



Best Infection Prevention Practices for Inmate Transfers During COVID-19

[CDC guidance](#) recommends restricting transfers of inmates to those that are necessary for medical evaluation, medical isolation/quarantine, clinical care, extenuating security concerns, release, or to prevent overcrowding. Every inmate transfer poses a risk of spreading COVID-19 between facilities and can result in transmission of disease and large outbreaks. This document outlines the NC Division of Public Health's (DPH) infection prevention recommendations for best practices for inmate transfers, if inmate transfers are necessary for continued safe operation of correctional facilities. If alternatives to transfer are possible (reducing inmate populations; hiring emergency staff; or allowing exposed staff to work with regular monitoring, face masks, social distancing, and increased cleaning per [CDC recommendations for critical workers](#)) these solutions should be used instead of inmate transfers.

1. Transfer people who are at the lowest risk of spreading COVID-19.

- Ideally, transfer people from a facility that has not had any COVID-19 cases to another facility that has not had any COVID-19 cases to minimize the risk of spreading between facilities.
- If people must be transferred from a facility that has COVID-19 cases, transfer only people who are not in isolation or quarantine to reduce the risk of spread.
- Communicate with Department of Public Safety (DPS) if the inmate needing to be transferred is ending an isolation or quarantine period and what day they are in that process (e.g., day 10 of 14 for quarantine).
- Please consult with DPH and the local health department before transferring inmates in isolation or quarantine. Do not transfer COVID-19 positive individuals to prison without the expressed permission of DPS.
- Send the *medication administration record* (MAR) and medical history of the inmate to the receiving facility before or during the transfer to ensure continuity of care.

2. Quarantine inmates after transfer.

- All inmates who are transferred to another facility must be quarantined for 14 days on arrival.
- This includes inmates who have just been released from quarantine at their home facility, because they may have been exposed during the transport process.
- If any inmates from the transfer test positive, this resets the 14-day quarantine clock for everyone who had close contact with the case (seated within 6 feet during the ride).
 - Keep records of where each person sat on the vehicle to determine who needs to be quarantined if someone tests positive.

3. Screen all inmates and staff before boarding the vehicle.

- Take the temperature and ask about symptoms for all inmates and staff before they board the vehicle. Anyone with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 should not board the

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vehicle and should be sent home (staff) or sent for medical evaluation (inmate). Refer to pg.3- **Recommended Screening Procedures before Jail and Prison Transfers.**

4. Assure everyone on board adheres to infection prevention measures (hand hygiene and either a surgical facemask or cloth face covering) and social distancing.

- Everyone on the vehicle must wear a face covering over nose and mouth at all times. Staff should provide each inmate with a face covering, instruct the inmates on [how to properly wear the face coverings](#), and monitor inmate compliance with the instruction.
- Everyone must perform hand hygiene **immediately prior** to boarding the vehicle. A corrections officer should dispense alcohol-based hand sanitizer to everyone, including inmates, just before they board the vehicle.
- A corrections officer on the vehicle should have tissues, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and a lined trash receptacle. If anyone needs to cough or blow their nose, they should be provided with tissues and the trash can. The corrections officer should dispense alcohol-based hand sanitizer to them afterward.
- Everyone must perform hand hygiene again immediately after getting off the vehicle. A corrections officer should dispense alcohol-based hand sanitizer when disembarking the vehicle.

5. Maintain social distancing.

- All people on the vehicle, including staff and inmates, must be seated 6 feet apart from each other. This will significantly decrease the capacity of the vehicle, so additional trips should be anticipated.

6. Keep staff safe during transfer.

- If possible, have inmates board first, filling seats from back to front, followed by staff. Alternatively, have inmates board from the back of the vehicle and fill seats from front to back. The goal is to minimize the number of people passing seated passengers (including the driver).
- If possible, place a barrier between inmates and staff.
- Provide staff with disinfectant wipes to clean hands and/or surfaces as necessary during transport.

7. Make sure there is plenty of fresh air in the vehicle.

- If possible, open windows to allow circulation of fresh air. Otherwise, turn on the air conditioning/fan with the **recirculate option off** and the vents open.
- Please make checking the air conditioning settings before loading the vehicle part of the standard operating procedure for inmate transfers. Ensuring that there is fresh air on the vehicle is critical for keeping everyone on board safe.

8. Thoroughly clean and disinfect the vehicle after each trip.

- The vehicle should be disinfected using an agent that is [EPA-registered](#) as active against coronaviruses.
- The vehicle should be disinfected after each one-way trip. [Clean and disinfect all surfaces inside the vehicle with a List-N EPA-registered disinfectant](#) after transporting inmates, and clean and disinfect staff areas after the return trip to the facility (assuming

no inmates are being transferred in the opposite direction). Discard of trash and perform hand hygiene after disinfection of the vehicle.

Transferring inmates during the COVID-19 pandemic is a very high-risk situation and requires consultation with public health authorities. Please consult with DPH and the local health department before transferring inmates in isolation or quarantine. We can provide advice on the best way to implement these recommendations for the specific scenarios and ensure that the risk of spreading COVID-19 between facilities is minimized as much as possible. Thank you!

Recommended Screening Procedures before Jail and Prison Transfers (CDC guidance)

- **Verbal screening for symptoms of COVID-19 and contact with COVID-19 cases should occur before leaving the sending facility and should include the following questions:**
 - *Today or in the past 24 hours, have you had any of the following symptoms?*
 - *Fever or chills*
 - *Cough*
 - *Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing*
 - *Fatigue*
 - *Muscle or body aches*
 - *Headache*
 - *New loss of taste or smell*
 - *Sore throat*
 - *Congestion or runny nose*
 - *Nausea or vomiting*
 - *Diarrhea*
 - *In the past 14 days and to your knowledge, have you had contact with a person known to be infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?*
- **The following is a protocol to safely check an individual's temperature:**
 - Perform hand hygiene
 - Put on a face mask, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), gown/coveralls, and a single pair of disposable gloves
 - Check individual's temperature
 - **If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, ensure that a clean pair of gloves is used for each individual and that the thermometer has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in between each check.** If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and the screener did not have physical contact with an individual, gloves do not need to be changed before the next check. Non-contact thermometers other shared medical equipment should be [cleaned routinely as recommended by CDC for infection control](#).
 - Remove and discard PPE. Follow [guidance for removal of PPE](#), being careful to not contaminate your face, skin, or clothes.
 - Perform hand hygiene.

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- **If an individual is symptomatic**, that person should be held in the sending facility under isolation and tested for COVID-19. Call the LHD for guidance on removal from isolation and monitor the person closely for worsening symptoms. **If the individual has had contact with a person infected with COVID-19 in the past 14 days**, that person should be held in the sending facility under quarantine until 14 days has passed from their most recent exposure to the infected person. Monitor quarantined individuals for symptoms.

COVID-19 Symptoms Signage for the Transfer Screening Area (CDC)

English <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf>

Spanish <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms-sp.pdf>

Chinese <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms-chinese.pdf>

Other languages: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html>

Jail to Prison Transfer Prioritization for Inmates Pending Prison Placement

1. Jails with COVID-19 outbreaks that are at or over capacity, provided that the people being transferred have no known exposure and are not in isolation or quarantine. (Anyone in isolation/quarantine needs to complete that time at the jail before being transferred.)
2. Jails without COVID-19 outbreaks that are at or over capacity.
3. Jails without COVID-19 outbreaks that are not at capacity.
4. Jails with COVID-19 outbreaks that are not at capacity (for people not in isolation/quarantine).