

Date: 3/13/2020 4:37:34 AM

Subject: Blog

HARLAN RICHARDS

March 12, 2020

### What Happens When COVID-19 Comes to Stanley?

I've been watching the progress of COVID-19 and listening to the advice of health experts and making note of the precautions being taken throughout the U.S. What I don't see is Stanley prison taking any steps to prevent COVID-19 from coming into Stanley or a feasible action plan to isolate infected prisoners.

The current procedure for infected/contagious prisoners is to confine the sick prisoner and his cellmate to the same cell for a period of time. For flu, it is 7 days. When a prisoner contracts COVID-19, how is he going to be isolated? Lock him and his cellmate in the same cell? There are no single cells and no way to isolate an infected prisoner. Finding one infected prisoner will guarantee that at least 2 prisoners will contract COVID-19 because there's no way the cellmate will be able to avoid infection confined in a cell with a sick prisoner. What happens when the cellmate is elderly or immune-compromised? Death most likely. The easy answer for prison administrators is to simply not test any prisoners. That way, they will have plausible deniability and no one will ever be able to prove there was a COVID-19 outbreak in Stanley.

There has been no procedure set up to screen staff or visitors before entering the prison. When Stanley quarantined prisoners for 2 weeks because of the norovirus, prisoners were still routinely transferred in and out of Stanley. When COVID-19 comes to the prison system in one prison, the administration's refusal to halt transfers will guarantee that all the prisoners will be exposed. If they think it's hard to staff the prisons now, what will happen when going to work every day will mean playing Russian Roulette with COVID-19?

Who will get protective equipment? Staff only? What will prisoners who are not yet infected do when they see staff wearing protective gear while they must be daily exposed to possible death via COVID-19?

Yet with this dire situation all but certain to occur, school classes are still being held and all other activities - including a scheduled spring concert - are still planned. Free world schools are going online to cut down on transmission, sporting events are being cancelled and all large gatherings are restricted. All it takes is one infected person to come in here and infect one prisoner. From there it will explode in this land-locked equivalent of a cruise ship. We are over 1500 prisoners packed into a prison built for 750. The DOC merely redefined the prison as a double-occupancy prison, welded another bed into each single cell and suddenly it became a 1500 bed prison.

Stanley is a ticking time bomb of disease, infection and death. There are hundreds of elderly and immune-compromised prisoners in Stanley, those most likely to die from COVID-19. How many will be left in cells to live or die by the strength of their immune system? There are not enough hospital beds in this rural area to meet the needs of free people. You can be sure hundreds of infected prisoners will not be transferred to hospitals for treatment. It is simply not feasible even if there was adequate bed space.

The only answer is to implement restrictions before COVID-19 comes to Stanley because once it does, it will be impossible to manage.