

■ MARION COUNTY DETENTION CENTER

Healthy at home, healthy in jail

Marion County Detention Center taking every step possible to keep virus from infecting staff, inmates

By Stevie Lowery
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Public health and corrections officials have expressed concern that cramped and unsanitary conditions at jails and prisons could prove to be a dangerous and deadly combo for spreading the novel coronavirus.

But, according to Marion County Jailer Barry Brady, the safety measures his staff have been implementing since the beginning of March have made the jail probably one of the healthiest and cleanest facilities in Marion County.

"It's difficult, but not impossible," Brady said. "We can't shut down. We are a necessary government facility. We will still lock people up. We haven't stopped. But, we have to operate with a lot more diligent concern about protecting everybody."

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, no one is allowed inside the jail, aside from staff, which means no visitation for inmates, and no volunteers are interacting with inmates. Employees aren't allowed to go beyond the lobby without their temperatures being taken to see if they have a fever. All community service work sites have been closed. And, no inmate is leaving the facility, unless they are released.

On March 20, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Minton Jr. urged state court officials to release inmates "as quickly as we can" to avoid potential outbreaks of the coronavirus in jail facilities.

"We know what a potential disaster this could be, and it's our responsibility to work with jailers and other county officials to safely release as many defendants as we can as quickly as we can," Minton said.

According to Jailer Brady, MCDC has released 94 prisoners since March 12.

Gov. Andy Beshear announced Thursday plans to commute the sentences for hundreds of non-violent offenders. The move reduces the risk of virus transmission for an at-risk population as well as for staff and other personnel. Gov. Beshear commuted the sentences of 186 inmates identified as being medically vulnerable to the coronavirus, and plans to commute the sentences of another 743 inmates in state custody who are due to complete their sentences within the next six months. Gov. Beshear said all of those receiving commutations were being held for non-violent, non-sexual offenses.

Jailer Brady said he wants to reassure the public that this doesn't mean law enforcement, judges or the jail are being soft on crime.

"If you break the law, you will be arrested and you will be put in jail," Brady said.

Sentences commuted for non-violent offenders

Gov. Andy Beshear announced Thursday plans to commute the sentences for hundreds of non-violent offenders. The move reduces the risk of virus transmission for an at-risk population as well as for Department of Corrections officers and other personnel.

"This is lightening the load on our corrections system and at the same time protecting some of the most vulnerable individuals who are in the corrections system," said J. Michael Brown, Secretary of the Executive Cabinet.

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Supreme Court suspends in-person services at court facilities through May 1

In anticipation of a surge in COVID-19 cases, the Supreme Court issued new amendments last week that strengthen the social-distancing order that has been in place in courts statewide since March 16. The order restricts dockets, jury trials and jury service during the pandemic. The new amendments are in effect through May 1 and provide that:

- All participants to a proceeding, including parties and attorneys, must be allowed to participate remotely.
- All judicial facilities will be closed to in-person services effective April 1, with limited exceptions. Signage will be posted at all public entry points notifying individuals of the restrictions.
- Eviction filings will not be accepted by the circuit court clerk until 30 days after the order expires pursuant to federal and state moratoriums on evictions and public health and safety concerns.

"It's not a get out of jail free card right now. Our law enforcement is enforcing laws as we speak. We've had 34 new arrests since March 12."

However, much like nursing homes, jails are susceptible to worse-case scenarios due to the close proximity of people and the number of pre-existing conditions.

"If we don't do this, and it breaks out in our facilities, we would be taking up needed ventilators and needed hospital beds," Brady said.

According to Brady, 26 inmates at MCDC have been deemed fragile/at-risk, and are being reviewed by the state for possible release.

Another big concern for Brady are the new arrestees that are brought to the jail. The jail's staff must do everything possible to make sure those new arrestees don't have the coronavirus so that they don't infect other inmates or the jail's staff.

"Law enforcement doesn't even come into our building now," Brady said. "They come into the sally port and the staff meet the officers and will mask the arrestee and process them. Then the new arrestee is quarantined for 14 days before being placed in the general population. We have to treat every new inmate as if they have the virus."

However, the jail has limited space, which makes it very difficult to quarantine all new inmates for 14 days, Brady said. On March 20, he sent a notice to all local judges and law enforcement, stating it was imperative for them to use

"sound discretionary judgment" when issuing arrest warrants, such as for failure to appear, failure to pay fines or restitution.

"I hope everybody is



Photo provided

Employees reporting to work at the Marion County Detention Center get their temperatures taken to see if they have a fever.

patient with each other, and take this seriously," Brady said. "There will be so many unfortunate deaths from this virus if we're not responsible as a community."

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Monday - Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:30 am - 5:00 pm	8:30 am - 5:30 pm	8:30 am - 12:00 pm

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Thank you for your understanding and patience as we work together to keep our families and communities healthy.



The Lebanon Enterprise will publish a graduation section for the Class of 2020.

There are many unknowns right now, but we do still want local seniors and their families to have the same commemorative section that previous graduating seniors have had in the past.

Right now, social distancing is important.

Our community is important.

And the Class of 2020 is still very much important to us!

When the time feels right for our community, we will start working on the production of the graduation section.

Until that time, we are all in this together.

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#TogetherKY

#Patriot

#HealthyAtHome

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