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RE: CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Dear Friend,

We are writing to you today about **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)**. We know that this is a particularly stressful time for incarcerated people and their families. We also recognize that people in prisons and jails may not have access to important information about COVID-19 or the COVID-19 vaccine. For these reasons, we are sending you some information about the global pandemic and the vaccine that we hope will be useful to you.

A. COVID-19 Cases in the United States, Georgia, and Alabama

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the country and the world. As of May 14, 2021, there have been 31,643,851 cases of COVID-19 and 580,837 COVID-related deaths in the United States.¹ Many jails and prisons have had outbreaks of COVID-19. The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) reports that 3,864 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19 and that 93 incarcerated people have died from the virus.² The Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) reports that 1,649 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19 and that 66 incarcerated people have died from the virus.³ However, the number of COVID-19 infections *reported* by prisons and jails that do not conduct widespread testing are likely much lower than the actual number of infections. A recent study published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that when facilities conduct widespread testing, they detect twelve times as many COVID-19 cases.⁴

B. Responses to COVID-19 in the United States, Georgia, and Alabama

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization designated COVID-19 a global pandemic.⁵ Since then, there have been varying responses to the pandemic on the state, national, and local levels. President Biden and Vice President Harris recently issued a seven-point plan to address the COVID-19 crisis. They plan to increase testing, increase production of masks and other personal protective equipment, work with governors and mayors to require people to wear masks in public, increase vaccine distribution, and more.⁶

¹ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *COVID Data Tracker* (Apr. 5, 2021), <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>.

² Ga. Dep't of Corr., *COVID Dashboard* (Apr. 5, 2021), http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/content/CVD_Dashboard.

³ Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC COVID-19 Testing* (May 17, 2021), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/covid19news>.

⁴ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report, *Mass Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in 16 Prisons and Jails – Six Jurisdictions, United States, April-May 2020* (Aug. 21, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6933a3.htm>.

⁵ World Health Org., *Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)* (Mar. 11, 2020), <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>.

⁶ The White House, *COVID-19: The Biden-Harris plan to beat COVID-19*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/priorities/covid-19/>.

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The Governors of Georgia and Alabama have also taken steps to address the pandemic:

- Georgia: The Governor declared a public health emergency in March of 2020⁷ and has renewed it monthly since then, most recently in March 2021.⁸ In April 2020, the Governor issued a “Shelter-in-Place” order, meaning that people are supposed to stay at home, with certain exceptions, and many businesses must close.⁹ That order has since been mostly lifted.¹⁰ However, businesses must follow social distancing and sanitation rules.¹¹
- Alabama: In March 2020, the Governor declared a state public health emergency. In March 2021, she issued a “Safer at Home” order that will remain in effect until April 9, 2021 (unless renewed again). The order requires people to wear masks in public (when interacting within six feet with people of another household) but allows businesses and schools to stay open if they follow social distancing and sanitation rules.¹²

C. The COVID-19 Vaccine

As of May 14, 2021, there are three COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States: (1) Pfizer-BioNTech (Pfizer), (2) Moderna, and (3) Johnson & Johnson/Janssen. All three vaccines have been authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA),¹³ meaning that the FDA concluded they were safe and effective based on large-scale clinical trials.¹⁴ The Pfizer vaccine requires two shots separated by three weeks. The Moderna vaccine requires two shots separated by four weeks. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires only a single dose.¹⁵

⁷ Office of Gov. Brian P. Kemp, *Kemp: Public Health Emergency in Georgia Effective March 14, 2020* (Mar. 16, 2020), <https://gov.georgia.gov/press-releases/2020-03-16/kemp-public-health-emergency-georgia-effective-march-14-2020>.

⁸ State of Ga., Executive Order, *Renewal of Public Health State of Emergency* (Mar. 31, 2021), <https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2021-executive-orders>.

⁹ Greg Bluestein, *Kemp details Georgia's statewide shelter in place order*, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Apr. 2, 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/blog/politics/kemp-details-georgia-shelter-place-order/hc3ETUjzBedtWW1LoJHTIP/>.

¹⁰ Greg Bluestein, *Kemp to lift statewide shelter-in-place for most Georgians on Friday*, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Apr. 30, 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/blog/politics/breaking-kemp-lift-statewide-shelter-place-for-most-georgians-friday/JdXpKK1srCbzIPZc2y3XuJ/>.

¹¹ Ga. Dep't of Ec. Dev., *Statewide Executive Order: Guidelines for Businesses* (2021), <https://www.georgia.org/covid19bizguide>.

¹² Office of Gov. Kay Ivey, *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) News & Resources: Public Health Information* (Mar. 22, 2021), <https://governor.alabama.gov/newsroom/covid-19/>.

¹³ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *Different COVID-19 Vaccines* (May 14, 2021), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html>.

¹⁴ According to the FDA, clinical trials are “voluntary research studies conducted in people and designed to answer specific questions about the safety or effectiveness of drugs or vaccines.” FDA, *Clinical Trials: What Patients Need to Know* (Mar. 28, 2021), <https://www.fda.gov/patients/clinical-trials-what-patients-need-know>.

