

<b>Subject</b>	<b>IMPORTANT: TJJD UPDATE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)</b>
<b>From</b>	Lou Serrano
<b>To</b>	Juvenile Probation Counties
<b>Cc</b>	
<b>Sent</b>	Friday, March 13, 2020 5:50 PM

Good Afternoon:

With the ongoing spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), TJJD has received many questions about standards, monitoring, and the potential need for waivers. Given the unprecedented nature of this event, addressing all possible needs to waiver from standards pre-emptively is not possible.

Rather than address potential standards deviations through waivers, TJJD's general expectation is the following:

1. Facilities should follow your existing non-fire emergency preparedness plan (particularly the portions applicable to medical emergencies) and your written policies and procedures regarding maintaining security in the event of a work stoppage.
2. Both facilities and probation department should follow guidance from the state and local health departments regarding pandemic prevention and containment.
3. In instances in which a particular situation is not addressed by the emergency preparedness or work stoppage plan or you need to deviate from those plans, communicate with your juvenile board or board chair to determine the appropriate and reasonable course of action and get their approval in writing (this can be done formally or informally, as the situation warrants). Maintain these approvals for future monitoring visits.

The Governor has issued a disaster declaration for the state. In that declaration, he detailed certain actions to be taken, including the suspension of visitation in juvenile justice facilities. As a result, effective immediately, TJJD is suspending visitation, with the exception of personal clergy. If you decide to suspend or limit visitation as well, Executive Director Camille Cain has determined that doing so is consistent with what is permissible under 37 TAC §343.354(a) in order to maintain control and security of the facility. Any county or contract facility that suspends or restricts visitation during this time will not be issued a monitoring finding or found non-compliant with 37 TAC 343.352. You should continue all efforts to allow attorney visitation, but attorneys should be screened prior to entry into your facility. This will be in effect until it is rescinded or until the March 13, 2020 disaster declaration is lifted or expires.

As you are considering the appropriate steps to take with regard to this situation, some actions might include:

1. Increasing the use of phone calls and/or incorporating the use of technology to allow families to maintain contact with their children
2. Using electronic or telephonic means to maintain contact with youth on your probation caseload if in-person communication is not possible
3. Carefully reviewing each child for the need for detention or ability for release, as lower populations in each facility will mitigate issues like inability to maintain ratios and engage in

programming

4. Time-phasing programming so that youth can maintain as much programming as possible while ensuring facility safety and security.

We are sure that you all have other creative ideas that can be implemented and encourage you to share with one another.

Additionally, TJJJ is suspending all monitoring activities, including fiscal monitoring, through April 30. We will reassess the situation by April 15 to determine if this suspension should be extended. Monitoring and Inspections staff will remain in contact via phone and email throughout this time.

For facilities, your regional lead monitor will serve as your point of contact with regard to questions and issues that arise. For probation departments regarding Chapter 341, contact Erica Leos.

As always, serious incidents and allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation should continue to be reported appropriately.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness with regard to standards always and particularly during this time. The work you do is so important and we will work together to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the juvenile justice system.

**Louis Serrano**

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