

COVID-19 Impact on Service and Operations

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has implemented exceptional COVID-19 measures that will affect routines and conditions of confinement in Canada's federal penitentiaries, including suspension of all visits until further notice. At this time, though regular and scheduled institutional visits from OCI staff members have also been temporarily suspended and most staff are working remotely from home, as an external independent oversight body the Office of the Correctional Investigator will maintain an essential level of services and operations, including regular situational monitoring. The Office's toll free number in every penitentiary (1-877-885-8848) and general contact email org@oci-bec.gc.ca will remain open and operational. Any inmate call or contact will be returned or addressed, with emergency matters taking precedence. As the situation evolves, the Office will consider making emergency institutional visits on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration directions from health authorities.

Over the coming weeks, the Office will maintain vigilance. Investigators are in regular contact and communication with CSC staff at their assigned institutions. Regular calls and contacts with Inmate Welfare Committees and institutional Health Services have also been initiated. Designated staff have been specifically asked to identify and document COVID-19 measures that may impact on the life, liberty and health interests of the inmate population. These include:

- Incidence of lockdowns or any period of isolation for health purposes, including reason(s), duration and measures to resolve the underlying situation.
- Modifications/disruptions to regular institutional routines and their nature.
- Incidents involving work stoppages, disruptions or refusals to work under the Canada Labor Code.
- Assessment of workforce capacity and operational readiness to ensure safe and humane care and custody.

In addition, the Correctional Investigator has scheduled regular updates with the Commissioner of Corrections, and will be informed of any presumptive or confirmed case(s) of COVID-19 in federal penitentiaries.

In these challenging and changing circumstances, the Office endeavours to work collaboratively with CSC to identify and address inmate health and safety issues in a timely and effective manner.

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