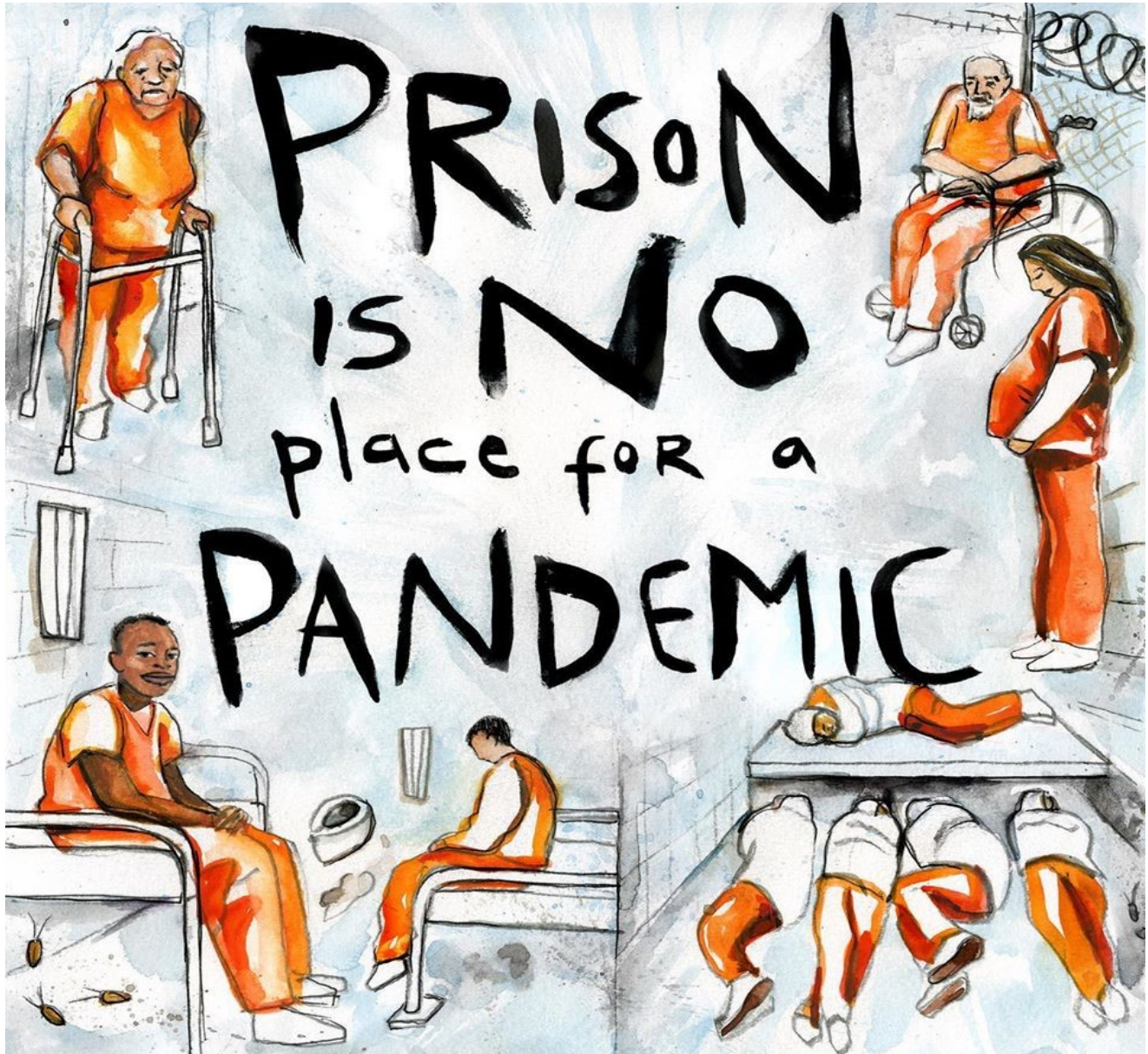


COVID19 Information For Prisoners in Texas



Original zine by Blue Ridge ABC
Adapted & reprinted by Austin ABC

Dear Friend,

We hope this message reaches you in good health and spirits.

