

**TO:** All Inmates

**FROM:** George M. Little  
Secretary of Corrections

**DATE:** February 28, 2022

**SUBJECT:** DOC Mask Requirement

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As you may be aware, on Friday, February 25, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced revisions to its COVID guidance for those in the community. The revised guidance now considers hospital bed utilization, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area and assigns a community risk level to each county in the country.

We've asked a lot of you since this pandemic began in March, 2020, and you've responded by doing your part in getting us to this point. Our population stands at a 90% vaccination rate, which is one of the primary reasons why those who have contracted COVID-19 aren't getting as sick as before. All of this work has gotten us to the point where we are resuming in-person visits tomorrow, and we're also rescinding the mandatory indoor masking rule. As of today, masks are strongly encouraged for our population, but they are no longer mandatory.

As we celebrate this milestone, we must recognize that COVID is still with us. Although we are in a much better position today than we were two years ago, we must continue to be cautious in our congregate setting. As you are aware, congregate settings are at greater risk than the community for this disease, and while masks are no longer required, they will continue to be provided and encouraged – especially if you are not fully vaccinated or have other risk factors. We also strongly encourage all of you to maintain social distancing, where possible.

Masks will continue to be required for those that are being treated for COVID-19 and is highly encouraged in areas within medical that are serving our particularly vulnerable population. Please be patient with your facility leadership as these areas are defined and managed inside.

This is a big step for the Department, but we must not lose focus. Please continue to keep us on track by getting vaccinated and boosted, and wear your mask when you feel it is necessary to do so.

We will continue to adjust our mitigation strategies appropriately over the next several weeks. If you have any questions, please elevate them to your unit team for assistance.