

RESIDENTIAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT (RSAT)

Training and Technical Assistance

Preparing People for Reentry from Jails and Prisons During the COVID-19 Epidemic

PREPARING PEOPLE FOR REENTRY FROM JAILS AND PRISONS DURING THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

Many county and municipal jails and state prison systems are taking measures to reduce the incarcerated population to help alleviate close living conditions conducive to the spread of disease. State prison systems are expediting scheduled releases by moving up release dates. Jails are releasing individuals who present minimal risk to public safety but are at elevated COVID-19 morbidity and mortality risk.

Because RSAT program generally serve inmates who are nearing the end of their sentences, they are likely candidates for early release if these measures are implemented. Re-entry for individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) is a crucial transition even when solid release plans, stable housing, and linkages to community-based SUD treatment and recovery support are all in place. The added task of re-entry preparation that includes precautions and restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is an added challenge for justice professionals as well as RSAT clients whose may find their release date suddenly moved up. Plus, the risks associated with a return to drugs and alcohol are now exponentially higher.

RSAT program staff simply do not have all the answers, but the list below may help guide steps that can help support individuals about to be released, given limited time and competing priorities.

- **RSAT programs with a distinct pre-release phase can integrate pre-release planning into the daily program schedule to encourage re-entry planning for all participants in the event early releases are implemented.**
- Programs can integrate a health literacy component to educate participants about basics of preventing transmission of COVID-19 while in custody and upon release. Low reading comprehension, high health literacy needs, and a preponderance of misinformation are typical challenges in custody settings. Using short videos or handouts from the CDC can help explain basics such as:
 - **Handwashing:** explain how, when and why. The action of scrubbing, as well as soap and water is important. Demonstrating and practicing helps. [CDC Handwashing video & handouts](#)
 - **Define or demonstrate** — explain specifics of **social distancing, covering coughs** or sneezes, and define terms such as ‘shelter-in-place.’ [CDC Social Distancing Video](#); [Shelter-in-Place webpage](#), [Cough Etiquette Video](#)
- **Make people with elevated risk factors aware of what they are and what they mean.** Many individuals in custody have one or more chronic health conditions in addition to mental health and substance use disorders. They will need to know if they have risk factors that make them more susceptible to the virus, or to becoming seriously ill and more likely to die as a result. The CDC has identified the following factors that elevate risks (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications/older-adults.html>):

- **Age:** 55 and over are at higher risk. The CDC reports 8 out of 10 deaths are among adults aged 65 and older.
- Chronic health conditions:
 - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - Heart disease with complications
 - Diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease, particularly if not well controlled
 - People who are immunocompromised including those undergoing cancer treatment
 - People of any age with severe obesity

Note: Currently, no data suggest pregnant women are at higher risk for contracting COVID-19; however, due to the seriousness of viral infections during pregnancy and possibility of mother-to-child transmission, the CDC recommends careful monitoring. For those receiving treatment for HIV, no data suggest they are at elevated risk (unless HIV is untreated and CD4 cell counts are low). However, people with hepatitis C have a higher prevalence of other chronic conditions that elevate risks.

- **Ask verbal screening questions and teach people to self-screen:** It is important to know the symptoms to look for and monitor, especially after contact with others who may be sick, and to understand purpose of a 14-day ‘quarantine.’ People should be aware of the high likelihood of recovering at home, the signs that their condition is serious, and what to do if that is the case.
 - [CDC Symptom Self-Checker](#)
 - CDC verbal screening questions
 - Today or in the past 24 hours, have you had any of the following symptoms?
 - Fever, felt feverish, or had chills?
 - Cough?
 - Difficulty breathing?
 - In the past 14 days, have you had contact with a person known to have COVID-19?
 - Signs of serious illness
 - Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face
- **Provide re-entering clients with contacts they will need and how they will be expected to communicate:** Individuals may need to understand how to report to probation/parole, if required and how to access video conferencing or other telecommunications.
- **Provide current information on what is in place in communities of release to prevent the spread of the virus**
 - Explain local directives including stay-at-home orders
 - Inform people about closures of public offices and businesses

- Check state executive orders for available emergency supports (housing, etc.)
- Provide local contacts for public health, emergency shelter, and medical care

Note: Many state directives that have closed all but essential services and business exclude recovery centers and sober homes and workers who provide shelter and safety net services to vulnerable individuals.