¹⁵ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in US* (Mar. 3, 2021), <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>.

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The vaccines teach the immune system how to recognize and fight off the virus that causes COVID-19, in order to prevent vaccinated people from getting sick. Vaccines are not used to treat people who are currently infected with COVID-19. Until the majority of people have been vaccinated against COVID-19, we should wear masks, practice social distancing, and wash our hands often.

We recognize the history of racism in the United States healthcare system. Harmful experiments have been performed on Black, Indigenous, and other people of color throughout the country's history. We condemn the medical abuse and neglect of people of color, poor people, and LGBTQ+ people, and we know that abuse continues into the present.

However, there is a lot of evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe, and that widespread vaccination is key to ending this pandemic. All three COVID-19 vaccines were tested through extensive clinical trials. The National Medical Association reports that 10% of the people enrolled in the clinical trials for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were Black. The safety and effectiveness of the vaccines were consistent for people of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities who participated in the trials.¹⁶ The Johnson & Johnson vaccine trial also included a diverse population; 13% of the study participants were Black.¹⁷ Many leaders have publicly received the vaccine, including President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.¹⁸

We understand that people of color and people in prisons and jails have valid reasons to mistrust the health care that is available to them. When you have the opportunity to get vaccinated, it is your decision to receive or refuse the vaccine based on what you learn about it. We have enclosed information that addresses some common questions and concerns about the vaccine. Also, please find below some recommended resources, in case you would like to continue researching on your own.

Please note, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) temporarily stopped use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine for about 10 days in April 2021 while they investigated fifteen cases of serious blood clots (out of nearly 8 million people who received the vaccine). Because this possible side effect is extremely rare, and because COVID-19 is very dangerous, medical experts recommended continuing to give the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. Please see the enclosed COVID-19 vaccine guide to learn more.

¹⁶ The National Medical Association, *Advisory Statement on Federal Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization Approval for Pfizer and Moderna Vaccine* (Dec. 21, 2020), <https://www.nmanet.org/news/544970/NMA-COVID-19-Task-Force-on-Vaccines-and-Therapeutics.htm>.

¹⁷ Johnson & Johnson, *Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine Authorized by U.S. FDA For Emergency Use – First Single-Shot Vaccine in Fight Against Global Pandemic* (Feb. 27, 2021), <https://www.jnj.com/johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine-authorized-by-u-s-fda-for-emergency-use-first-single-shot-vaccine-in-fight-against-global-pandemic>.

¹⁸ Gabrielle Sanchez and Charlotte Walsh, *All the Celebrities Who Have Received the COVID-19 Vaccine*, Vulture, Feb. 3, 2021, <https://www.vulture.com/2021/02/celebrities-who-got-the-covid-19-vaccine.html>.

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D. How to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

We have received countless reports from jails and prisons in Georgia and Alabama about dangerous conditions that increase the risk of incarcerated people contracting COVID-19. Although facilities have a duty to keep you safe, we are sharing this information about how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 so that you can use it to advocate for yourself if needed. We know that some of these recommendations may be difficult to follow in jails and prisons, but if you can, we encourage you to consider:

- (1) **Wearing a Mask:** As much as possible, consider wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth, especially if you will be within six feet of another person. The CDC advises four ways to ensure your mask works as best it can: 1) make sure your mask fits snugly against your face without gaps along the edges of the mask; 2) use a mask with two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric to keep respiratory droplets from getting in or out; (3) ensure that the mask completely covers your nose and mouth; and (4) have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask, if possible.
- (2) **Requesting Necessary Supplies:** Request supplies such as face masks, extra soap, chemicals to clean cells and common surfaces, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- (3) **Requesting Distance From Each Other:** Whenever possible, and especially when moving in groups, ask others to stay at a distance. Avoid sitting close to others whenever possible. Remember that the CDC is recommending everyone stay at least six feet apart from one another.¹⁹
- (4) **Requesting Temperature Checks and a COVID-19 Test:** If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or are concerned you may have been exposed to the virus, request regular temperature checks with no-touch thermometers and request that staff follow proper protocols for safe temperature checks. You may also request a COVID-19 test.
- (5) **Learning About Rules Regarding Co-Pays and Communication:** The Georgia and Alabama Departments of Corrections both report that they have put new protocols in place to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. Please review the enclosed documents for details about what the Departments report they are doing in response to the pandemic. If a facility is not taking appropriate steps to keep you safe and healthy – and if the facility has a grievance process – consider grieving your concerns and appealing any responses you receive.

¹⁹ Ctrs. for Disease Control & Prevention, *Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities* (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html>.

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- (6) **Getting Vaccinated:** You can protect yourself and the people around you by getting vaccinated if the vaccine is offered to you. If you want the vaccine, you may ask for it and have loved ones contact the facility on your behalf to ask as well. There is still very little public information about how and when the vaccines will be available in prisons and jails. Please see the enclosed vaccine guide for the information that is currently available about distribution in correctional facilities in Georgia and Alabama.

