



City of Alexandria, Virginia
Sheriff's Office



MEMORANDUM

Date: March 23, 2020

To: Mayor Justin Wilson, Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, and Members of City Council

From: Sheriff Dana Lawhorne

Subject: Sheriff's Office response to COVID-19 pandemic

To protect our inmates and our staff, the Sheriff's Office, several weeks ago, implemented new protocols and modified procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Tours and volunteer access at the Adult Detention Center (ADC) were suspended effective March 7.
- Social visitation at the ADC was suspended effective March 14 and professional (attorney-client) meetings are being conducted by video conferencing.
- Work release programs for inmates and those inmates serving sentences on weekends were suspended effective March 13.
- Increased emphasis on inmate hygiene with all inmates receiving anti-bacterial soap and information on proper hand washing practices.
- Expanded cleaning at the ADC and entire Public Safety Center through contracted cleaning service. Staff and inmates have access to proper cleaning materials.
- New arrests are being handled differently. A health screening form related to Covid-19 was created and now being used by the arresting officers. Medical and booking procedures will occur in a separate but secure booking area for any new arrestee with symptoms or other risk indicators.
- New inmates **without** any symptoms or risk indicators will be housed in a special unit for 14 days with other new inmates before joining general population.
- New inmates **with** specific symptoms and risk indicators will be housed in zero pressure cells and will receive close medical monitoring. ADC staff will also consult with the Health Department staff. All staff involved are using full personal protection equipment.

- The ADC medical team regularly checks temperatures and general well-being of those currently in custody. Temperatures are taken daily of all staff and anyone who enters the ADC.
- Procedures are in place for medical and ADC staff to respond to any inmate reporting or exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Protocols include isolating the inmate in a cell, quarantining other inmates in the same housing unit, and notifying appropriate Health Department personnel.
- Any inmate requiring medical treatment beyond the capabilities and resources of the ADC and the ADC medical team will be transported to a hospital for care.
- Staff is being told to stay home if they exhibit any symptoms or suspect they have been exposed.
- Our IT staff worked with our state and federal courts to establish methods to conduct hearings electronically. This includes our special justices who conduct mental health hearings.

Beyond the physical health of our inmates, the Sheriff's Office remains committed to their overall well-being. We are providing daily updates to inmates about our modified procedures and new protocols. Our Inmate Services staff is filling in to deliver programs like education and faith-related services. Because inmates no longer have the benefit of social visitation, each will receive an additional one hour of free phone calls.

Since early March, we have been working with our local magistrates, commonwealth attorney, and courts to review ways to reduce our jail population especially for the most vulnerable. As of today, there has been a 25% reduction in the local inmate population since March 1, 2020. (FYI, I have no legal authority to reduce sentences, modify bond conditions or authorize an inmate's release without judicial intervention).

In summary, we instituted changes four weeks ago by going into prevention mode. All visitors to the detention center has ceased, new arrest protocols put in place, IT staff developed a system for virtual attorney visits, and our cleaning efforts have tripled. Our medical teams are monitoring our inmates and staff daily. We have worked with our judicial partners to reduce the jail population. Our Incident Command Center was opened to monitor and manage the situation daily by our executive staff.

Thank you for your concern for those in our care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana Lawhorne", written in a cursive style.

Dana Lawhorne, Sheriff