



Announcements and Updates from the Office

INSIDE

From the Ombudsman

Spring Message from Lauren "Laurie" Andersen, the director/ombudsman

Key Accomplishments

A synopsis of the key accomplishments of the Office

About the Office / Contacting Us

Learn about the Office and ways to connect.



FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

By Lauren "Laurie" Andersen, MM, RN, CEN, CCRN

Spring is here - the signs are all around us! One day at a time to more sunshine, longer days, and warmer weather. Springtime is a time for new hope - a renewal of sorts.

It has been two long years of COVID-19 and its impact on everything in our lives. Masks over our faces, isolation from others, restrictions on our activities, and the fear/reality of illness all around us. You have been both brave and tough while facing all of the challenges of COVID-19 and its damage within the walls of Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) facilities. I am grateful to each of you for your participation in standing up to COVID-19 and for your open minds in accommodating social distancing, cleaning, masking, testing, vaccines, and quarantining. Your participation and your help matter, and it makes a difference. You have helped yourself stay healthy and you have helped others stay healthy too. Thank you.

This Office wants to help to allow DOC to return to more routine corrections operations. We will continue to follow CDC and DPH guidelines and scientific information to motivate how we move forward in the months to come. I look forward to working with you!

[Continued on next page]

FROM THE OMBUDSMAN - CONTINUED

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce you to Rob Charpentier, Regional Clinical Administrator for the Office. Rob will be helping the Office by being present at different DOC facilities at times to check in on the progress against COVID-19. He and I have had the pleasure of visiting all the DOC facilities and getting caught up on how each facility is doing after the recent Omicron COVID-19 surge. Rob and I look forward to working with all of you in each DOC facility to listen to and understand your COVID-19 concerns. We will continue to visit your facilities regularly to check in with all inmates and DOC staff on how COVID-19 is resolving.

Laurie Andersen

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Office would like to share with you a few items that have already been reviewed, including:

- ✓ **Concerns about Inmate Access to the Office of the Ombudsman:** We are happy to see that the 1-833-662-8410 number has been activated to allow access to the Office for all inmates. The number is both free to call and is confidential. You can call and leave your COVID-19 concerns or questions on the answering machine. You can either leave your name and DOC facility if you want the Office to get in touch with you or just your concern or question without any information if you prefer to remain anonymous. In your voicemail, please let us know if you are okay with us using your name when we follow up with the DOC facility.
- ✓ **Social Distancing:** The standard for “social distancing” has been changed from six feet to three feet. This change allows more people to attend essential programming and classes. This is hopefully the first step to returning to “normal” crowd capacity in the months to come.
- ✓ **DOC Facilities Emerge from Omicron Surge:** The Office is happy to note that all of the DOC facilities have resolved the COVID-19 cases from the last variant, Omicron. We look forward to (and hope for) a stable number of COVID-19 cases this spring.
- ✓ **Communication:** The Office is working on this every day! We are hoping to be able to email you a response when you call in your concern in the future.

[Continued on next page]

ABOUT THE OFFICE



Office of the Ombudsman

Independent COVID-19 Oversight to
MA Department of Correction

The independently operated Office of the Ombudsman, run by Lauren M. Andersen, MM, RN, CEN, CCRN, Director/Ombudsman, monitors and reports on the Massachusetts Department of Correction’s efforts to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in the DOC’s facilities across Massachusetts.

CONTACTING US



Website: <https://covidombudsman-madoc.org>

Inquiries can be submitted anonymously if desired. If you provide your contact information when filling out the form, the Office will use its best efforts to respond within 2 business days.

We look forward to addressing your COVID-19 related questions, concerns, and inquiries.

Free Call: 1-833-662-8410

You may also submit your COVID-19 inquiry or concern via our telephone number. COVID-19 related inquiries may be left anonymously. If you would like a response from the Office, then please leave your contact information as instructed on the voicemail.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CONTINUED

- ✓ Common concerns for the past three months:
 1. **Quarantine Issues:** COVID-19 caused most DOC facilities to have to quarantine units which prevented inmates from leaving their cells or their areas. The CDC standard for corrections facilities is 10 days of quarantine.
 2. **Double Bunking:** The DOC facilities have many different types of housing. It is not a social distancing issue for an inmate to have roommates in their cell as roommates are together in the room all the time and are not being reintroduced to other new people.
 3. **COVID-19 Testing:** The testing is voluntary but does prevent more widespread infection if COVID-19 is detected early. The Office appreciates your willingness to test.
 4. **Vaccines & Boosters:** The HSA from Wellpath at each DOC facility is offering vaccines and boosters for COVID-19 weekly. Please fill out a sick slip if you would like to get a COVID-19 vaccine.
 5. **Cleaning and Cleaning Supplies:** The Office has encouraged all DOC facilities to have supplies for the inmates to use to clean the phones, their areas, and the bathrooms. We have also verified hand sanitizer availability in all public areas.
 6. **Out-of-Cell Time:** The Office collaborated with DOC leadership to return all facilities to normal operations which will increase unit out-of-cell time.

The Office of the Ombudsman encourages all inmates to provide their feedback by phone at 1-833-662-8410 and to share how the COVID-19 experience has impacted their time as inmates. The Office understands that the past two years have been complicated with COVID-19 infection, isolation, quarantine, masking, and social distancing. We are looking for your thoughts on the experience.