

DOC COVID-19 Response Timeline

Updated July 3, 2023

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 reopening 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 Infirmaries.
- 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 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 videoconferencing 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 sanitation, 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.

- October 25 – 29
 - Due to recent vaccination mandates for municipal workers and in an effort to share the facts about the vaccines, on **Tuesday, October 26, 2021**, the Department hosted a Vax Chat at DOC facilities RNDC & GRVC with guest speaker Dr. Olusimbo Ige M.D., Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Health Equity Capacity Building at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).
 - On **Thursday, October 28, 2021**, a vaccine telephonic town hall was also held with Dr. Olusimbo Ige. He answered questions about the vaccine, its safety, and its effectiveness.
 - DOC held a family vaccination day for all DOC Staff and their family members on **Friday, October 29, 2021**, from 6AM-9PM at the GMDC, in the North Gymnasium. Staff members could bring a child (12 years and older), sibling, spouse, domestic partner, step of foster parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, or relatives residing in their household who would like to get vaccinated for free.
 - Aside from the \$500 in the paycheck and \$100 gift card incentives, there was free food and DOC giveaways, tickets to the Nets basketball game (distributed on a first come, first served basis) and eligibility to receive three (3) hours comp time after being fully vaccinated.
 - Additional vaccination sites were added for **Thursday, October 28 and Friday, October 29** at the DOC headquarters at the Bulova Corporate Center as well as at DOC's Health Management Division in Rego Park.
 - All staff who received the first dose of a vaccine at these sites also received the \$500 in their paycheck, \$100 gift card, and eligibility to receive three (3) hours comp time after being fully vaccinated.
 - Throughout the week, additional details messaged to staff regarding the vaccine mandate included the following:
 - Employees who are required to be vaccinated with at least one dose of a COVID-19 Vaccine by Friday, October 29 at 5 PM and need to request a reasonable

accommodation should contact the Office of EEO by emailing EEODESK@DOC.GOV or calling 718-546-0861.

- Non-uniform staff should submit requests by October 27th at 5 PM or they will be placed on LWOP effective November 1. Weekly negative PCR test results should be submitted while their accommodation request is under consideration or on appeal.
 - Uniformed staff assigned to clinics who fail to get vaccinated with at least one dose of the vaccine by October 29 will be reassigned to a non-medical post.
- November 1 – 3
 - A COVID Vaccine Mandate reminder was sent to all uniform staff, reminding staff to submit proof of vaccination by 11:59PM on November 30, 2021. Reminder stated that uniform staff who fail to provide proof of vaccination will be placed on unpaid leave until the required proof is provided.
 - Reminder also stated that any staff who received their first dose between October 20th and October 29th and did not submit proof of vaccination are still eligible to receive the \$500 incentive in their paycheck. Proof of vaccination should have been submitted by 5pm on November 3rd.
 - November 8
 - A teletype was issued on November 8, 2021, reminding uniform staff that proof of vaccination must be submitted by November 30, 2021. Any uniform staff who have not provided proof of vaccination by that date will be placed on unpaid leave on December 1, 2021, until required proof of vaccination is provided. Anyone seeking a reasonable accommodation must submit requests by November 23, 2021. Uniform staff who seek reasonable accommodations after November 23, 2021, will be placed on unpaid leave beginning December 1, 2021, until the reasonable accommodation is decided.
 - November 15
 - A teletype was issued to staff indicating pop-up vaccination sites at:
 - Health Management Division on Tuesday, November 16th and Wednesday, November 17th from 9AM – 5PM
 - Bulova Headquarters on Thursday, November 18th and Friday, November 19th from 9AM-5PM.
 - The teletype also indicated that:
 - Uniform staff who receive the first dose of a vaccine at these sites (or anywhere else) will receive the following incentives - \$500 in their paycheck, \$100 gift card and are eligible to receive three (3) hours comp time after they are fully vaccinated.
 - All uniform staff are required to be vaccinated with at least one dose of the vaccine by Tuesday November 30, 2021, at 5PM and vaccination proof should be sent to Human Resources by 5PM Tuesday, November 30, 2021, and for those getting the first dose of a two-dose vaccine,

proof of the second dose must be provided to Human Resources within 45 days of submitting proof of the first dose. Unvaccinated uniform employees will be placed on unpaid leave until proof of vaccination is provided.