As you read this, the world is changing rapidly outside. People's day to day realities have changed dramatically as routines of work, school, childcare, recreation, and simple things like shopping for groceries are disrupted or eliminated entirely, leaving us in a new moment none of us can fully comprehend or predict.

We are told to stay indoors and "socially distance" ourselves from each other. In many places there are official orders to "shelter in place" and people feel anxious—not just about getting sick, but also about how to afford and access basic supplies and pay the rent after being laid off or having hours cut.

But alongside the anxiety, we also see possibilities opening up in the cracks of the status quo. We are witnessing a rapid and fierce coming together of friends and neighbors committed to taking care of each other through this crisis. People are coordinating distribution of material resources and providing emotional support within their communities, finding ways to remain socially connected while being physically distant.

This guide is an attempt to extend that social connection inside, across the walls and razor wire. We haven't forgotten about you and won't stop advocating for you. We hope you find this guide helpful, and that you'll stay in touch to let us know how you're doing and what you need.

With love & rage,

Austin ABC



What this guide covers

This guide provides up-to-date information about COVID19. We have only used information from credible sources such as the Center for Disease Control and other public health resources. **Critical information is also covered in Spanish although we were not able to translate the entire guide.**

We also suggest ways to advocate for yourself and others at this time, including a **COVID19 Report Form** and information about an upcoming national grievance filing day on May 7. Finally, we share news about people being released from prisons and jails in the wake of this crisis.

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Section 1: Background Information

What is coronavirus // COVID19?

Symptoms of COVID19 // Síntomas **** Español incluido **** ○

Who is at a higher risk for severe symptoms? ○ How does the virus spread? **** Español incluido **** ○ How is COVID19 diagnosed and treated?

What is coronavirus // COVID19?

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases affecting the respiratory (breathing) system.

In 2019 a new strain of coronavirus was discovered in humans

(before then, it was only known to exist in animals). This new or “novel” coronavirus causes the disease known as COVID19, which is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. COVID19 is short for **Coronavirus Disease 2019.**

After rapidly spreading across the world, COVID19 was officially declared a “pandemic” by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. At the time of that declaration the virus had spread to at least 114 countries and had killed more than 4,000 people. As of March 21, 2020, that number has risen to 177 countries with at least 12,000 deaths. The vast majority of people who get sick do recover; to date, about 90,000 people (that we know of) have recovered from COVID19.

Symptoms of COVID19

People may not experience symptoms **for between 2-14 days** (the “incubation period”) after infection. The most common symptoms are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Síntomas

En los casos confirmados de la enfermedad del coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), las enfermedades reportadas han variado de tener síntomas leves a enfermedades graves, y hasta produjeron muertes. Los síntomas pueden incluir:

- Fiebre
- Tos
- Dificultad para respirar

Los CDC creen que los síntomas del COVID-19 podrían aparecer en tan solo 2 días o hasta 14 días después de la exposición.

Most people with COVID19 experience **mild to moderate symptoms** and recover without seeking treatment. Many people are also **“asymptomatic,”** meaning they show no symptoms at all. Some patients develop **severe symptoms**, including pneumonia, organ failure, and in some cases death.

According to current data, “approximately 14% [of patients] develop severe disease requiring hospitalization and oxygen support and 5% require admission to an intensive care unit to try to prevent the most severe complications including septic shock.” (this differs for high-risk groups, see **“Who is at higher risk”**) Emergency warning signs for severe COVID19 include:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

Who is at higher risk for severe illness?

