



# Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers | Secretary Kevin A. Carr

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DOC Communications, 608-240-5060**

**[DOCMedia@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DOCMedia@wisconsin.gov)**

## **In-Person Visitation Resuming at Wisconsin DOC Facilities**

*New visitation guidelines address COVID-19 concerns*

(MADISON, Wis.) – Wisconsin’s Department Corrections (DOC), in consultation with Wisconsin’s Department of Health Services (DHS), has determined it is safe for the state’s correctional facilities to begin the transition back to normal activities, including in-person visitation with the proper precautions beginning July 6. This decision is based on a real and sustained downward trend in COVID-19 infections across the state and in DOC facilities.

“We are very happy to again offer in-person visits,” said DOC Sec. Kevin Carr. “Soon after the pandemic began, we transitioned to video visits as a way to protect our staff, persons in our care and Wisconsin communities. Now, with COVID-19 infection numbers down and vaccination rates up, those in our care and their loved ones can again enjoy each other’s company face-to-face.”

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of DOC staff and persons in DOC care has been a top priority. After months of COVID-19 surveillance and outbreak investigations in DOC facilities, cases are down substantially while vaccination rates continue to climb. Wisconsin DOC’s COVID-19 dashboards indicate only 11 active cases currently among the more than 19,000 people in the department’s custody across 37 institutions. In addition, the dashboards show 57% of DOC’s population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and more than 90% of those who have not declining vaccination have received at least one dose.

“Vaccination is an incredible tool against COVID-19,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “The level of vaccination rates we are seeing in DOC institutions and Wisconsin communities allows in-person visitation to resume safely in these facilities, with precautions in place.”

Those precautions include:

- Modified or different visiting rooms that allow for appropriate physical distancing
- Cleaning protocols for visitation areas

- New entrance procedures for visitors, which will include a COVID-19 screening for temperature and symptoms conducted by security staff
- Masks will be worn by staff, persons in our care and visitors age two and up, per CDC guidelines
- No sharing of food or drinks between visitors and persons in DOC care

For a full list of COVID-19 precautions and other visitation guidance please visit the [Resuming in-person Visitation](#) page on DOC's website.

“We understand being able to see loved ones in-person, in some cases for the first time in close to 18 months, will be an emotional experience for many. However, due to continued COVID-19 activity throughout the state, we're putting safety precautions in place when face-to-face visitation resumes on July 6 to protect those still vulnerable to COVID-19.” Sec. Carr said.

If COVID-19 cases in a specific DOC facility or surrounding community begin to rise during this transition period or after July 6, face-to-face visitation may be suspended again at that facility. DOC will consider several factors, including the opinion of health experts at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, in determining if face-to-face visitation needs to be suspended at a DOC facility.

DOC expects initial demand for in-person visits to be high. Due to physical distancing and other preventative measures related to COVID-19, capacity in visitation areas has been decreased. However, DOC institutions will attempt to honor up to two face-to-face visits per week for each person in our care at most facilities. In addition, DOC will continue to offer a video visit option to augment in-person visitation, and create more opportunities for those in our care and their loved ones to stay connected. Each person in DOC care will also continue to receive two free phone calls per week until DOC returns fully to pre-pandemic operations.

People can begin to schedule in-person visits at 9am on Wednesday, June 16. Visitors are asked to schedule their in-person visits at least two business days (excludes Saturdays, Sundays and holidays) in advance. They are encouraged to schedule by emailing the same address they have been using to set up Zoom visits, which can be found by going to the [individual institution's page](#) on the DOC website. Those without internet access can call the institution's main line. Whether calling or emailing, visitors are asked to specify whether they are requesting a zoom or in-person visit.

People on approved visitors' lists are eligible for visits. Initially, up to three approved visitors will be allowed for a specific visit. Relationship does not matter but at least one visitor must be an adult. Vaccination is not required and all visitors, regardless of vaccination status, must abide by the mask requirements.

The Department is also transitioning to a safe restart of other areas of pre-pandemic operations, including work release, project crews, volunteer and religious visits. Resumption of these programs may vary by facility, and anyone with questions about these programs should contact the institution directly or email [DOCGeneral@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DOCGeneral@wisconsin.gov)

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