E. Enclosed Resources

- (1) A guide from the CDC titled, “What You Need to Know about COVID-19 if You are Incarcerated/Detained.” This handout provides crucial information about how COVID-19 spreads and what you can do to reduce your risk of exposure. **Please note:** the CDC states that quarantine and medical isolation are “not to punish you.” While quarantine and medical isolation are effective strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19, we know that prisons and jails sometimes inappropriately use quarantine and medical isolation as forms of punishment.
- (2) A guide about the COVID-19 vaccine from AMEND, an organization at the University of California San Francisco that works to transform correctional culture inside prisons and jails and reduce the harmful health effects of those environments. With AMEMD’s permission, the Southern Center for Human Rights adapted this handout to include information about vaccine distribution in Georgia and Alabama.
- (3) Summaries of the GDC’s and the ADOC’s responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Please note:** these summaries were either prepared by the Departments themselves or were copied directly from their websites. We understand that the Departments of Corrections in both states are not taking all the precautions listed.

F. More Information

For more information about COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccine in Georgia and Alabama, you may contact the public health departments of both states using this information:

- Georgia State Health Department: 2 Peachtree Street NW, 15th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30303; 404-657-2700; <https://dph.georgia.gov/>
- Georgia COVID-19 Hotline: 844-442-2581
- Georgia COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline: 888-357-0169
- Alabama Department of Public Health: The RSA Tower, 201 Monroe Street, Montgomery, AL 36104; 1-800-252-1818; <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/index.html>
- Alabama COVID-19 Hotline: 1-800-270-7268
- Alabama COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline: 1-855-566-5333

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Thank you, and please stay safe.

Sincerely,



Atteeyah Hollie
Managing Attorney

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

The following organizations support your right to the enclosed COVID-19 information.

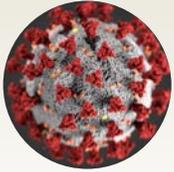


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What You Need to Know about COVID-19 if You are Incarcerated/Detained

COVID-19



- COVID-19 is an illness caused by a new virus (SARS-CoV-2) that can spread from person to person and has spread across the world.
- Many people who have COVID-19 do not feel sick.
- For those who do feel sick, some signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include:
 - » Fever/chills
 - » Cough
 - » Feeling tired
 - » Having a hard time breathing
 - » Pain in the head or body
 - » Loss of taste or smell
 - » Sore throat
 - » Stuffy or runny nose
 - » Nausea/vomiting
 - » Diarrhea

How COVID-19 Spreads



- The virus spreads through droplets in the breath (“respiratory droplets”) when a person with COVID-19 breathes, coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings within about 6 feet (two arm lengths) of other people.
 - » Respiratory droplets containing the virus can land in the mouth, nose, or eyes of people who are close by.
 - » Sometimes, droplets may stay in the air for minutes to hours and infect someone more than 6 feet away.
- People may also be able to get the virus by touching something with the virus on it, then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

People at Risk For COVID-19



- Anyone can get infected.
- Older adults and people with certain medical problems tend to get sicker with COVID-19. Some of these medical problems include:
 - » Cancer
 - » Chronic kidney disease
 - » Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
 - » Sickle cell disease
 - » Heart problems
 - » Obesity
 - » Smoking
 - » Type 2 diabetes mellitus



**U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services**
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

What You Can Do to Reduce Exposure

- Try to stay at least 6 feet (two arm lengths) from others, especially people from a different housing unit. For example, try to stay at least 6 feet apart from others at mealtimes or when you use the bathroom.
- As much as possible, wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth, especially if you will be within 6 feet of another person.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose; after using the bathroom; before eating; before and after preparing food; and before taking medicine.
 - » If available, you can also use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol; cover your hands with sanitizer and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, and throw the tissue in a trash can.
- Avoid sharing eating utensils, dishes, and cups.
- If possible, go outside for your recreation time so you can more easily stay at least 6 feet apart from others.
- Try to sleep opposite, sleep head to foot when multiple beds are in a room. This gives you more space between your face and others around you.
- Inform visitors and volunteers before they travel to the facility that they should expect to be screened for COVID-19 (including a temperature check), and will be unable to enter the facility if they do not clear the screening process or if they decline screening.

If You Were Near Someone with COVID-19

- You may be tested for the virus with a swab in your nose, even if you don't feel sick.
- You may be sent to a quarantine area. This is so if you get sick, you can get medical care and so you don't get others sick. Quarantining is not to punish you or because you are in trouble. You may be quarantined alone or with others who were near someone with COVID-19 to protect you and others.

What to Do if You Feel Sick

- Tell a correctional officer or staff member if you feel sick.
- You may be sent to medical isolation. This is so you can get medical care and so you don't get others sick. Medical isolation is not to punish you.
- You may be tested for the virus with a swab in your nose.
 - » If you infected with the virus, you may be told to stay in the medical isolation area.
 - » If you aren't infected with the virus, you may be sent back to your normal housing unit.