- **Immediate medical and behavioral health needs:** Individuals will need access to at least a 14-day supply of all medications to prepare to stay at home for quarantine periods, linkages to prescribers, treatment providers, and alternatives to face-to-face recovery support.
 - A federal directive has been issued that allows states to authorized 28-day take home supplies of methadone, as well as buprenorphine. Contact the state opioid treatment authority for current regulations. Long-acting formulations of MAT drugs may also be an option.
 - Provide harm reduction contacts including syringe exchanges, access to naloxone, and emergency contacts.
 - If re-entry support groups, recovery coaching, etc. are suspended, provide information about alternatives such as online meetings or peer recovery coaching/check ins by phone. [SAMHSA: virtual recovery resources](#)
- **Provide concrete examples specific to COVID-19 of the added risks of substance use behaviors.** Because of the nature of addiction, impulses to return to drug and alcohol use are usually accompanied by denial rather than common sense. It is best to repeat and reinforce examples of risk behaviors that now carry the compounded risk of COVID-19 transmission. Examples may need to be as explicit as:
 - “You should not smoke anything shared with another individual, even a cigarette”
 - “Do not drink alcohol out of a container someone else drank from.”
 - “Drugs that come in a balloon were probably in someone’s mouth. Wash your hands and the balloon”
 - “Sharing any drug use equipment, not just injecting equipment, is dangerous” (pipes, straws, etc.)

These simple steps may help protect RSAT program staff, other facility staff, re-entering individuals, and support community efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Stay safe, stay well.

ADDENDUM

1. *Preparing for Reentry, Covid-19: What you need to know before you go*
Brochure preparing persons leaving prison or jail to safeguard themselves in the community (2 pages)
2. *Coming Home from Prison or Jail during Coronavirus & Coming Home: How to Care for a Loved One Returning from Prison or Jail*
Center for Healthcare Value and Equity brochure for persons returning from prison or jail and how family can care for them (2 pages)

Symptoms of Covid-19 infection

Early symptoms include:

- Fever, cough, shortness of breath
- Some report loss of taste and/or smell

Signs of serious illness include:

- Trouble Breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or unable to wake up
- Bluish lips or face

If you think you might be or do get sick

- Stay home except to get medical care. **CALL before you get medical care.** Get care if you feel worse or think it's an emergency or have trouble breathing.
- If you call 911 for a medical emergency, tell them you think you may have Covid-19 and, if possible, put on a face mask before they arrive.
- Avoid public transportation, ride-sharing, and taxis.
- Isolate yourself in your home. Stay in one room and use a separate bathroom if possible.



This project was supported by grant No. 2019-IJ-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Point of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.

Did you know....

If you have asthma, chronic lung disease, a heart condition, diabetes, liver disease or any medical problem that compromises your immune system, **you are at higher risk of getting very sick from the Covid-19 virus.**

“What about continuing or starting on buprenorphine or methadone?”

Because of Covid-19, there are new rules that make it easier to start and receive both methadone and buprenorphine. Contact your local MAT providers to find out more.



“Everyone is wearing face masks! Should I be wearing one too?”

Wearing a face mask decreases the chances of becoming infected with Covid-19 and definitely protects others if you may be infected. But even with a face mask, you still need to take steps to protect yourself as outlined in this brochure.



Preparing for Re-Entry

What you need to know before you go

Covid-19

The world has changed because of Covid-19.

There is no cure or vaccination to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

To prevent becoming sick, you must avoid being exposed to this virus.

Protect Yourself:

- Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds, especially after being out in public, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If no soap or water are handy, use a hand sanitizer that contains 60% alcohol. Cover your whole hands with the sanitizer and rub until dry.