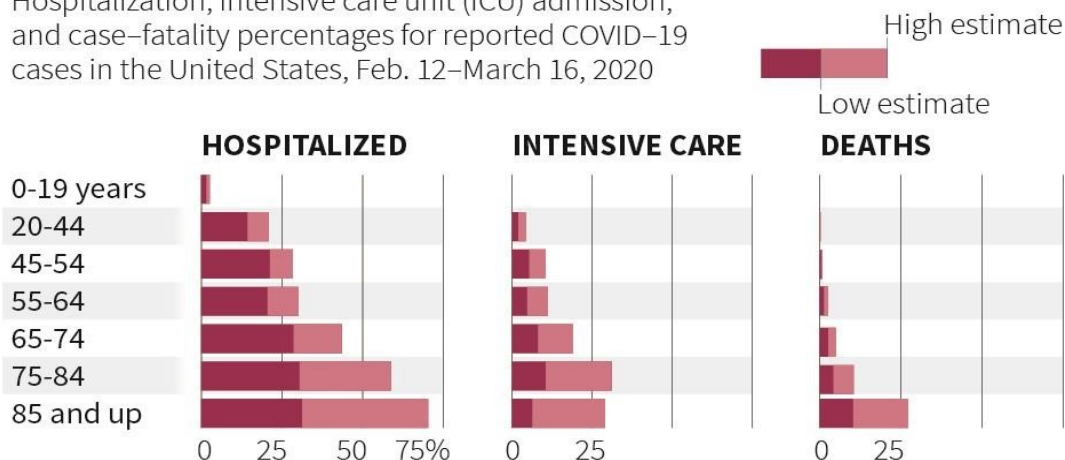
Los adultos mayores y las personas con afecciones crónicas subyacentes graves, como enfermedades cardíacas, enfermedades pulmonares o diabetes, parecen tener un mayor riesgo de presentar complicaciones más graves.

Certain groups of people are more vulnerable to developing severe symptoms, including:

- Older adults (65 and older)
- People with chronic health problems such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes
- People with weakened immune systems

Severity by age group in the U.S.

Hospitalization, intensive care unit (ICU) admission, and case-fatality percentages for reported COVID-19 cases in the United States, Feb. 12–March 16, 2020



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Staff, 19/03/2020

REUTERS

31-59% of adults 65-84 years old with COVID19 require hospitalization

11-31% of adults 65-84 years old require admission to intensive care unit

How does the virus spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact (within about 6 ft) through “respiratory droplets” released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby or be inhaled.

Frequently-asked questions about spread of coronavirus

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (sickest), but people with mild symptoms and people who show no symptoms (asymptomatic) **can** spread the virus.

Can the virus be spread from contact with contaminated surfaces/objects?

Information on this is changing, but recent evidence from the National Institutes of Health shows the virus **can** remain “detectable and stable” on various surfaces including copper (up to 4 hours), cardboard (24 hours), and plastic and stainless steel (2-3 days). So it may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes.

Can you catch coronavirus by eating food handled or prepared by others?

It's not clear whether the virus can be spread through food handled or prepared by an infected person, but it is considered unlikely/rare. For hot food, the virus would likely be killed by cooking. This may not be the case with uncooked foods like salads or sandwiches.

Can coronavirus travel through the air?

Information about this is still emerging, but a recent NIH study shows the virus **can** stay present in the air for up to three hours, concluding that airborne spread of the virus is “plausible.”

Cómo se propaga el COVID-19

Los conocimientos actuales sobre cómo se propaga el virus que causa la enfermedad del coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) se basan en su mayoría en lo que se sabe sobre coronavirus similares.

Propagación de persona a persona

Se cree que el virus se propaga principalmente de persona a persona.

Entre las personas que tienen contacto cercano entre ellas (dentro de unos 6 pies de distancia).

Mediante gotitas respiratorias que se producen cuando una persona infectada tose o estornuda.

Estas gotitas pueden llegar a la boca o la nariz de las personas que se encuentren cerca o posiblemente entrar a los pulmones al respirar.

Propagación mediante el contacto con superficies u objetos contaminados

Podría ser posible que una persona contraiga el COVID-19 al tocar una superficie u objeto que tenga el virus y luego se toque la boca, la nariz o posiblemente los ojos, aunque no se cree que esta sea la principal forma en que se propaga el virus.

¿Cuándo se produce la propagación?

Se cree que las personas son más contagiosas cuando presentan síntomas más fuertes (están más enfermas).

Podría ser posible que haya algo de propagación antes de que las personas presenten síntomas; ha habido informes sobre esto con relación a este nuevo coronavirus, aunque no se cree que esta sea la principal forma en que se propaga el virus.

How is COVID19 diagnosed and treated?

Diagnosis

Laboratory tests can identify the virus that causes COVID-19 in respiratory samples. State and local public health departments have received tests from the Center for Disease Control. These tests are Real-Time Reverse Transcriptase (RT)-PCR Diagnostic Panels, that can provide results in 4 to 6 hours.