If you have further questions or concerns

Your local or state health department is a great resource if you have questions or concerns.

Websites with More Information:

- COVID-19 Wear a Mask: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html
- COVID-19 in Correctional and Detention Facilities: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/
- To find our state health department name and phone number: www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html
- To find your local health department name and phone number: www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory

Information for People in Correctional Facilities: Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine

This publication was originally created by the Director of Health Education at AMEND at University of California San Francisco (UCSF), Leah Rorvig, MD, MS, the Director of Healthcare Quality at AMEND at UCSF, David Sears, MD, the Founder and Director of Amend at UCSF, Brie Williams, MD, MS and Internal Medicine Resident Physicians at UCSF, Zoe Kopp, MD and Ilana Garcia-Grossman, MD. This resource has been adapted by the Southern Center for Human Rights.

COVID-19 VACCINES: THE BASICS

- Vaccines teach the immune system how to recognize and fight off the virus that causes COVID-19, in order to prevent vaccinated people from getting sick. Vaccines are not used to treat people who are currently infected with COVID-19.
- There are currently three vaccines available in the United States, made by the drug companies Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines both have two shots that are given three weeks apart (Pfizer) or four weeks apart (Moderna). The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is one shot.
- All three vaccines are SAFE and HIGHLY EFFECTIVE at preventing serious illness from COVID-19.
- The vaccines have now been administered to tens of millions of people and have a strong record of safety.
- While the vaccines were developed in record time, the science has been in development for many years and they have gone through all of the same steps required of any vaccine to be approved for use.

SAFETY & EFFICACY

How effective are each of the three vaccines at preventing COVID-19?

- All three vaccines are highly effective at preventing serious illness due to COVID-19. Nearly 60,000 people were fully vaccinated in studies of the three vaccines and only one fully vaccinated person was hospitalized with COVID-19.
- So far, research shows that the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are more than 90% effective in preventing mild COVID-19 illness, while Johnson & Johnson is 66% effective. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was studied in locations where more contagious COVID-19 variants (“strains”) were circulating, so right now it is not possible to directly compare the effectiveness of the vaccines.
- Because all three vaccines are effective and limited in supply, doctors and public health experts recommend taking whichever vaccine is offered to you first.

Are the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines safe? Should I worry that they were developed so quickly?

- Both vaccines were found to be safe and effective in tens of thousands of adults (including Black and Latinx people) who participated in high quality research – the same research that any new vaccine or medicine must undergo before it is approved.
- Both vaccines were reviewed faster than normal. This is because so many people are getting sick and dying of COVID-19 that it is considered a national emergency.

What about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine's safety?

- Out of nearly 8 million people who have received that vaccine so far, fifteen people have been found to develop unusual blood clots within 5 to 24 days after getting the vaccine. These blood clots are very serious and have happened mostly in women between 18 and 50 years old. So far three people have died from them.
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) temporarily stopped use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine for about 10 days in April while they investigated these cases. Because this possible side effect is extremely rare, and because COVID-19 is very dangerous, medical experts recommended continuing to give the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.

How likely am I to get a blood clot due to the Johnson & Johnson vaccine?

- Experts estimate there is about 1 case of unusual blood clots for every 500,000 people who get the vaccine. For comparison, remember that COVID-19 is a very dangerous disease. For every 500,000 people who contract COVID-19, about 9,000 people will die.

SIDE EFFECTS & MEDICAL QUESTIONS

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

- The most common vaccine side effects are arm soreness, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever. These side effects are more common after the second dose of the vaccine (for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines) and – if they occur – should stop within 2 days.
- These symptoms are normal and they are a sign that your body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Among the millions of people who have received COVID-19 vaccines, a very small number of people have experienced severe allergic reactions. If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine or other substance, you should tell the health care professionals giving the vaccine so they can make sure that giving you the vaccine is safe. The CDC recommends all vaccine administrators observe patients for 15 minutes following the vaccination (or 30 minutes if they have a history of severe allergic reactions). The CDC also recommends that vaccination locations that anticipate vaccinating large numbers of people have adequate supplies available, including epinephrine, an emergency medication used to treat allergic reactions.

Can I get COVID-19 from the vaccines?

- No. Because of how the vaccines work, it is impossible to get COVID-19 from the vaccines. The vaccines also cannot make you test positive for COVID-19.
- Even if you have been vaccinated, if you have a cough, fever, or other symptoms, then there is a chance you could have COVID-19, and you should ask to speak to medical staff right away.

I have diabetes, high blood pressure, hepatitis C, and/or HIV. Is it safe to get the vaccine?

- Yes. It is safe for people with diabetes and high blood pressure to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. It is also safe for people with hepatitis C and HIV to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Only people who have had allergies to ingredients of the COVID-19 vaccine in the past should potentially not receive the vaccine – if this is the case for you, ask a doctor if possible.
- None of the vaccines contain eggs, gelatin, latex or any preservatives.

