

DOC COVID-19 Prison Response: *Myth v. Reality*

Myth: Few people who are released will have a safe place to go, so they're safer in prison.

Reality: Many people leaving prison have family members who will provide a safe, rehabilitative space for them to go. For these people, staying in prison is not the safest option. Releasing those who can be successfully reintegrated into the community, without a risk to public safety, can make the environment more safe for those who have to remain living and working in the prisons.

Myth: People who are released will just reoffend.

Reality: Reentry service providers across the state are available and ready to provide services to returning citizens. They are just as committed as ever to helping people overcome the obstacles reentry—even new ones presented by COVID-19.

Myth: Governor Carney has more important things to be doing than spending time and resources on releasing prisoners.

Reality: In some states COVID-19 outbreaks in prisons have created community-spread hotspots that top the national charts, like the Cook County Jail in Chicago. Spending time and resources on this important issue can help keep Delaware from becoming the next hotspot.

Myth: Governor Carney and the DOC have already taken enough measures to prevent a serious outbreak in one of our correctional facilities.

Reality: Governor Carney is doing his best to keep Delawareans safe and reduce the risk of infection across the state, but we need to do more if we're going to save lives. Reducing the prison population makes the environment more safe for those who have to remain living and working in the prisons, because it allows them to practice social distancing more effectively and helps staff and inmate resources go where they're needed the most.

Myth: I'm a law-abiding citizen, so this issue doesn't affect me.

Reality: A COVID-19 outbreak in one of Delaware's correctional facilities is a serious public health concern. Correctional officers are essential workers who enter and leave our prisons daily, potentially bringing whatever they may have contracted from their job into the community they live in. An outbreak in one of our state's prisons could spread to even more Delawareans—even those who have no connection to any of our correctional facilities.

Myth: Allowing prisoners to wear face masks is a major threat to corrections officers.

Reality: The risk of contraband hidden under a mask isn't much greater than the accepted risk of contraband hidden under clothes—especially in comparison to the high risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in a prison.

Myth: Masks are not necessary for inmates because the threat is from officers coming in from the outside.

Reality: Early on this was true, but now that inmates have tested positive we know it is spreading among them as well. They need to be able to wear masks to protect prison workers and fellow inmates.