As of now, it is unclear how testing is being handled within TDCJ facilities. Let us know if you or someone else have symptoms of COVID19 and have not been given a test or have been told no tests are available.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment or vaccine at this time.

However, if your symptoms are mild, you can relieve your symptoms if you: rest and sleep, keep warm, drink plenty of liquids, take a hot shower to help ease a sore throat and cough

Section 2: How to Avoid Spread & Infection

The best way to stay healthy is to avoid exposure and infection by following these practices:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds – especially before eating or touching your face, eyes, or mouth and after touching frequently-used surfaces (cell doors, counters, phones, bathroom surfaces).

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth especially with unwashed hands.

Whenever possible stay 6 feet away from others (“physical distancing”)

Cover cough or sneeze with your **elbow** – do not cough/sneeze into your hand or the air

Sanitize surfaces in your cell with disinfectant every day. If possible, sanitize eating surfaces before eating.

Do not share glasses, utensils, dishes, towels, or bedding that has not been cleaned/sanitized between uses.

Everyone should follow these practices, but it is especially important if you are over 65 or have a chronic health problem (heart or lung disease, diabetes, weakened immune system).

Tome medidas para protegerse

Límpiese las manos con frecuencia

Lávese las manos frecuentemente con agua y jabón por al menos 20 segundos, especialmente después de haber estado en un lugar público, o después de sonarse la nariz, toser o estornudar.

Evite tocarse los ojos, la nariz y la boca con las manos sin lavar.

Evite el contacto cercano

Evite el contacto cercano con personas que estén enfermas.

Mantenga una **distancia entre usted y las otras personas** si el COVID-19 se está propagando en su comunidad. Esto es especialmente importante para las personas que tengan un mayor riesgo de enfermarse gravemente.

Tome medidas para proteger a los demás

Quédese en casa si está enfermo

- **Quédese en casa** si está enfermo, excepto para conseguir atención médica. Sepa qué hacer si se enferma.

Cúbrase la boca al toser y estornudar

Cúbrase la boca y la nariz con un pañuelo desechable cuando tosa o estornude, o use la parte interna del codo.

Bote los pañuelos desechables que haya usado a la basura.

De inmediato, **lávese las manos** con agua y jabón por al menos 20 segundos.

Use una mascarilla si está enfermo

Si está enfermo: Usted debería usar una mascarilla cuando esté cerca de otras personas (p. ej., compartiendo una habitación o un vehículo) y antes de entrar al consultorio de un proveedor de atención médica. Si no puede usar una mascarilla (por ejemplo, porque le causa dificultad para respirar), debe hacer todo lo posible por cubrirse la nariz y la boca al toser y estornudar, y las personas que lo estén cuidando deben ponerse una mascarilla si entran a su habitación. Sepa qué hacer si se enferma.

Si NO está enfermo: No necesita usar una mascarilla a menos que esté cuidando a alguien que está enfermo (y que no puede usar una). Es posible que las mascarillas empiecen a escasear y deberían reservarse para los cuidadores.

Limpie y desinfecte

- **Limpie Y desinfecte las superficies que se tocan frecuentemente todo los días.** Esto incluye las mesas, las manijas de las puertas, los interruptores de luz, los mesones, las barandas, los escritorios, los teléfonos, los teclados, los inodoros, los grifos, los lavamanos y los lavaplatos.
- **Si las superficies están sucias, límpielas:** use agua y jabón o detergente antes de desinfectar.

Section 3: Latest News

What TDCJ is telling people

Resistance News

What TDCJ is telling people

The situation is evolving rapidly, but this information is found on the TDCJ website and is current **as of April 9, 2020:**

“Visitation and volunteer visits were suspended at all prisons “

“Incoming offenders arriving at our 24 intake facilities are now being screened for fevers. Anyone with a 100.4 temperature or higher will be medically isolated and treated following our contagious disease protocol.”

“Employees and staff had already been being temperature

screened before entry to the units. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 or higher would be denied entrance.”