If I already had COVID-19, do I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

- When the COVID-19 vaccine is available at your facility, it should be offered to you even if you already had COVID-19.
- Research shows that COVID-19 vaccination is safe for people who have already had COVID-19.
- Right now, research shows that reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19 is very rare in the

first few months after you first get sick with COVID-19. This is why some health systems are first giving the vaccine to people who have not had COVID-19 until the vaccine supply is better.

- You should not get the vaccine if you are currently sick with COVID-19.

AFTER VACCINATION

Do I need to keep wearing a mask after I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Unfortunately, even people who have had the COVID-19 vaccine may be able to get infected, and although the vaccine protects them from getting seriously sick, they may spread COVID-19 to others. (Medical professionals do not think this is common but we need more information about this.) Until the majority of all people have been vaccinated against COVID-19, everyone needs to continue wearing masks, practicing physical distancing, and frequently washing their hands.

I got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. How do I know if I have one of these unusual blood clots related to the vaccine?

If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine within the last 28 days and have a bad headache, difficulty breathing, leg swelling, or abdominal pain, you could have an unusual blood clot related to the vaccine, and should contact a health care provider immediately. Keep in mind that these blood clots are extremely rare. Experts estimate there is about 1 case of unusual blood clots for every 500,000 people who get the vaccine.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES

I heard that some of the officers, health care staff, or the warden at my facility are refusing to get the vaccine. If they aren't getting it, why should I?

There are many reasons that people don't get the vaccine. These include a lack of knowledge about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine, a lack of understanding about COVID-19 itself, mistrust of the medical system, and more. We encourage you to learn as much as you can about the COVID-19 vaccine, and make your own decision based on facts, and regardless of what other people are doing.

Should I even bother getting this vaccine given all the mutant "variant forms" of COVID-19?

Yes. So far, research suggests that all three vaccines in the US continue to provide protection against the most common COVID-19 variants. The vaccines are very good at preventing people from getting seriously sick (meaning so sick that they have to be hospitalized) from COVID-19. Scientists are still studying the effect that COVID-19 variants have on how well the vaccine works.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine harm my fertility?

No. There is no evidence that the vaccine affects the fertility of men or women. There is also no evidence of infertility caused by the COVID-19 virus among the many millions of men and women who have recovered from COVID-19 infection.

The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are mRNA vaccines. Does that mean they change your DNA (also called your genetic code)?

- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines both use "messenger RNA" (also called mRNA) to teach the cells in your body to recognize the outside part of the virus that causes COVID-19. That way, if you are exposed to the virus, your immune system will stop it from making you sick.
- The COVID-19 vaccine **does not change your DNA**. mRNA is not the same as DNA, and it cannot combine with your DNA to change your genetic code.

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION IN GEORGIA AND ALABAMA

How is Georgia distributing the COVID-19 vaccine?

The first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine arrived in Georgia in mid-December. The Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH) prioritized vaccination of individuals who were most at risk of exposure and transmission, starting with healthcare workers, law enforcement (including corrections staff), fire personnel, first responders, residents and staff of long-term care facilities, individuals aged 65+ and their caregivers.¹ On March 25, every Georgian aged 16 and older became eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.² As of May 14, over 3 million Georgians have been fully vaccinated.³

How will people in Georgia prisons and jails have access to the COVID-19 vaccine?

Federal correctional institutions will receive the vaccine directly from the CDC. The state vaccination planning team will work with the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) to address their vaccination needs. If local counties and jails need support with distributing the vaccines, they can reach out to the Sheriff's Association.⁴ As of May 14, the GDC reports more than 21,901 people in its custody have received a vaccine.⁵ The GDC also reports they have protocols in place to administer additional vaccines as they continue to receive supplies. There is no additional public information about how Georgia plans to vaccinate more people in prisons and jails.

How is Alabama distributing the COVID-19 vaccine?

As of March 22, 2021, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) includes the following people in its initial phase of COVID-19 vaccine distribution: healthcare providers, nursing home residents, law enforcement officers, firefighters, people 55 and older, people aged 16 and older with high risk medical conditions, people with intellectual developmental disabilities, and additional groups of frontline critical workers, including correctional officers.⁶ As of May 14, over 1.2 million people have been fully vaccinated in Alabama.⁷

How will people in Alabama prisons and jails have access to the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Alabama Department of Public Health's distribution plan prioritizes everyone in congregate settings, including homeless shelters, group homes, and prisons and jails, in Phase 1b.⁸ On March 17, the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) received 4,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and began offering free vaccines for all ADOC staff shortly afterwards.⁹ On March 31, the ADOC began administering vaccines to all willing individuals incarcerated at Bullock Correctional Facility. Since then, the ADOC reports that it has continued offering vaccines to individuals incarcerated in at least 12 additional facilities, and has a plan to offer vaccines at every ADOC facility.¹⁰ As of May 7, the ADOC reports that a total of

¹ Ga. Dep't of Pub. Health, *COVID-19 Vaccines – Safe. Tested. Effective* (Mar. 8, 2021), available at <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>.

