

MEDIA RELEASE

Sheriff's Office Working with Justice Leaders to Respond to COVID-19

March 16, 2020

During a meeting with Washington County justice leaders, Sheriff Pat Garrett announced several emergency measures to fight the outbreak of COVID-19. These temporary measures are aimed at minimizing disease transmission, protecting all staff and inmates inside the jail, and preserving the long-term viability of jail operations.

Here's what changes are happening now in the Washington County Jail:

1. As of Saturday, all social visiting at the jail has been canceled until further notice.
2. We're working to offer inmates additional phone calls and video visits, where some of the costs will be covered by the sheriff's office.
3. Inmates will not be allowed to congregate in groups of more than 20 at a time.
4. Extra cleaning routines are in place to keep the facility as sanitized as possible, including before and after inmates are allowed in common areas.
5. Inmates will be eating meals inside their cells to adhere to recommended social distancing recommendations.
6. All inmate programs have temporarily been canceled.
7. We're working to lodge all inmates in single-occupancy cells.
8. We're working with the courts to release some low-level offenders with future court dates.
9. Inmates with short or nearly completed sentences may be considered for early release.
10. Our population management staff will use our force release options when necessary.
11. We're working to implement a screening process for both inmates and staff entering the facility, to include a temperature reading.
12. Our jail medical staff is equipped with COVID-19 testing kits for in-house testing.

Our patrol deputies are also implementing changes to help reduce the number of people brought to the jail, including the option of issuing a citation (court date) in lieu of arrest when appropriate. Individuals who are arrested on more serious charges, such as domestic violence, sex crimes, and violent person crimes, will still go to jail.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office is committed to serving our entire county and will continue to work with our partners in the Circuit Court, District Attorney's Office, Parole & Probation, Juvenile Justice, Health and Human Services, and others to do our best to meet the needs of our justice system while protecting our community from the COVID-19 virus.



MEDIA CONTACT: 503-209-5613

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