“Governor Abbott has approved the temporary suspension of medical co-pay for offenders needing health care services related to COVID-19. “

“Effective immediately any facility that has a positive offender or employee/staff COVID-19 test will be placed on lockdown. That includes 15 facilities today (as of April 8, 2020)”

“Only staff that are assigned to those facilities will be allowed on the facilities. The medical lockdowns extend for 14 days from the date of the positive test. Those dates may be extended to the date of the most recent positive test.”

“Offenders that are under medical restriction will continue to receive twice daily temperature testing and anyone interacting with those offenders will wear N-95 mask and glove PPE.”

“All correctional staff at all facilities continue to wear cotton masks at all times and are encouraged to wear those masks when in public off duty.”

“Facilities on lockdown: Beto, Clements, Darrington, East Texas Treatment Facility, Estelle, Goree, Jordan, Murray, Ramsey, Robertson, Smith, Stringfellow, Telford, Woodman, Wynne “

“Medical Restriction: Used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the dis-

ease but do not show symptoms. Medical restriction can help limit the spread of disease.”

“Medical Isolation: For people who are sick and contagious. Isolation is used to separate ill persons who have a communicable disease from those who are healthy. Isolation restricts the movement of ill persons to help stop the spread of disease.”

“In all there have been 56 TDCJ employees, staff or contractors and 47 offenders in custody who have tested positive for COVID-19.”

“The Offender Telephone System (OTS) is now operating 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Offenders are being escorted to phones when they are available even after traditional hours. Each offender is receiving 2 free 15-minute calls a week which reset every Tuesday. Disciplinary restrictions have been suspended. Offenders who do not have access to the OTS are being escorted to hardline phones in the units to make calls.”

Resistance News: Campaigns for Mitigation & Early Release

All across the country, people are being **released from prisons and jails** in the wake of this outbreak. As abolitionists, we want to see everyone released, but we take heart at seeing the small gains made toward decarceration in a short period of time, and we will keep building momentum for more and more people to walk free.

In Travis County, Texas, judges have begun to release more people from local jails on personal bonds (about 50% more often than

usual), focusing on preventing people with health issues who are charged with non-violent offenses from going into the jail system.

In Bexar County, Texas, Sheriff Javier Salazar released a COVID-19 mitigation plan that includes encouraging the use of cite and release and "filing non-violent offenses at large," rather than locking more people up during this pandemic.

In an executive order on Sunday, March 29, 2020, Governor Abbott barred inmates accused or previously convicted of violent crimes from being released from jails without paying bail. Those with the same criminal history or the same charges can still walk free if they have access to cash — a distinction that bail reform attorneys argue makes the order unconstitutional.

Additionally, two older Texas inmates are suing the state's prison system for its handling of the new coronavirus pandemic. The lawsuit, filed on Monday, 3/30/2020, argues that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is failing to protect prisoners at the Pack Unit, a geriatric prison near College Station, from the potentially fatal virus. Some of the attorneys representing the inmates are the same ones who sued the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for allowing stifling temperatures at the same prison.

Other States:

North Carolina

Hundreds of people in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County and Buncombe County have been released and advocates are

actively pushing for more releases

Durham County jail population decreased nearly 9% this past week and advocates outside are pushing for more releases

Baltimore State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby asked Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan to use his clemency powers to release incarcerated people who are over 60 or battling illnesses, and release early anyone due to complete their sentences in the next year.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department reduced its inmate population by 600; as many as 1,000 people in New Jersey county jails will be released starting next week; and Cuyahoga County, Ohio, released hundreds of prisoners.

The Oklahoma Departments of Corrections announced that they are suspending admissions of newly sentenced individuals to state prisons, in an effort to prevent the virus from spreading rapidly behind prison bars.

Immigrants Are on Hunger Strike in 3 ICE Detention Centers

International

In Iran, as many as 85,000 people have been released from prisons across the country since the start of the outbreak

Hundreds of people escaped from four semi-open prisons in São Paulo state in Brazil after Easter prison holidays were cancelled and restrictions on visitors tightened

Riots broke out in Italian prisons and about 50 people escaped after restrictions on visitation were placed due to virus

Section 4: What you and your loved ones can do

Self-Advocacy

Communicate and Document

COVID19 Report Form

Self-Advocacy

If you are not getting the care you need, or staff are not adhering to the policies/practices stated above, you can:

- File an internal grievance form according to facility standard
- Have family members or friends mail or call the TDCJ Patient Liaison Program

TDCJ Patient Liaison Program

Health Services Division

PO Box 99

Huntsville, TX 77340

note: email correspondence is prohibited. Please mail or call!