² Ga. Dep't of Pub. Health, *Georgia Expands COVID Vaccine Eligibility* (Mar. 24, 2021), available at <https://dph.georgia.gov/press-releases/2021-03-24/georgia-expands-covid-vaccine-eligibility>.

³ Ga. Dep't of Pub. Health, *Vaccine Distribution Dashboard* (May 14, 2021), available at <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/3d8eea39f5c1443db1743a4cb8948a9c>.

⁴ Ga. Dep't of Pub. Health, *Georgia Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan* (Mar. 4, 2021), available at <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>.

⁵ Ga. Dep't of Corr., *COVID Dashboard* (May 14, 2021), http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/content/CVD_Dashboard..

⁶ Ala. Dep't of Pub. Health, *COVID-19 Vaccine* (Mar. 4, 2021), available at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19vaccine/index.html>.

⁷ Ala. Dep't of Pub. Health, *Alabama's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Dashboard* (May. 14, 2021). available at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=d84846411471404c83313bfe7ab2a367>.

⁸ Ala. Dep't of Pub. Health, *Alabama COVID-19 Vaccination Allocation Plan* (Feb. 2, 2021), available at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19vaccine/assets/adph-covid19-vaccination-allocation-plan.pdf>.

⁹ Ala. Dep't of Corrections, *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19 Update* (Mar. 17, 2021), available at <http://www.doc.state.al.us/COVID19NewsFeed>.

¹⁰ Ala. Dep't of Corrections, *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19 Update* (Apr. 2 – May 11, 2021), available at <http://www.doc.state.al.us/COVID19NewsFeed>.

3,508 incarcerated individuals have received a vaccine.¹¹ The ADOC reports that vaccination is completely voluntary for staff and incarcerated people.¹²

MORE RESOURCES

You or loved ones can access more information about the COVID-19 vaccines on these trusted sites:

- <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>
- <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19/vaccine.html>

You or loved ones can also get more information by calling the following hotlines:

- Georgia COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline: (888) 357-0169
- Alabama COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline: 1-855-566-5333

REFERENCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: COVID-19 Vaccination
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- State of California COVID-19 Vaccine Information Center <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>
- UCSF COVID-19 Vaccine Information Hub <https://coronavirus.ucsf.edu/vaccines>
- Georgia Department of Public Health <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>
- Alabama Department of Public Health <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/index.html>

¹¹ Ala. Dep't of Corrections, *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19 Update* (May 11 2021), available at <http://www.doc.state.al.us/COVID19NewsFeed>.

¹² Ala. Dep't of Corrections, *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19 Update* (Mar. 30, 2021), available at <http://www.doc.state.al.us/COVID19NewsFeed>.

Georgia Department of Corrections Coronavirus (COVID - 19) Response

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) is responding with all available resources to help prevent/mitigate the potential introduction and spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) into our facilities. We continue to work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) to coordinate the appropriate response to this evolving situation, the GDC has implemented a phased approach to include activating GDC's Pandemic Emergency Response Team, planning and education, preparedness and response.

Phase One - Planning and Education: (Initial Activation)

Activated an interdisciplinary agency task force to evaluate GDC's Emergency Response Plan, Infection Control Plan and other areas that will be affected by COVID-19.

Education of staff and inmate population (to include ADA) regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) through the Office of the Governor, CDC, Department of Public Health. Information includes but is not limited to symptoms of COVID-19, prevention of COVID-19 hand-washing and sanitation protocols related to the virus.

Evaluated partner agency response to determine impact to GDC: Sheriffs, Dept of Community Supervision, Judicial Branch, Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Phase Two - Preparedness and Preventative Measures:

Inmate Movement:

The GDC suspended all non-essential offender movement across GDC facilities on March 11, 2020.

Tours and Visitation Restriction:

All prison tours are suspended until further notice.

All volunteer visits are suspended as of March 12, 2020 until further notice.

Visitation at GDC facilities will remain suspended through March 12, 2021.

Additional measures remain in place to accommodate the inmate population until visitation resumes:

- GDC has partnered with Securus Technologies and JPay to provide each offender with one FREE fifteen (15) minute call each week starting Saturday, March 14, 2020 and 2 FREE stamps each week starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020. The one free call and 2 free stamps per week will continue until further notice as we maintain safety efforts for our offenders, staff and visitors.
- Medical CoPay waived related flu and COVID-19 Symptoms

The GDC will be delaying all visitation, including attorney visitation, until after March 12, 2021. We do not have a definite date for when attorney visitation to resume at this time.

Programming and Details:

Programming is scheduled to begin, on a limited basis beginning July 1, 2020 and classes will be conducted following strict social distancing guidelines as recommended by the CDC.

Outside Details - suspended (unless emergency)

Staff Actions:

Screening and Sanitation: Enhanced Screening of all staff to include the requirement of staff to sign an attestation of no known illness questionnaire, and have temperature checks prior to entry into the facility. Further, Portal Sergeants are required to wear gloves and observe hand washing requirements and other sanitation measures as communicated. As an added measure, mats have been placed at all facilities for sanitizing shoe soles upon entry and exit.