- The Mayor announced any uniform staff who receives their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine between November 15th and November 30th will receive \$500 in their check.
 - All uniform staff must show proof of vaccination by Wednesday, December 1, 2021.
 - The deadline for uniform staff to apply for reasonable accommodations is November 23, 2021, at 5PM.
 - Vaccines remain available at the GMDC Staff Lounge, or you can schedule it in the privacy of your home.
- November 17
 - A teletype was issued to uniform staff to encourage staff to get vaccinated, indicating the following:
 - The first 15 uniform employees who receive the first dose of the vaccine on November 17th at GMDC will receive two (2) tickets to see the Brooklyn Nets versus the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday 11/17.
- November 22
 - The Office of Public Information sent an announcement for all uniform staff to get vaccinated before December 1 to get the \$500 incentive after the first dose.
- November 23
 - A town hall was held on Tuesday, November 23 with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene with Dr. Olusimbo Ige, Assistant Commissioner for Bureau of Health Equity Capacity Building.
 - Tuesday, November 30, 2021, at 5pm is the last day to receive \$500 incentive for getting the first dose. Any uniform staff who does not submit proof of receiving the first dose will be placed on unpaid leave.
- November 24
 - A teletype was issued to staff reminding staff about vaccine mandate. Teletype reminded staff who require a reasonable accommodation to apply for one by Tuesday, November 30, 2021, at 5PM. Uniform staff who remain unvaccinated and who have not filed an RA by November 30th will be placed on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) beginning December 1, 2021. Staff placed on LWOP will also need to turn in their firearm, identification card, ballistic vest, stab proof vest and shield until proof of vaccination is provided.
 - The only allowable accommodation from the vaccination mandate that will not cause undue hardship and/or disruption to DOC is weekly testing and submission of negative PCR results.
- November 29
 - A teletype was issued reminding staff to get vaccinated prior to the December 1, 2021, deadline.

- Staffing incentives were realigned to accommodate the new 12-hour tours established by the Mayor's executive order.
- November 30
 - A teletype was issued thanking all uniform and non-uniform staff who have gotten vaccinated and reminding unvaccinated uniform staff of the December 1 deadline.
- December 7
 - After the December 1 deadline for vaccination, the Department issued a teletype announcing that the rate of vaccinated uniformed staff (at least one dose) has risen to 83% as of December 6.
- December 21
 - A teletype was issued suspending In-person visitations starting December 22nd due to the rapid rise of COVID-19 Omicron cases; televisits were expanded to 5 days per week. Congregate services were modified to on-unit services.
 - A teletype was issued requiring all staff to wear a mask in all DOC facilities and office spaces.
 - A \$100 incentive was offered for anyone getting a booster shot by December 31st.
- January 24, 2022
 - External programming providers started resuming in-person services on Monday, January 24, 2022.
- February 9
 - In-person visits resumed at a reduced capacity on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. All visitors between ages 5 and 12 must provide proof of vaccination of at least one dose. All visitors age 12 and up must meet the CDC definition of "fully vaccinated." All visitors age 2 and up must submit to a rapid COVID-19 test and test negative. Tests are provided to all visitors at Rikers Island.
- March 7
 - The City of New York issued new guidance regarding the wearing of face coverings/masks, requiring that every medically able employee wear a face covering/mask:
 - When interacting with members of the public;
 - During days 6 to 10 after infection with COVID-19 upon returning to work; or
 - If the employee is employed in a correctional facility or state regulated health care setting.
 - Staff members working in Headquarters, the Correction Academy at Metropolitan Avenue, and the Firearms Tactical Unit at Rodman's Neck are not required to wear a mask unless they call into one of the categories listed above.
 - Staff assigned to Rikers Island facilities, the hospital prison wards, and the Health Management Division must continue to wear a face covering/mask.