TDCJ Patient Liaison Program (936) 437-3534

Additional numbers to call for COVID related concerns:

UTMB Hotline: (409) 747-2727 / TTUHSC Hotline: (806) 743-3285

- Inform local & national media, especially about failure to properly isolate and **test** sick people

Here's a few outlets you can reach out to:

The Texas Tribune

919 Congress Ave.

Sixth Floor

Austin, TX 78701

For urgent newsroom needs, try:

Corrie MacLaggan

MANAGING EDITOR

Email: cmaclaggan@texastribune.org

512-716-8631

Ayan Mitra

EDITOR

Email: amitra@texastribune.org

512-716-8638

The Marshall Project

156 West 56th Street, Suite 701

New York, NY 10019

212-803-5200

Email: pitches@themarshallproject.org

Trans Pride Initiative (TPI), located in Dallas, mailed 300+ COVID-19 information leaflets to currently incarcerated folks in Texas. They are in the process of filing complaints about TDCJ failures to adhere to their promises for prevention. They can be reached at:

Trans Pride Initiative

P.O. Box 3982, Dallas, Texas 75208

admin@tpride.org | 214-449-1439

If you are parole-eligible and/or in a high-risk group such as 65+ or with chronic illness, write and call Governor Greg Abbott to seek clemency/commutation. Article IV, Section 11 of the Texas Constitution gives the governor the power to grant clemency in all criminal cases with a written signed recommendation from the Board of Pardons and Paroles. To apply, a form must be submitted which can be obtained through the website or mail.

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
Clemency Section
8610 Shoal Creek Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78757
Phone 512-406-5852
FAX 512-467-0945
E-mail: bpp-clemency@tdcj.texas.gov
Website: <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp>

Communicate & Document

Send us a letter documenting what is going on in your facility; let us know if staff are not adhering to stated policies and practices. You can also use the enclosed **report form**. Send letters and report forms to:

Austin ABC c/o MonkeyWrench Books/ re: COVID19

110 E. North Loop Blvd, Austin, TX 78751

There will be a national grievance filing day on May 7, 2020 directed toward the Department of Justice – this relates to all conditions in state prisons, including but not limited to COVID19 response. We will also share this information with other advocacy groups and potentially media contacts with your permission.

If you or a family member would like to receive a grievance form let us know at the address above!

Kite Line Radio has a hotline to report on COVID19 inside; messages will be played on-air. Call: (765) 343-6236



COVID19 REPORT FORM

First Name:

Last Name:

Pronoun:

DOB:

ID#:

Location:

Facility:

Housing Unit:

State:

Federal Prison Y/N

What measures have been taken, if any, to increase the safety of and distance between you and other prisoners in your unit?

What measures are taken when someone on your unit shows symptoms of the virus? What kind of access, if any, do you have to testing?

Where is the biggest “need” in your facility? This could include but is not limited to: lack of testing, improper hygiene/health standards, lack

of food, lack of water, lack of access to bathing, disregard for social distancing, etc)

Is the staff on your unit adhering to policies related to COVID-19? Consider things like: maintaining social distancing, ensuring the safety of those in higher-risk (older folks, people with pre-existing conditions like heart problems or asthma) groups, and keeping you informed about the policy as it changes.

Do you have pre-existing immune system complications? Y/N

Do you have Coronavirus symptoms? Y/N

Fever Y/N Dry Cough Y/N Trouble Breathing Y/N

How many days have you had symptoms?

Have you seen a doctor?

Have you been tested for COVID19? What kind of treatment are you getting?

Have you been placed in isolation?

Are you on lockdown? Y/N How many days have you been on lockdown?

Do we have your permission to potentially share the information on this form with other advocacy groups and media? Y/N

Notes/Additional Information:



Direct Correspondence to:
Austin ABC c/o MonkeyWrench Books/ Re: Covid19
110 E. North Loop Blvd, Austin TX, 78751