

DOC COVID-19 Response Timeline

Updated October 22, 2021

The below is an outline of significant events related to the COVID-19 pandemic and actions taken by the Department in order to mitigate the spread of the disease and keep the people that live and work its facilities safe. This timeline will be updated on a weekly basis, as appropriate, as long as the public health state of emergency remains in effect.

- March 1 – 7, 2020
 - DOC rolls out COVID-19 sanitation training for certain staff members and people in custody.
 - DOC begins providing staff, visitors, and people in custody with information on COVID-19 and guidance on preventing the spread of this illness.

- March 8 – 14
 - First COVID-19 related death of a DOC staff member occurs .
 - DOC and Correctional Health Services (CHS) provide updates on COVID-19 preparedness to BOC and relevant City Council committee chairs.
 - DOC activates its protocol regarding provision of N95 masks to staff assigned to court and transportation commands .
 - Social distancing protocols for certain congregate spaces implemented in all DOC facilities and commands .
 - CHS begins COVID-19 testing.
 - A COVID-like symptom screening process is implemented for all in-person visits to people in custody.

- March 15 – 21
 - Mayor de Blasio signs Executive Order No. 100, exempting DOC from various BOC Minimum Standards requiring the provision of certain congregate services and in-person visitation.
 - DOC implements telework operations for all non-essential employees.
 - DOC begins making daily notifications to BOC of information related to COVID-19.
 - CHS begins COVID-19 screening for all clinical encounters.
 - DOC and CHS implement a COVID-like symptom screening for all persons entering jail facilities.
 - DOC begins releasing sentenced people in custody into a community release program, per the Commissioner's authority outlined in state law.
 - DOC orders masks be worn in close contact areas.

- March 22 – 28
 - Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC) is reopened to house people in custody who are symptomatic and/or COVID-confirmed.
 - DOC modifies its new admission housing process and designates Manhattan Detention Center as the primary intake facility for male asymptomatic individuals entering custody;

housing units for newly admitted females are designated for the same purpose at the Rose M. Singer Center (RSMC).

- DOC begins distributing the DOC End of the Day Report Newsletter, which includes data on the spread of COVID-19 among DOC staff and people in custody, information regarding the Department's response to COVID-19, and general COVID-19 information, to all DOC staff, uniform union leadership, and members of the Board of Correction.
 - CHS implements a COVID-like symptom screening for patients upon discharge.
 - DOC launches a newly developed at-home televisit program to support connections between people in custody and their loved ones.
- March 29 – April 4
 - In accordance with newly announced public health guidelines by the City, DOC advises staff that they and individuals in custody are required to wear face masks at all times and provides mask distribution information.
 - CHS establishes a dedicated phone line to provide additional medical support to individuals in asymptomatic exposed housing.
- April 5 – 11
 - First death of a person in custody presumed to be related to COVID-19.
 - Northwell Health-Go First Responder hotline is active for staff to schedule COVID-19 testing free of charge.
 - Burials on Hart Island transition to external workers.
 - CHS establishes a dedicated mental health phone line to further support individuals in symptomatic and COVID-19 positive housing from their unit.
- April 12 – 18
 - DOC implements enhanced social distancing guidelines in its facilities and posts information in every housing area, including guidance that encourages limits to the number of people in common areas like dayrooms.
- April 19 – 25
 - DOC Chaplain begins to provide blessings over burials on all burial days on Hart Island
 - Painting of social distancing cues is completed in all day rooms and intakes.
 - PPE distribution locations are reiterated and supplies are added to all housing units for ease of access for staff and people in custody.
- April 26 – May 2
 - COVID-19 testing begins for all new admissions to RSMC.
- May 3 – May 9
 - COVID-19 testing begins for all new admissions to all Department facilities.
 - Nunez Monitor provides letter to federal judge overseeing Nunez case with updates on DOC and CHS efforts to contain COVID-19 within the City's jails.
- May 26 – 30
 - Free COVID-19 antibody testing is made available to DOC and CHS staff in the borough facilities and on Rikers Island.

- June 28 – July 4
 - As the number of people in custody with COVID-like symptoms continues to steadily decrease, EMTC is closed.
- July 5 – 11
 - DOC begins providing people in custody with a weekly informational flyer related to COVID-19.
- October 4 – 10
 - DOC pilots a return to barbershop services in the NIC Annex. Haircuts are afforded within the housing unit to avoid unnecessary movement across the facility.
- October 18 – 24
 - DOC resumes the provision of congregational religious services in a modified manner and at reduced capacity, ensuring that services can be delivered safely and with appropriate sanitization, PPE, and social distancing protocols in place.
 - DOC resumes the provision of barbershop and beautician services in a modified manner, ensuring that services can be delivered safely and with appropriate sanitization, PPE, and social distancing protocols in place. Haircuts are afforded within the housing unit to avoid unnecessary movement across the facility.
- November 17 – 21
 - The Department partners with one of the City's mobile testing vendors to provide all Department and CHS staff five consecutive days of access to free COVID-19 testing at a location on Rikers Island.
 - Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC) is reopened to separately house all male new admissions who are deemed asymptomatic of COVID-19. Male new admissions will remain at EMTC for at least 14 days prior to being rehoused in other facilities. Male new admissions who are symptomatic of COVID-19 continue to be housed at West Facility where they undergo new admission processing and receive appropriate medical care.
- November 22 – 28
 - In an abundance of caution due to the rising rate of COVID-19 positivity in New York City, the Department pauses the provision of modified congregational religious services and modified barbershop services.
- November 29 – December 5
 - The Department extends free on-site COVID-19 testing at a location on Rikers Island to make testing available weekly, every Wednesday and Thursday. Staff are encouraged to get tested and retested frequently, regardless of symptoms or whether they recently tested negative.
- December 6 – 12
 - The Department extends free on-site COVID-19 testing on Rikers Island to make testing available weekly on Tuesdays, in addition to Wednesdays and Thursdays, through the end of December. Staff are encouraged to get tested and retested frequently, regardless of symptoms or whether they recently tested negative.

