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San Diego County Sheriff's Department – Media Relations

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Detention Services Bureau Statement on Coronavirus

The Sheriff's Detention Services Bureau has implemented several mitigating measures to address COVID-19 concerns. Considering those in custody may initially present as being healthy or they could potentially be exposed, we have enacted processes to quickly and safely isolate those potentially ill persons and reduce the likelihood of further spread. These protocols are nothing new, as they are always in place considering the potential spread of infectious diseases in our jails. So far, there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 in any of our jails.

The Sheriff's Medical Services Division (MSD) follows the communicable disease protocol of the "3 I's" – Identify, Isolate, Inform. The Department adheres to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines of practicing standard contact and airborne precautions with the use of appropriate personal protections equipment (gown, goggles/eye protection, N-95 or better HEPA masks). For symptomatic persons, we are following respiratory hazard precautions, which are the same as precautions for the seasonal flu.

MSD has implemented a prompt identification of possible cases at intake. That is, the arrestees are asked questions related to travel history and assessed for symptoms prior to being accepted by the jails. There is the ability for isolation of a potential case in a negative pressure respiratory isolation cell/Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR). Some environmental infection control measures that are implemented include: dedicated and/or disposable non-critical medical equipment and health reminders for inmates on how to reduce the risk of acquiring infection. Any incidents will be reported to Health & Human Services Agency (HHS). (HHS).

Informational flyers from HHS have been posted at various locations in the jails, including the housing areas. The flyers provide information about the virus and how to take precautions to prevent spread. Flyers have also been posted in all public information lobbies asking visitors not to come into our facilities if they are ill. In addition to informational flyers, the Reentry Services Division has created an informational video which is shown daily in all Sheriff's detention facilities. The video covers an array of information that includes the symptoms of COVID-19, how it is spread, things one can do to prevent the spread of the virus, and changes that will impact operations. Our intent is to keep the inmates informed of our efforts in keeping them safe.

We have already taken steps to reduce the number of employees at our work locations. Telecommuting is an option available to those eligible. Department-wide, non-essential meetings, training, and events have been cancelled to allow employees to stay home, provide fewer opportunities to spread germs, and permit employees to focus on only the essential tasks.



In addition, the following has been implemented within the bureau.

- As much as possible, social distancing has been implemented. Essential meetings are conducted through electronic or telephonic means.
- No facility tours will be provided.
- All trainings have been cancelled for the next 60 days.
- Contact social visitations have been cancelled for the next 30 days.
- Inmates are eating meals in their units versus utilizing an inmate dining hall.
- All religious programs facilitated by volunteers have been cancelled bureau wide for the next 30 days.
- All inmate programming (vocational, education, psycho-social, life skills, wellness, etc.) facilitated by contracted or volunteer staff will be cancelled for the next 30 days.
- All social visiting has been suspended until further notice.

Cleaning schedules are strictly being followed as outlined in our current policy at all facilities which include both staff areas and inmate modules. Inmate workers are provided with PPE when conducting cleaning duties. There is a sufficient amount of cleaning supplies and the Department is aggressively seeking vendors to ensure additional PPE is purchased.

Based on the complex and rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 situation, we modified our booking acceptance criteria. These criteria exclude the booking of some misdemeanor field arrests, misdemeanor warrants, violations under the Adult Use of Marijuana Act and Social Host prohibitions. Instead of being booked into custody, they will be issued citations and released. As a result, we anticipate some much-needed bed space availability as a result of the changes. We are collaborating with our justice partners for a review of sentencing options for those in custody.

Pursuant to California Penal Code 4024.1, the Sheriff's Department requested and received authorization from the presiding judge to reduce inmate sentences up to thirty 30 days.

- 4024.1 PC: Accelerated release to relieve overcrowding. Each month the Sheriff may apply to the presiding judge of the Superior Court for authorization for the next 30 days to release inmates pursuant to 4024.1 PC. The number of days is accelerated by 10 percent not to exceed a maximum of thirty (30) days.

This added capacity will allow us to accomplish two things which are directly related to COVID-19. First, it will allow us to reduce the population in some of the areas which are heavily populated and allow for more social distancing in these modules. Second, it will allow us the ability to properly quarantine modules and individuals as necessary.



Those in our custody who are elderly and most vulnerable according to CDC guidelines, are being moved to housing area where they can be separated from the general population.

According to CDC guidelines, there is no need to test every person for COVID-19. Those presenting symptoms are isolated from others and can be transported to local hospitals for additional treatment if clinically indicated.

Statement from Sheriff's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Jon Montgomery:

We are extremely concerned about the health and welfare of our employees, as well as those patients who are entrusted to our care. Out of an abundance of concern for their safety and well-being, we have taken the unprecedented step of identifying those patients with such medical conditions or – that would place them at an undue health risk. We have taken the additional precaution and separated them from the general population.

Testing for SARS-CoV-2 is extremely important, from both an epidemiologic and medical perspective; however, as testing capabilities have been limited, the CDC has provided guidance in determining testing parameters. Not every patient or every potential exposure would need to be tested. If a patient is symptomatic, they would need to be isolated for the safety of others. Those patients would then be individually evaluated and medically assessed; testing for COVID could be ordered by the treating physician, or the patient could be transported to the local hospital if clinically indicated. If a test was conducted, the results are communicated back to the Sheriff's department from either Public Health or the contracted community laboratory.

In this time of uncertainty, we are committed to providing the best medical care for our patients. We are working with our community partners and following the evolving CDC guidelines to help shape our response to the ongoing pandemic:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>

There are plans in place for the continuity of operations across our Department. With the closure of the courthouses, those personnel are being reassigned to jail and patrol functions. The Sheriff's Department is committed to ensuring the safety of those in our custody and those in the communities of San Diego County.

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