

## COPING WITH COVID-19

### STAYING IN CONTACT WITH INCARCERATED LOVED ONES

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*It's important that individuals receive human to human contact.*

With over 2.3 million incarcerated individuals in the United States, many people know of someone who is in prison or has been. This can be hard on individuals and families to bare, but their stress levels may have increased since COVID-19. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, prisons across the country have had to adapt. They have stopped the visitations of family members, restricted the movement of inmates within facilities and reduced the transportation of inmates to other facilities. Since inmates are housed in small spaces, it is hard to

follow the Centers for Disease  
Preventions  
and control  
guidelines  
on social



distancing. This may have caused stress amongst the general public as well as the inmate's family. This resource provides guidance on staying connected with your incarcerated loved one during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### COVID-19 STAYING CONNECTED

It is important that individuals receive human to human contact. Research shows that communicating with individuals is essential and since the pandemic, staying in contact has been more difficult than pre-COVID-19. Since the suspension of face to face visitation, some prisons have increased access to their

communication  
systems, offering  
low cost or free  
services. This  
allows  
individuals to



communicate with their family and friends more frequently to help make up for the lost visitation. Writing letters is a good way to communicate with incarcerated individuals. Adding a picture to the letter can make you feel closer and keep your loved one current on how you and other family members are growing/changing. Visit the state department of corrections website to retrieve the address and the proper way you should address the envelope to send to your loved one.

## WELLNESS CHECKS/ LIVING CONDITIONS

Hearing the rising numbers of infected individuals can be alarming. The department of corrections has a responsibility to provide inmates with health care while they are incarcerated. Many facilities have full-time staff ready to help inmates with physical



and mental health. Currently, inmates are being tested for COVID-19. As the they are tested, more precautions are being used to

keep those that have been infected quarantined from other inmates.

The Tennessee Department of Corrections has launched a 24-hour COVID-19 information line for family members of incarcerated individuals. This line is used to help individuals with COVID-19 related questions; such as testing, protective measures, and additional information on the prison system as it relates to COVID-19. Another hotline has been established to serve family members 24-hours a day as well. The CoreCivic hotline is monitored daily by a live operator. If you have general health concerns, you can reach out to the correction facilities directly and they can direct you to the appropriate individual.

## DISCUSSIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children are usually able to talk with their loved one during an in-person visitation. During COVID-19, it can be difficult for children to communicate with their loved one causing confusion, distress, or

disconnection. Discuss with your child (ren) about the pandemic and the precautions the prison is taking to keep your loved one safe. Explain to them about the transmission of the virus and how visiting could potentially make them or their loved one sick. Continue conversations with them, providing updates on how the inmate is doing. Explore some ideas on what they can do to stay in touch.

## EDUCATING YOURSELF

Knowing someone who is incarcerated is a tough issue



to deal with, especially during COVID-19. Use this time to review the Tennessee Department of Corrections page to learn about the corrections facilities. Continue to try and communicate regularly with your loved one. Staying connected will help them in the long run. When times are tough, we need people to get us through them.

## References & Resources:

- Federal Bureau of Prisons. 2020. COVID-19 Coronavirus. <https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/>
- Prison Policy Initiative. 2020. COVID-19 and the criminal justice system. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/virus/>
- Tennessee Department of Corrections. 2020. Frequently Asked Questions Regarding COVID-19. <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/correction/frequently-asked-questions-regarding-covid-19.html>.

For General Health Information: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)  
TN COVID-19 Information: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>  
TN Mental Health Hotline: 1-855-274-7471  
TN Addiction and Recovery Hotline: 1-800-889-9789

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