- Don't touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and then disinfect surfaces in your home that are touched a lot, such as tables, countertops, doorknobs, light switches, phones, keyboards, faucets, etc. You can use household disinfectants OR combine 5 tablespoons of bleach into one gallon of water.



What is social distancing?

Staying away at least 6 feet away from other people while in public. This includes when you are out grocery shopping, picking up prescriptions, or going out for a walk.

Some people infected with Covid-19 don't have any symptoms, nor do people during the first few days of being infected. **This is why it's very important for you to avoid contact with other people outside your home.**

**Stay Home.
Stay Safe.
Save Lives.**

Decrease your risks

- Don't smoke anything shared with another person – even a cigarette.
- Don't drink alcohol or anything else out of a container someone else drank from.
- Sharing any drug use equipment, not just injecting equipment, is dangerous. This includes pipes, straws, vaping devices, etc.
- Plastic baggies, balloons and cellophane can also carry the Covid-19 virus. Wash your hands and these items after contact.

“What if I have no home to go to when I'm released?”

If you are homeless:

- Try to make your encampment, tent, sleeping place, at least 12 feet away from another person's encampment.
- Try to find a bathroom that has soap and water and paper towels to dry your hands.
- Seek a shelter that has these facilities where you can receive care. Shelters have information to help you if you are or become sick.

COMING HOME FROM PRISON OR JAIL DURING CORONAVIRUS

You may have been exposed to the coronavirus while in prison or jail. When you return home, protect your loved ones by distancing yourself from members in your household. Sadly, this means no hugs, kisses, or handshakes. Follow these steps to keep everyone in your home safe and healthy.

Isolate for 14 Days



- Stay home and away from others
- No visitors
- Stay in one room away from other members in your household, if possible
- Stay away from anyone over 60 yrs old or with health conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes
- Do not share dishes, towels, sheets, and electronics
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible

Prevent the Spread of Germs

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Cover your sneeze and cough
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean all surfaces that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs
- Stay 6 feet away from people
- Wear a cloth face covering that fits over your nose and mouth



Check for Symptoms

Most people who get sick from coronavirus will have only mild illness and should recover at home.

- Symptoms include:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Shortness of breath
- Get emergency medical attention if you have:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Pain or pressure in the chest
 - Confusion
 - Bluish lips or face



FOR MORE INFO:

CALL 211

WWW.LDH.LA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS

WWW.CDC.GOV/CORONAVIRUS/2019-NCOV/

Center for Healthcare
Value and Equity

www.vote-nola.org

VO
TE

COMING HOME: HOW TO CARE FOR A LOVED ONE RETURNING FROM PRISON OR JAIL

Your loved one may have been exposed to coronavirus while in prison or jail. When they return home, they must distance themselves from others, if possible. Follow these steps to keep everyone in your home safe and healthy.

Check for symptoms

Most people who get sick from coronavirus will have only mild illness and should recover at home.

- Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath

- Get emergency medical attention if they have:

- Trouble breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Confusion or won't wake up
- Bluish lips or face



Prevent the spread of germs

- Have your loved one stay in one room, away from others
 - No hugs, kisses, or hand holding
 - Especially away from people 60 or older and people with health conditions like blood pressure & diabetes
- If in same space, open a window and turn on a fan
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Everyday, clean all surfaces that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs
- No visitors - stay 6ft away from people
- Have them wear a cloth face covering when around people in the home and outside
- Do not share dishes, towels, sheets, and electronics



If your loved one has COVID-19

- Make sure the sick person drinks a lot of fluids to stay hydrated and rests at home.
- Treat the symptoms - Over-the-counter medicines may help with symptoms.
- For most people, symptoms last a few days and get better after a week.
- They can leave their sick room if they have no fever for 3 days and other symptoms have improved
- Monitor your own health and check for symptoms

FOR MORE INFO:

CALL 211

WWW.LDH.LA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS

WWW.CDC.GOV/CORONAVIRUS/2019-NCOV/

Center for Healthcare
Value and Equity

www.vote-nola.org

VO
TE