



## COVID-19 Visitation Plan

On March 13th, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) suspended visitation after a disaster declaration was issued by Governor Greg Abbott. The decision, while difficult, was necessary to limit the introduction of COVID-19 into correctional facilities. Through an aggressive testing campaign and strong mitigation efforts, the agency has seen a significant reduction of coronavirus cases in the offender population and is prepared to begin allowing limited visitation.

Understanding the importance of communication with loved ones, the agency expanded access to the offender telephone system, introduced video visitation, and implemented other creative opportunities to keep incarcerated individuals and their families connected during the pandemic. The TDCJ believes it can safely resume limited face-to-face visits and access to volunteers with appropriate safety measures in place. The COVID-19 visitation plan is detailed below.

### Safety Measures

- ◆ **Advanced Scheduling/Screening:** Visitors will be required to register in advance and will complete a COVID-19 screening during the registration process. Visits can be scheduled outside of the traditional weekend timeframe. Families will be encouraged to call the day before the visit to verify if the visit is still scheduled.
- ◆ **Occupancy/Time Limits:** Eligible offenders will be allowed one in-person visit per month. At facilities that have video visitation, eligible offenders can have one in-person and one video visit per month. To allow for social distancing, visits can consist of one adult visitor. Visits will be one hour in length.
- ◆ **Personal Protective Equipment:** Visitors must wear appropriate PPE as they approach the highway gate check point. At the highway gate, they will be provided a new surgical mask and gloves. These items must be worn at all times. Hand sanitizer will also be available. Staff assigned to visitation areas will be required to wear N95 masks and gloves. Sanitation stations will be available in visitation areas.
- ◆ **COVID-19 Screening and Temperature Check:** Visitors will be required to answer screening questions and have their temperature checked at the facility. Those who fail the screener or have a temperature greater than 100.0 will not be allowed access. Offenders will also have their temperature checked prior to visitation.
- ◆ **Barriers/Seating Area:** No contact will be allowed during visits. Barriers will be in place. No items can be exchanged. The entire visit seating area and phones will be sanitized routinely with a 10% bleach solution or vital oxide.
- ◆ **Volunteers:** Approved volunteers must register with the unit chaplain in advance prior to visiting the facility. Volunteers will go through the same screening and entrance process as visitors. Any activities with the offender population must be approved in advance by the warden and Rehabilitation Programs Division. During approved activities social distancing and PPE use will be required.
- ◆ **Education/Training:** TDCJ will implement an internal and external communication campaign to include posters, videos, social media posts, and articles in the agency newsletter and offender newspaper detailing the visitation requirements. Special training will be provided to correctional and program staff and volunteers. Facilities that are eligible for visitation will be updated regularly on the agency's website and social media channels.

### Timeline

The TDCJ has the appropriate safety measures and staffing in place to implement the COVID-19 visitation and volunteer access at the following facilities beginning October 1st.

#### Visitation

- ◆ Telford Unit in New Boston
- ◆ Roach Unit in Childress
- ◆ Murray Unit in Gatesville
- ◆ Lockhart Unit in Lockhart
- ◆ Lindsey Unit in Jacksboro

#### Volunteer Access

- ◆ Gist Unit in Beaumont
- ◆ B. Moore Unit in Overton

The agency will closely monitor the activities at the pilot facilities and will be prepared to phase in additional locations by October 15th.