

Recommendations for COVID-19 Protocols in Alabama Jails

3/16/2020





Third-Party Administrator for
**Association of County Commissions of
Alabama Self-Insurance Pools**

TO: Alabama Sheriffs

FROM: Mary Kay Frazee, Vice President

DATE: March 16, 2020

SUBJECT: Protocols for dealing with COVID 19 in Alabama Jails

The constantly changing landscape created by the COVID-19 pandemic (coronavirus) has been dizzying. We at CRS, Inc. realize that navigating your way through all the information out there can be difficult at best. That's why we have been working with our legal counsel to put together some guidance that we believe will prove helpful to the Sheriff's Offices throughout Alabama and allow you to implement protocols and procedures to help mitigate the spread of the virus within the jails.

Attached is a document that outlines best practices which should be implemented in your facility in order to reduce the introduction and spread of the virus. We are here to provide support as we all try to navigate this environment together and we encourage you to reach out if you have questions. Chris Steskal csteskal@countyrisk.org is our acting Director of our Risk Management department and can provide assistance as can Randy McNeill rmcneill@webbeley.com who is our go to legal counsel for law enforcement matters.

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Frazee

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mary Kay Frazee

FROM: JRM

DATE: March 16, 2020

SUBJECT: Protocol for Alabama Jails in Facing COVID 19

As you know, Alabama Sheriffs are facing multiple challenges regarding the Coronavirus. Over the weekend with assistance of Sheriff Derrick Cunningham and Sheriff Jay Jones, a protocol was developed to assist them. We also developed a questionnaire that should be used at screening. Please forward this protocol and questionnaire to the sheriffs. Encourage them if they have any questions to contact me.

PROTOCOL FOR ALABAMA JAILS IN FACING COVID 19

As you know, the coronavirus, which causes the respiratory infection COVID 19, is confirmed in Alabama. It is only a matter of time before the disease becomes community wide. The virus is novel, so the human population has not developed immunities to it like the flu. It appears to be more contagious than the flu and 10 times more deadly, especially in older population or to people with chronic conditions. This virus will affect every aspect of law enforcement, but it will especially impact the jails. Before the numbers of those infected become potentially overwhelming, it is prudent for Alabama Sheriffs to develop a protocol for the administration of the jails in this crisis.

INTAKE

This aspect is the most important. Sheriff Jay Jones developed a questionnaire that is attached to this protocol. The purpose of it is to identify any arrestee that has been exposed to the virus. I encourage every sheriff to include these questions in the screening. Further, the arrestee's temperature should be taken. If the arrestee has a low grade fever, he/she should be isolated. Train your staff on the symptoms of COVID 19. I encourage you to review the CDC website regarding the virus. The problem with this virus is that in many people, it will appear to be nothing more than a cold. It is therefore imperative that your staff is trained on the symptoms. Prepare a designated isolation area in your jails for the arrestee. If he/she is showing any symptom, have them in a mask to reduce the spread of droplets. If the arrestee appears to be in acute distress, such as the shortness of breath, then you can refuse admittance and direct them to a hospital.

SUPPLIES

As you know, panic causes shortages. This is already evident in trying to find toilet paper. Everyone should now make arrangements that there is no disruption in your supplies. The most important is of course, food. Make sure that there are enough cleaning supplies, especially bleach, which will kill the virus. The virus is transmitted by droplets that get on surfaces, so they must be cleaned with more frequency. Of course, make sure that there are enough paper products.

STAFFING

Equally as important in screening inmates, your staff should be screened. If they have been exposed, please refer to the CDC guidelines, but they should not be allowed inside the jail. Require temperature checks for them. You should also prepare for staff shortages. If you have not, you should begin cross-training deputies and reserve deputies to work in the jail. Coordinate with your medical provider to ensure that they have a plan for nurses and doctors are available and staffed.

CLEANING

As noted, the virus spreads by droplets that adhere to a person's face or onto surfaces. Be diligent in cleaning surfaces such as door knobs, elevators, and counters with a bleach solution. If possible, use an industrial mister to clean common areas.

VISITATION

All in-person visits should be suspended, which includes contact with attorney. If they can be done by video conference, then that should be allowed, but the area should be frequently cleaned. There should be no group meetings, religious or educational.

HIGH RISK INMATES

Inmates with compromised immune systems or with chronic conditions such as diabetes or COPD should be isolated. The virus is more serious to people with those conditions. They should not come into contact with recently admitted inmates, if possible.

WORK RELEASE OR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

Some Alabama jails have work release centers that allow the release of inmates daily into the population. These inmates should be treated as arrestees and screened but every day upon release and upon return. Avoid them having any contact with inmates in the jail. It may be prudent to consider the suspension of work release. We encourage you to consult with your local judge on the appropriateness of holding these inmates in your jail during this time period.

REMOVAL OF "DIPS" AND "DUNKS"

Many jails have inmates that are being held because of technical violations of their parole or probation. Some are there for short stays (known as “dips”) and others are there awaiting transfer to the Department of Corrections to serve a short sentence in state custody (known as “dunks”). Alabama law (Sections 15-22-32 and 15-22-54) authorize the sheriff to refuse to accept persons for “dips” and “dunks” for the following reasons: the admission would create a security risk; if the jail is at or near capacity; or the person has a serious medical health condition. Likewise, the same statutes allow for persons there to serve “dips” and “dunks” to be released for the same reasons.

Sheriffs should consider whether it is prudent to refuse to accept “dips” and “dunks” during this time of crisis and whether those being held in the jail should be considered for immediate release. Again, it is recommended that you consult your local judge on the appropriateness of this step.

REDUCE YOUR JAIL POPULATION

Review your roster to determine what inmates can be bonded or released on ROR or some similar bond. Houston County, for example, has a provision that people on similar bonds must report by a certain date, and if they do not, an escape charge is added. I encourage you to work with your judges and DAs and review your list of inmates. Even a 5% reduction of population would greatly assist you in managing through this crisis.

The next few weeks are critical. Most experts believe that we will reach a peak of infected population in early summer. Hopefully, the steps being taken now will reduce the number of those exposed and infected. It is always better to prepare for the worst but hope for the best. If you have any questions, please contact Randy McNeill at Webb and Eley. His email address is rmcneill@webbeley.com.



SHERIFF OF LEE COUNTY

JAY JONES

1900 Frederick Road
Opelika, Alabama 36801



COVID-19 SCREENING FORM

Inmate Name: _____ Date: _____

TRAVEL HISTORY

1: In the past 30 days, have you traveled outside the United States?

_____ Yes _____ No

When: _____ Where: _____

2: Does the inmate report a history of traveling to or from Asia or Europe?

_____ Yes _____ No

CONTACT HISTORY

3: In the past 30 days, have you had close contact with anyone known to have traveled to Europe or Asia?

_____ Yes _____ No

4: Have you or anyone you've been in contact with had lab confirmed Coronavirus? (Incubation period 2-14 days.)

_____ Yes _____ No

5: Do you have fever, shortness of breath, or symptoms of lower respiratory illness?

_____ Yes _____ No

_____ Detention Officer _____ Date

If inmate answers "Yes" to questions 2,3,4 or 5 above, immediately place mask on him/her and escort to the designated isolation area. The nurse will be immediately notified.