

# **Prevention Measures in Taiwan's Correctional Institutions against COVID-19**

Updated Date: April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic can pose a tremendous threat to those who are incarcerated, and thus the Agency of Corrections, Ministry of Justice (MJAC) has established a command centre since January 20<sup>th</sup> to prevent the spread of virus inside the correctional institutions in Taiwan. As of April 9<sup>th</sup>, none of our correctional staff and prisoners has been infected by COVID-19.

## **General Prevention Measures**

### **1. Check body temperatures**

All prisoners' body temperatures are checked daily and so do all of our correctional staff. For those who come to the correctional institutions for business or visiting, their temperatures need to be checked at the main entrances by our staff.

### **2. Educate all correctional staff and prisoners to wash their hands regularly**

We have utilised the propaganda from the public health authorities to educate people about the importance of washing hands and how to wash their hands with soap or sanitizer properly.

### **3. Environmental cleaning and disinfection**

All areas and rooms of the correctional institutions are required to be cleaned and disinfected daily.

### **4. Investigate the travel history of newly arrived inmates**

All new arrivals will be sent and monitored in the arrival units. These new inmates will be asked by our staff about their past travel history, whom they contacted with, whether they have fevers or upper respiratory tract symptoms. Once these new arrivals are observed to have symptoms similar to COVID-19, they will be transferred to nearby hospitals for testing and treatments.

### **5. Suspend all large gatherings and activities**

We have to suspend all volunteers or groups from visiting prisoners. Meanwhile, large gatherings and activities, such as religious education, sports competition, and performances, have to be suspended.

**6. Ensure the protective equipment is sufficient**

MJAC will ensure all surgical masks, forehead thermometers, gloves, disinfecting products are sufficient for all of our correctional institutions. Correctional staff who need to contact with prisoners directly will receive one surgical mask per day, whereas those who are not frontline roles will receive two surgical masks per week. Prisoners who are categorised as high risks, such as the elderly and the sick, will receive one surgical mask per day, while general prisoners will receive two surgical masks per week. Prisoners' family members can send surgical masks into the institutions after inspection.

## **Visitation Information**

Presently, our correctional institutions are still open for visitation, yet we strongly suggest prisoners and their family or friends can use phone calls as alternatives.

**1. Non-contact or telephone/video visitation**

Inmates' family or friends MUST wear masks once they arrive at the correctional institutions and our staff will take their temperatures.

**2. Contact visitation**

We have limited this type of visitation until further notice.

**3. Set up more public telephone booths inside the institutions**

Visitation or family contact is essential for prisoners' rehabilitation, yet due to the pandemic, we expect prisoners' family members are more likely not to visit them. Therefore, MJAC is asking all of our correctional institutions to set up more public booths to meet the increasing needs for the public telephone.

**4. Utilise technology for visitation**

Since 2019, MJAC has foreseen the trend for utilising technology in the correctional institutions. We have developed mobile phone visitation software for prisoners' family. Prisoners' family can use their mobile phones or tablets anywhere to have video visitation with prisoners. To date, six of the fifty-one correctional institutions in Taiwan have adopted this new type of visitation. MJAC aims to implement this technology in all of our correctional institutions by the

end of 2020.

## Staff

### 1. **Do not expose yourself to the coronavirus**

All staff shall not travel abroad except emergency. When staff need to travel abroad, they have to apply for it and get consent from the wardens or the heads of institutions. Meanwhile, staff are suggested not to participate in large gatherings during their day-offs.

### 2. **Take self-quarantine if it is necessary**

Staff who have developed symptoms similar to COVID-19 or contacted with the confirmed COVID-19 cases shall follow the guidelines and regulations for quarantine issued by the Central Epidemic Command Center and Taiwan Centers for Disease Control.

### 3. **Arranges off-site workplaces amid coronavirus concerns**

All correctional institutions must come up with plans for off-site workplaces and practice this mode in advance.



(Picture: Environmental cleaning and disinfection in Taichung Prison)