Single-ply and two-ply sneeze/cough masks have been distributed to all staff.

Enhanced Screening of Contractors and vendors to include the requirement of staff to sign an Attestation of no known illness questionnaire and have temperature checks prior to entry into the facility.

TC Resident screening is being conducted in the same manner as all other GDC facilities.

Enhanced Facility Sanitation: Increased chemical orders statewide, availability of hand sanitizer and soap increased for staff at all GDC locations, increased sanitation rounds and required cleaning of high traffic areas and high touch areas, sanitation officer mandated not to be pulled for other assignments. Increased the availability of soap over and above normal issue for the inmate population as well. All facilities have received a chemical fogging treatment.

All staff onsite training suspended until further notice and will be reevaluated as the situation warrants. Staff may take online trainings at this time.

Staff Hiring: Staff recruitment and hiring will continue.

Staff Teleworking: Staff designated as non-essential may telework.

Optimizing use of Telecourt, Telemedicine and Telepsychiatry.

Phase Three - Implementation and Response:

Actions for Inmate Population:

Enhanced Facility Sanitation: Increased chemical orders statewide, availability of hand sanitizer and soap increased for staff at all GDC locations, increased sanitation rounds and required cleaning of high traffic areas and high touch areas, sanitation officer mandated not to be pulled for other assignments. Sneeze/cough masks distributed to each offender.

Modified Movement Plan

The GDC suspended all non-essential offender movement across GDC facilities on March 11, 2020. As we begin transitioning into a modified movement process within our system, a strategic plan has been developed to ensure priority is placed on taking precautionary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and offenders.

Beginning May 18, 2020, all points of offender entry into our system will be Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison (GDCP) for male offenders and Lee Arrendale State Prison (LASP) for female offenders. All new arrivals (intakes) and court return offenders will be administered a COVID-19 test. Offenders who are symptomatic will be placed in a designated medical isolation unit while awaiting test results. Non-symptomatic offenders will be placed in 14-day security quarantine while awaiting test results. Those offenders receiving negative test results will resume the normal diagnostic process.

SUMMARY OF ADOC RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

This document summarizes information from the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) about steps the ADOC reports it is taking in response to the global pandemic. On March 17, 2020, the ADOC issued the following specific protocols in response to COVID-19:¹

- Suspended visitation, passes, tours, and volunteer entry into all facilities statewide for 30 days;
 - **Note:** On April 16, 2020, this suspension was extended for 30 additional days, or until such time as ADOC deems it safe to resume;²
- Provided one free phone call per week (up to 15 minutes) and extended hours of availability for phone calls for all incarcerated people;
 - **Note:** On November 6, 2020, the ADOC announced that video connect services (video visitation) and Inbound eMessaging (an email service) are now available for family and friends of incarcerated individuals;³
- Suspended all medical co-pays (including for medical services not directly related to COVID-19) for 60 days;
- Suspended all non-emergency community physician appointments and procedures for 30 days.
 - **Note:** Beginning May 13, 2020, ADOC resumed necessary community medical appointments. All incarcerated people referred to outside medical providers will be tested for COVID-19 upon the medical provider's or the facility's request. All incarcerated people transferred for offsite medical care, as well as the ADOC staff transporting them, will adhere to third-party medical providers' COVID-19 safety protocols;⁴
- Agreed to work with local oncologists to ensure that those requiring chemotherapy continue to receive treatment;
- Suspended transfers of incarcerated people between facilities, though some security and healthcare exceptions may be granted;
- Closed vocational classes offered through J.F. Ingram State Technical College from March 17-April 3, 2020;
- Suspended in-person legal visits for 30 days. Requests by counsel for in-person meetings due to urgent matters will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Confidential legal phone calls will be offered as an alternative;
- Suspended all Work-Release and Work-Center Programs for 30 days. No offsite assignments will be permitted;
- Instituted temperature checks for all employees entering facilities. If an employee's temperature is greater than 100.4 degrees, the employee will be restricted from entering the facility that day. All employees will have a temperature screening at the beginning of each shift;
- Provided that, by March 18, 2020, any staff able to perform job functions remotely will do so, although ADOC will maintain critical services;

¹ See Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19* (Mar. 17, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19News>.

² See Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19* (Apr. 16, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19NewsFeed>.

³ See Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19* (November 6, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19NewsFeed>.

⁴ See Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19* (May 13, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19NewsFeed>.

- Provided that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)-approved signage detailing preventative recommendations, signs, and symptoms of COVID-19 will be posted throughout ADOC facilities;
- Provided that all ADOC facilities will be sanitized with CDC-recommended cleaning supplies; and
- Provided that information on preventative measures will be communicated proactively with incarcerated people via the newsletter and facility bulletin boards.

