

Texas Civil Commitment Office (TCCO) and Texas Civil Commitment Center (TCCC) COVID-19 Protocols

TCCO has continually taken a proactive approach to COVID-19 precautions and has adjusted precautions and actions taken as additional information is learned about COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, the Texas Civil Commitment Office and the Texas Civil Commitment Center administration have closely monitored the COVID-19 situation in the Littlefield/Lubbock area and within the TCCC itself and will continue to do so. The Texas Civil Commitment Office and the TCCC have proactively taken multiple steps since March 2020 to attempt to limit exposure to and spread of COVID-19 within the TCCC. In March 2020, as the COVID-19 virus was spreading throughout the United States and Governor Abbott began to issue emergency orders regarding the pandemic, TCCO took action to protect TCCO staff statewide as well as TCCO clients residing at the Texas Civil Commitment Center. On March 13, 2020, TCCO suspended all visitation to the Texas Civil Commitment Center. Additionally, TCCO staff reached out to all visitors who had been to the facility during the prior thirty days to check on their health status and ensure that none of the visitors were experiencing symptoms that could be related to COVID-19.

All TCCO and TCCC staff were tested for COVID-19 and all new staff require proof of a negative test for clearance to enter the facility. Any staff member displaying any potential COVID-19 symptom is not permitted in the TCCC and is required to have a negative COVID test and be free of symptoms before returning to work. TCCO and the contractor operating the Texas Civil Commitment Center worked together to develop a screening protocol for all staff arriving to the facility. Each day, staff undergoes a screening upon arrival to include having their temperature checked and being asked questions regarding their health status and any symptoms they may be experiencing. Additionally, all TCCO staff statewide and all vendor staff of the Texas Civil Commitment Center were tested for COVID-19.

All client workers at the TCCC are required to test negative for COVID-19 prior to starting a work assignment and those workers are retested weekly to ensure that they remain negative. In the event that a client worker tests positive for COVID-19, the worker along with any other client workers exposed to the positive client, are removed from their work posts and quarantine in accordance with CDC guidelines. The exposed clients must complete their quarantine and test negative before being permitted to return to work. Additionally, the positive client must be cleared by medical staff in accordance with CDC guidelines and test negative before being permitted to return to work.

TCCO worked with TDCJ to provide reusable cloth masks for all TCCO staff, all Texas Civil Commitment Center vendor staff and all SVP clients. All staff at the TCCC who enter a location in which clients are present are required to wear a N95 or KN95 mask in addition to a face shield or goggles, gloves, disposable gown, or coveralls. All staff or client workers in the kitchen at the TCCC are also required to wear a N95 or KN95 mask in addition to a face shield or goggles, and gloves. All new clients arriving at the TCCC or clients that leave the TCCC to attend an outside medical appointment are quarantined for 14 days upon arrival or return to monitor for potential COVID symptoms. Sanitizing solution is also available throughout the TCCC and sanitizing stations are located at nearly every door so that staff can sanitize between uses. The TCCC also utilizes disinfectant fogging machines regularly throughout the facility.

The TCCC has put detailed protocols in place for preventative measures to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the facility and also to stop the spread of COVID-19 among clients or staff. These preventative measures are taken seriously and any staff member who does not follow the protocols is subject to disciplinary action. Staff members who have been determined not to have followed the protocols have faced significant disciplinary action such as demotion or termination.

Finally, the Texas Civil Commitment Office stays up to date regarding the latest guidance and news regarding COVID-19 through weekly phone calls with the Department of State Health Services officials and will continue to do so throughout the pandemic.

Procedures for Clients Testing Positive for COVID-19:

When a client tests positive for COVID-19, the housing area where the client is housed will be quarantined/isolated and all other clients in the housing area will be tested for COVID-19.

Nursing staff makes daily rounds to check on all COVID-19 positive clients. Positive clients will have oxygen levels, temperature, and symptoms checked daily by nursing staff. If symptoms are exhibited, nursing staff will start administering over the counter medication to help with symptoms such as cough medicine, cold medicine or fever reducing medications such as Tylenol.

During daily checks if a client is showing any signs of shortness of breath and if oxygen levels are 90% or lower, nursing staff will transfer the client to the medical department for further evaluation. Clients will be placed on oxygen via nasal cannula with an oxygen concentrator. A nurse will listen to the lungs to see if there are signs of COVID pneumonia and the on-call doctor will be notified.

If the client is stable (oxygen levels above 93% on 5L or less of oxygen), the doctor will determine what prescription medication will be administered to stabilize the resident at the center. If the client is not deemed to be stable or if the doctor feels client needs further treatment, medical staff will contact EMS to transfer client to the emergency room for further evaluation and treatment.