine how testing is conducted moving forward. We are looking into options that include the transition of employee COVID-19 testing to onsite CCHCS staff who will perform the tests at the institutions working in close partnership with the labs contracted to process the tests or a hybrid of vendor and CCHCS staff-conducted testing. These changes will allow for increased efficiencies in staff testing procedures and results to ensure the safety of staff and patients. The resource needs required to implement these changes are currently being evaluated expeditiously and plans will be announced in the very near future.

We are optimistic that these newly established resources will provide the necessary steps required to improve our CDCR/CCHCS employee COVID-19 prevention and response program.

Thank you for your continued support as we move forward with this efficiency project aimed at protecting the health of our entire valued CDCR/CCHCS communities.