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BY EMAIL

Bill Hallsworth, Jails & Court Services Coordinator
Georgia Sheriff's Association
3000 Highway 42 N.
McDonough, GA 30253

Donella Peacock, Jail Administrator
Georgia Sheriff's Association
3000 Highway 42 N.
McDonough, GA 30253

Dear Sheriff Hallsworth and Sheriff Peacock:

We are writing regarding out of concern for the probable spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) to people incarcerated in the county jails throughout Georgia and more importantly because we now have confirmed cases in the correctional setting. We thank you for all precautions you have taken to prevent the spread of the virus and support your continued efforts in accordance with the CDC guidelines on stopping the spread of coronavirus.¹ Due to the unknowns and uncertainties of the coronavirus in conjunction with the high turnover of the county jails, we are most concerned with the virus' spread to vulnerable populations including elderly, disabled, and pregnant people as well as those that pose unnecessary risks due to lack of funds to make bond, traffic violations, misdemeanors, technical

¹ CDC guidelines on stopping the spread of coronavirus <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

violations, and non-violent charges. We ask that the Georgia Sheriff's Association to implement the following initiatives to reduce virus transmission and potential loss of life.

A. Recommendations to Georgia Sheriff's Association

1. **Comply with CDC, Georgia Department of Public Health, and NCCHC Guidelines:** We urge the GSA to maintain consistent communication with experts at CDC, Department of Public Health, and National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC). We expect that prison specific, COVID-19 guidelines are forthcoming from the CDC.
2. **Implement Testing for Jail Staff:** Incarcerated people are highly susceptible to the staff that enter in and out of the jails daily. All staff should be tested, and temperatures taken daily before each shift is started.
3. **Provide Timely Medical Care:** Due to the high turnover of county jails, immediately remove any inmate that complains of or begins to show flu-like symptoms from general populated areas, administer medical treatment, and provide testing.
4. **Implement Medical Quarantine as Warranted:** Considering this is a new, wide, and rapidly spread virus, there need to be proper protocols and priorities including release for pregnant women, older inmates, and immune deficient individuals.
5. **Ensure Ample Supplies of Sanitizing/Cleaning Products, Hygiene products, Soap, Tissue, and Clean laundry:** dorms/pods/cells: Due to the virus being spread through both air and physical touch, it's imperative to guarantee fair cleanliness and hygiene products. This also means providing easier access to soap, hand sanitizer, tissue, and clean uniform.
6. **Provide Clear Consistent Communication with Families and Public:** Update your websites and give news briefings to the public to allow transparency of the status of the corona virus in reference to the incarcerated population. Provide regular and transparent communication with inmates regarding updates, implementations, and any other pertinent information within the correctional facility. Allow inmates daily access and communication to their families via video, phone, and letters. Supply indigent inmates free phone calls and stamps.

7. Prioritize a List of People for Release: County jails experience a high turnover of inmates due to waiting to bond out, for court dates, and short-term sentencing. It's necessary to manage the COVID-19 crisis by reducing the prison population. We respectfully ask that a list of persons to prioritize for the release of pregnant women, immunocompromised, people 60+ years of age, traffic violations, technical violations, misdemeanors, non-violent felonies, and people being detained that have not been convicted.

8. Priority Care and Release of Pregnant Persons: GA is amongst the highest rates of maternal-infant mortality. The exposure of pregnant women to the corona virus puts two lives at risk. We urge you to immediately release pregnant persons who have not been convicted and expedite immediate transfer to Helms Facility all that have been sentenced. In the meantime, provide pregnant women with ample sanitizing/cleaning supplies, make their medical requests a priority, provide testing, take their temperature daily, and allow them as much social distancing as possible.

Out of the concern and numerous inquiries that we are receiving from incarcerated persons and their families, we are sharing this letter publicly. We appreciate the precautions that the GSA has taken to respond to COVID-19 and continue public safety. We urge you to adopt the additional measures listed in this letter, for the protection of people in jails, correctional staff, and the public at large.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Pamela Winn
Founding Director