



New protocols to meet new challenges in Texas

Tarrant County Sheriff's Office has put protocols in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within the jail facilities. Under the leadership of Sheriff Bill E. Waybourn and efforts of the command staff, the protocols are working, and the cases of this illness remain low.

Since Tarrant County initiated protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in March, there has been an abundance of caution taken in the jail facilities to prevent the spread of the illness. The protocols included mandatory multiple daily temperature checks of contract employees, jail staff and inmates. The wearing of face masks by anyone entering the jail facilities, including staff is required.

Tarrant County Sheriff's Office has five housing facilities and the current jail population around 4000 inmates. Many of the COVID protocols were etched out prior to the first case being recorded in Tarrant County and were quickly implemented when the illness arrived. Upon the first positive COVID case, TCSO began working with nearby counties to hold inmates that may otherwise have

been transferred to keep prisoner movement to and from other facilities minimized. On a case by case basis, the Warrants, Transportation and Patrol Divisions began to scrutinize the need for arrests of minor misdemeanor offenders to lower the possibility of bringing infected arrestees into the facility. Patrol increased the

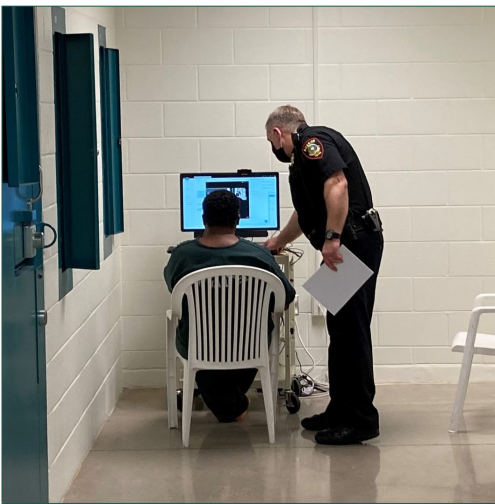


number and type of calls that could be taken by phone to not put deputies or the public at unnecessary risk of transmitting the illness. When arrests occurred, medical screenings were completed by John Peter Smith Hospital (JPS) staff on each prisoner prior to them being brought into the jail booking area. Temperatures were taken, medical questions related to the illness were asked and a mask was given to the prisoner to be worn will in the facility. These protocols, along with other safeguards inside the jail, are still being practiced.



During the booking process a more thorough medical screening is completed, and the prisoners are kept out general population for as long as possible to prevent spread from asymptomatic arrestees. If a COVID positive prisoner is brought to TCSO they are immediately isolated and medically monitored until they can be safely moved. Cleaning and sanitizing of the area is performed and done on an on-going basis to keep all areas within

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the secured facility COVID free. Inmates who have the illness are housed separately from general population and monitored by JPS. They are transported to JPS Hospital if the illness becomes serious. Since March, several inmates have been admitted to the hospital and one passed away due to COVID and other underlying health conditions. There have been 165 inmates recover from COVID since the pandemic began.

Other safeguards implemented since March is the use of an inmate body scan machine, visitation and many extra-curricular programs have been suspended. Prisoner movement within the facility has been minimized and done on a rotating basis with fewer number of inmates out at a time. Video conferences with attorneys and video court proceedings have been instituted. Most courts have closed or are doing very limited in-person business since the pandemic began.

Recently, TCSO had the opportunity to have all staff and inmates tested for COVID-19. We were concerned about possible results, as we would be testing over 4400 people. Prior to the tests being conducted we were warned that on average, in the size and type of environment being tested, we could expect 3.5% positive results. That would have meant about 155 people testing positive for COVID inside our facilities. After the test results returned we had .6% that tested positive among inmates and jail staff. Out of 4444 tests 19 inmates and 7 jail staff tested positive for the illness.

Currently, there are only 17 active inmate cases and 26 jail staff cases of COVID in Tarrant County Jail. All of the ill individuals are quarantined and receiving medical care. We believe that the adherence to protocols and the cleanliness of our facilities has curtailed the spread of active COVID-19 cases and has kept us ahead of the curve. The safety and the well-being of our team-members and the inmates we are housing will remain a top priority, and we must all work together to get through this.