



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH,  
WELLNESS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

Ministerial Building, Kingstown,  
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

## **INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR HER MAJESTY'S PRISONS RE:COVID-19**

This document provides short-term guidance for the HER MAJESTY'S PRISON in St. Vincent and the Grenadines during the global pandemic of COVID-19. This guidance is to facilitate the continued operations of the HMPs in a manner that will ensure the health and safety of incarcerated persons and staff. Revisions to this document may be provided as more information becomes available. The guidelines may be further adapted to suit the current staffing, prison population, physical space, resources and other facility conditions.

**1. SCREENING OF STAFF:** Enhanced health screening of staff should be implemented when community transmission of COVID-19 is sustained in the population. Such screening includes self-reporting of symptoms and temperature checks.

**2. SOCIAL VISITS:** Social visits should be suspended for a period of 30 days, at which time the suspension may be reevaluated. To ensure inmates maintain social ties, the HMP may allow for additional inmate telephone communications.

**NOTE:** Suspending visitation would be done in the interest of incarcerated/detained persons' physical health and the health of the general public. However, visitation is important to maintain mental health. If visitation is suspended, HMP should explore alternative ways for incarcerated/detained persons to communicate (e.g. teleconferencing) with their families, friends, and other visitors in a way that is not financially burdensome for them.

**3. LEGAL VISITS:** Access to legal counsel remains a paramount requirement in the HMP but like social visiting, the HMP is mitigating the risk of exposure created by external visitors. As such, while in general, legal visits will be suspended for 30 days, case-by-case accommodation will be accomplished at the local level and confidential legal calls will be allowed in order to ensure inmates maintain access to counsel. Attorneys seeking an in-person visit with their client or a confidential call should contact [relevant authority HMP]. If approved for an in-person visit, the attorney will need to undergo screening using the same procedures as staff.

**4. INMATE MOVEMENT:** All inmate facility transfers will be suspended for 30 days, at which time the suspension will be reevaluated. Admission of new inmates will continue.

**5. MEDICAL SERVICES:** Access to HMP facilities should be restricted to those performing essential services (e.g. medical or mental health care). Persons granted access should be screened using the same procedures as staff prior to entry. **Restrict transfers of incarcerated/detained persons to and from other jurisdictions and facilities unless necessary for medical evaluation, medical isolation/quarantine, clinical care, extenuating security concerns, or to prevent overcrowding.**



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## **6. SCREENING OF INMATES:**

- All newly-arriving inmates are being should be screened for COVID-19 exposure risk factors and symptoms.
- Asymptomatic inmates with exposure risk factors should be quarantined.
- Symptomatic inmates with exposure risk factors should be isolated in a single room. The Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment should then be immediately consulted for testing for COVID-19.

**7. MODIFIED OPERATIONS:** The HMP should implement social distancing and limit group gatherings. These includes but is not limited to staggered meal times, recreation etc.

**8. INFORMATION SHARING:** Symptoms of COVID-19 and hand hygiene instructions should be shared with all staff and facility inmates. Signage may be posted. Ensure that signage is understandable for those with low literacy, and make necessary accommodations for those with cognitive or intellectual disabilities and those who are deaf, blind, or low-vision. Specifically:

- The following information must be shared with all staff and inmates:
  - Practice good cough etiquette: Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow (or ideally with a tissue) rather than with your hand when you cough or sneeze, and throw all tissues in the trash immediately after use.
  - Practice good hand hygiene: Regularly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose; after using the bathroom; before eating or preparing food; before taking medication; and after touching garbage.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth without cleaning your hands first.
  - Avoid sharing eating utensils, dishes, and cups.
  - Avoid non-essential physical contact.
- Incarcerated persons should be reminded of importance of immediately reporting symptoms to staff



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- Staff should stay at home when sick; if symptoms develop while on duty, self-isolate and immediately contact the health authorities to determine whether they need to be evaluated and tested.

**9. STAFFING:** Staff should stay home when they are sick, or they may need to stay home to care for a sick household member or care for children in the event of school and childcare dismissals.

- Allow staff to work from home when possible, within the scope of their duties.
- Identify critical job functions and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff where possible.
- Determine minimum levels of staff in all categories required for the facility to function safely. If possible, develop a plan to secure additional staff if absenteeism due to COVID-19 threatens to bring staffing to minimum levels.
- **Consider offering revised duties to staff who are at higher risk of severe illness with COVID-19.** Persons at higher risk may include older adults and persons of any age with serious underlying medical conditions including lung disease, heart disease, and diabetes.
- Communicate with the public about any changes to facility operations, including visitation programs.

**10. CLEAN AND DISINFECT:**

a) Ensure that sufficient stocks of hygiene supplies and cleaning supplies are on hand and available, and have a plan in place to restock as needed if COVID-19 transmission occurs within the facility. Even if COVID-19 cases have not yet been identified inside the facility or in the surrounding community, begin implementing intensified cleaning and disinfecting procedures. These measures may prevent spread of COVID-19 if introduced. Supplies include:

- Tissues
- Liquid soap when possible. If bar soap must be used, ensure that it does not irritate the skin and thereby discourage frequent hand washing.
- Hand drying supplies
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol (where permissible based on security restrictions). **Consider relaxing restrictions on allowing alcohol-based hand sanitizer in the secure setting where security concerns allow.** Consider allowing staff to carry individual-sized bottles for their personal hand hygiene while on duty.



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- Cleaning supplies
  - b) Several times per day, clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially in common areas. Such surfaces may include objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, toilets, toilet handles, recreation equipment, kiosks, and telephones).
  - c) Staff should clean shared equipment several times per day and on a conclusion of use basis (e.g., radios, service weapons, keys, handcuffs).
  - d) Consider increasing the number of staff and/or incarcerated/detained persons trained and responsible for cleaning common areas to ensure continual cleaning of these areas throughout the day.

*Please note that this document may be revised at any time at the discretion of the Health Services Subcommittee of the National Emergency Committee/COVID-19 Task Force, Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment.*

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