- Staff assigned to other areas must likewise wear a mask if they temporarily visit a facility on Rikers Island or hospital prison ward.
- Staff members who are not required to wear a mask may still, at their choosing, continue to wear a face covering/mask.
- March 9
 - In line with Key to NYC requirements, DOC lifted the requirement for visitors to present proof of vaccine to have an in-person visit. Rapid testing requirements remain in place until further guidance from DOHMH.
- March 14
 - The New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) has partnered with the Department to provide rapid COVID-19 test kits for all staff members. Each staff member who elects to do so will receive one (1) test kit and distribution begins on Thursday, March 17. Additional test kits will be made available for all staff.
- March 23
 - Procedures concerning COVID screening prior to in-person court appearances are changing effective immediately. Incarcerated persons who are assigned to non-Asymptomatic Exposed (AE) housing areas no longer require COVID screening before in-person court appearances. Incarcerated persons assigned to AE housing with an in-person court date are now subject to screening conducted by uniform staff.
 - On the day of scheduled court appearances, uniform staff tasked with court production will ask incarcerated persons assigned to AE housing areas if they are exhibiting COVID symptoms as listed on the DOC COVID screening form. If an incarcerated individual answers “Yes” to any of the questions, uniform staff will produce the individual to the clinic where Correctional Health Service (CHS) staff will complete further screening and provide an appropriate disposition to DOC regarding the person’s court clearance status. If an incarcerated individual answers “No” to all questions, they will be cleared for their in-person court appearance but must have a screening form from CHS or DOC, depending on the circumstances.
- May 12
 - COVID vaccines and booster shots at the George Motchan Detention Center (GMDC) will now only be available Mondays-Thursdays from 6:00am-9:00pm. COVID testing will continue to be available during these same days and times.
- June 2
 - The Mayor’s Office passed along an updated telework policy effective June 1, 2022. For every scheduled workday, both uniformed and non-uniformed staff are required to report to work everyday in person. Hybrid schedules are no longer permissible sans a reasonable accommodation. Pursuant to the city’s COVID-19 leave policy, telework will only be allowed in these limited circumstances:
 - If it has been less than five days since the employee has tested positive for COVID-19 through a diagnostic test, or
 - If the employee is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 but has not tested positive, they may telework until they either test negative and are symptom-free or it has been five days since symptoms began and they are improving, or

- If it has been less than five days since the employee has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-10, or
 - If the employee develops a fever or other symptoms after receiving a vaccination (including boosters) for COVID-19, or
 - If the employee is caring for a dependent that is subject to a government quarantine/isolation order, or
 - If the employee is caring for a child, whose school or place of care is closed/childcare is unavailable due to COVID-19.
- July 1
 - In observance of the Fourth of July holiday, COVID-19 vaccinations, and testing operations at George Motchan Detention Center (GMDC) will be closed. All covid-19 operations will resume on Tuesday, July 5th at 6:00 AM.
 - COVID-19 vaccinations and testing will continue to be available Mondays-Thursdays, 6am-9pm.
 - Staff is encouraged to get tested frequently, especially if you have symptoms of COVID-19.
- September 28
 - The new Pfizer Bivalent Booster Shot will be available to all staff
 - At this time, 40 Shots of the Pfizer Bivalent Booster will be available Mondays-Thursdays, 6am-9pm, on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - COVID-19 testing will continue to be available Mondays – Thursdays, 6am-9pm.
- February 2, 2023
 - Staff are no longer required to complete the daily COVID-19 self-screening assessment when entering departmental facilities.