



3/30/2020

Dear Secretary Inch,

I want to applaud you for taking swift action to reduce the risk COVID-19 poses to people housed in the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC), and to the corrections professionals who care for them. Unfortunately, Florida law denies to you some effective tools available to others in your position, but under your leadership, FDC has used available options effectively. The Department has also done a good job releasing useful information. I am writing to request that FDC expand efforts to keep the public even better informed as this crisis unfolds.

As you know, roughly 96,000 prisoners are housed in FDC, and tens of thousands more FDC employees and contractors have daily contact with facilities. Between prisoners and corrections professionals, the number of people directly affected by COVID-19 inside Florida's prisons exceeds the population of at least 30 counties around the state. Last Friday, FDC confirmed seven positive tests among Department employees or contractors.

The Florida Department of Health recently created the "COVID-19 Data and Surveillance Dashboard," which tracks relevant data – including total tests, hospitalizations, deaths, and new cases by day – and publishes that data online. It is a valuable tool for Floridians to track the spread of the virus, and for officials to adjust policies as necessary. A similar FDC dashboard would keep families of those incarcerated – as well as FDC employees and their families – informed of what is happening inside state prisons. In addition to providing comfort to worried families, correct and up-to-date information can reduce rumors, calm fears, and help maintain order in facilities. In fact, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections recently launched a COVID-19 dashboard.

We recommend the FDC dashboard include, by facility, and for prisoners and staff, daily updates with:

- Total number of tests, including total positives and total negatives
- New cases
- Hospitalizations, including transfers to community medical facilities
- Quarantines/Lockdowns
- Deaths

On behalf of thousands of families around Florida, we are grateful for the steps FDC has taken to protect their loved ones. More than ever, these families need access to timely, comprehensive, and correct information. To that end, FAMM requests FDC creates a user-friendly dashboard to track and publish relevant data daily. Thank you for your consideration of our views, and for your leadership during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Greg Newburn
Florida Director, FAMM