- December 13 – 19
 - The Department continues to expand free on-site COVID-19 testing on Rikers Island. Staff are encouraged to get tested and retested frequently, regardless of symptoms or whether they recently tested negative.
- December 27, 2020 – January 2, 2021
 - CHS begins vaccinating eligible CHS health care staff against COVID-19
- January 3 – January 9
 - CHS begins vaccinating high-risk people in custody against COVID-19
- January 10 – 16
 - New York State announces that additional frontline employees are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 1B of vaccine distribution, including staff at the NYC Department of Correction. In partnership with CHS, the Department begins providing vaccines to staff whose primary assignment is patient-facing in the jails, including CDU and the Infirmarys.
- January 17 – 23
 - In collaboration with CHS, the Department expands eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine to all staff, both uniform and non-uniform. To educate staff about the vaccine and provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions of medical professionals and public health advisors, the Department hosts Virtual Vaccine Town Halls.
- January 24 – 30
 - The Department continues to provide staff with regular access to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. As of January 24th, a vendor assumes responsibility from CHS for all DOC staff vaccinations. The location for the on-site vaccination operation moves to a larger location in GMDC, and the hours of operation expand.
- February 7 – 13
 - In addition to continuing to provide staff with regular access to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations at GMDC, the Department opens a temporary vaccination satellite location at the Vernon C. Bain Center. The Department also hosts a family vaccination day on Rikers Island for individuals who are who are currently eligible for vaccination under New York State guidelines and are a family member of an active Department staff member.
- March 8 – 13
 - In accordance with current health guidelines, the Department began issuing cloth masks in addition to surgical masks to persons in custody and staff. Persons in custody and staff are strongly encouraged to layer their cloth mask over their surgical mask for enhanced protection against COVID-19.
- March 14 - 20
 - The City of New York holds an official day of remembrance for the lives lost to COVID-19.
- March 28 – April 3

- In accordance with new guidelines issued by the State, as well as expanded eligibility requirements, CHS staff can now offer the COVID-19 vaccine to all incarcerated individuals.
- April 11 – 17
 - The Department of Education (DOE) resumes instruction for people in custody via video-conferencing at East River Academy sites, located in RNDC and RMSC.
- May 2 – 8
 - Non-essential municipal workers in New York City return to in-person working.
- May 9 – 15
 - DOC resumes gravesite visits to Hart Island in a limited capacity and modified manner, ensuring that visits can be conducted safely with appropriate COVID-19 precautions in place.
- May 16 – 22
 - As the number of people in custody with COVID-like symptoms continues to steadily decrease, EMTC is closed. All newly admitted asymptomatic male detainees are housed in OBCC.
- June 6 – 12
 - DOC begins to resume the provision of certain minimum services in a modified manner, ensuring that services can be delivered safely and with appropriate sanitization, PPE, and social distancing protocols in place.
- June 20 – 26
 - DOC resumes in-person visits on June 25th on a modified visit schedule and encourages pre-registration online. Televisits continue to be offered on the weekends. Appropriate sanitization, PPE and social distancing protocols are in place to resume in-person visits safely.
- July 4 – 10
 - in-person services have resumed in religious service areas and barbershops in most areas.
- August 15
 - Per the policy issued by the City of New York, DOC staff must receive a COVID-19 vaccine by mid-September or submit to weekly COVID-19 testing in order to report for work.
- August 24th
 - DOC opens two new satellite COVID-19 testing sites for staff in addition to the current location at GMDC.
 - The first testing site is located at VCBC and the second is located at the Perry Center on Rikers Island.
- October 5th
 - In addition to the \$100 commissary incentive for people in custody upon vaccination, a \$100 grocery store gift card incentive was added, allowing the person in custody to identify a recipient in the community to receive this gift card.
 - The incentives are available for both the Pfizer and J&J vaccines.

- October 22nd
 - Mayor de Blasio announces vaccine mandate for city workers:
 - **All non-uniform** staff are required to be vaccinated with at least one dose of the vaccine by **Friday, October 29th**.
 - All **uniform staff assigned to CHS clinics, WF, NIC, Elmhurst and Bellevue Hospital Prison Wards** must get vaccinated with at least one dose of the vaccine by **Friday, October 29th** or be reassigned to a non-medical post.
 - **All other uniform staff** must submit proof of vaccination by **November 30th**.
 - Starting October 21 until October 29, any DOC employee who gets vaccinated will receive an extra \$500 in their paycheck if they receive their first shot at GMDC or any other NYC vaccination site.