Since issuing these initial protocols, the ADOC reports it is taking the following additional steps:⁵

Quarantine and Testing

- The ADOC is developing measures to provide free COVID-19 tests to ADOC staff and contracted staff. Additionally, they report testing all incarcerated individuals in facilities with large numbers of medically vulnerable people.⁶
- An incarcerated person will be tested for COVID-19 if a physician's order for a test is approved by the ADPH;
- The ADOC has established quarantine/isolation areas in each facility for incarcerated people showing symptoms of, and being tested for, COVID-19.

Intake

- Beginning March 20, 2020, for 30 days, a moratorium was placed on intakes from county jails, with one exception: the ADOC continued to receive individuals with severe medical or mental health conditions. However, additional screenings were implemented at the facility level to ensure that people were not symptomatic prior to entering the ADOC;
- Beginning the week of April 27, 2020, a multi-stage pilot program was implemented to re-start the intake process;⁷
 - During stage one, the ADOC announced that they were accepting approximately 100 male and 20 female prisoner cohorts over a two-day period, all of whom were to be quarantined for a mandatory 14-day period. The ADOC stated that they would not accept new intakes who were symptomatic of COVID-19, intakes from any jail with an incarcerated person who had tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or any facility that was under quarantine due to a COVID-19 outbreak. The ADOC reportedly quarantined men on the Draper campus and women in a facility next to Tutwiler.
 - During the week of May 11, 2020, a second cohort of 21 female prisoners and 100 male prisoners from county jails were received at the Tutwiler Quarantine Intake Facility and the Draper Quarantine Intake Facility, respectively.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Plants at Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women and Holman Correctional Facility have been modified to produce face masks. On April 29, 2020, plants at Tutwiler began producing gowns;
- By April 24, 2020, every incarcerated person will have received two masks, and by May 11, 2020, all incarcerated people will have received four masks;
- While incarcerated people are asked to sign a form upon receipt of masks, no person will be denied masks regardless of whether they sign the form;
- All those who work within the facilities are required to wear their face masks at all times to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The ADOC continues to encourage staff to practice social distancing and good hygiene in accordance with CDC recommendations;

⁵ Ala. Dep't of Corr., *COVID-19 Update* (Mar. 19-20, 2020; Apr. 1, 2020; Apr. 16, 2020; Apr. 17, 2020; Apr. 28, 2020; May 1, 2020; May 4, 2020; May 6, 2020; May 11, 2020; May 18, 2020; May 20, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19News>.

⁶ See Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19* (December 29, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19NewsFeed>.

- The ADOC continues to acquire face masks, face shields, gloves, gowns, and other personal protective equipment for healthcare staff who work in infirmaries;
- The ADOC has distributed additional supplies of hand sanitizer to all facilities and placed them in key locations, including points of entry and staffing posts;
- The ADOC is providing additional hygiene products, including bar soap and liquid anti-bacterial soap, to incarcerated people as needed.

Sanitation

- The ADOC has secured \$10 million of allocated federal Coronavirus funds (CARES ACT), to purchase new sanitation and virus-mitigation equipment;
- Sentry Secure Hand Sanitizer Dispensers have been placed throughout ADOC facilities;
- Airofog AR9 Thermal Foggers are in use to decontaminate areas following exposure;
- Victory Innovations Hand-held Backpack Sprayers are used to decontaminate frequently used areas;
- Three transport buses with built-in decontamination systems have been ordered and one is now in use at Kilby Correctional Facility.⁸

Screening

- The ADOC is developing verbal screening measures recommended by the CDC for those entering ADOC facilities;
- Beginning the week of May 11, 2020, the ADOC launched a new initiative to install infrared cameras across its facilities to detect individuals attempting to enter or exit while running a temperature greater than 100 degrees. If the system detects such a temperature, the individual in question will undergo a second screening by a staff member to determine if he or she is running a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees.
- Only critical outside contractors will be permitted in ADOC facilities to conduct vital repairs and maintenance. These individuals must follow screening protocols.

Staffing

- The ADOC has established a call-in program for employees in order to monitor staffing levels at each facility.

Education

- An ADOC-specific educational handout will be distributed to incarcerated people throughout the correctional system.

Laundry, Recreation & Programming

- All laundry fees at community-based facilities have been waived. All charges since March 13, 2020 will be credited back;
- Yard time and snack line services will be extended for incarcerated people at all facilities;
- Formal programming and volunteer entry is suspended for the Alabama Prison Arts & Education Project (APAEP) through Auburn University. However, APAEP has been developing weekly educational newsletters for distribution to students currently enrolled in the program, students formerly enrolled in the program, and people housed in ADOC's mental health units.

This document was prepared by the Southern Center for Human Rights, based on information the ADOC has posted its website. Please note: we anticipate that many of these protocols will change as the pandemic continues. For instance, although some of these protocols have technically expired, they may, in practice, be extended past the dates indicated here.

⁸ See Ala. Dep't of Corr., *ADOC Public Announcement: COVID-19* (November 16, 2020), <http://www.doc.alabama.gov/COVID19NewsFeed>.