



Resources for Criminal Justice Agencies in Response to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic affecting the nation, the world, right now is an unprecedented event for most of us that we have ever seen in our lifetimes. By now, everyone has heard of “social distancing” and what that means in terms of helping prevent “community spread” of the virus and “flatten the curve.” Many of you have also noticed misinformation and hoaxes being spread on social media and in general. The best thing to do is always obtain your information from credible sources and fact check information.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and new information is provided daily by various critical sources. Agencies should contact their local Public Health Authority for up-to-date information about their specific area. To help our members, counties and probation departments find the right resources, I have conducted some research and found the links below to be very useful. Some links and information are helpful for probation clients since many of them will be severely impacted by the pandemic. In addition to the links below, there are several apps that can be downloaded on any smartphone to help individuals deal with stress, which we know can be a trigger for relapse and other negative behaviors, during the COVID-19 outbreak. The CDC also has an app for download to keep up-to-date with changes.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

As most of you know the CDC is one of the primary sources of information on COVID-19. A wealth of information from symptoms, to FAQs, to advice for caring for someone who is sick, travel information, and printable flyers are available. There is also a Coronavirus Self-Checker on the site, a guide to help make a decision and seek appropriate medical care if a person thinks he/she may have been exposed or is exhibiting symptoms. The website is being routinely updated to provide the latest information, including number of confirmed cases in each state.

<https://www.cdc.gov>

Council of State Governments

The CSG website provides helpful information on COVID-19 cases by state, legislative sessions & resources information, state executive orders, interactive maps showing states with school closures, crowd size limits by state, state curfews, restaurant and bar closures, government travel, states where the National Guard has been deployed, and links to various other helpful sites.

www.web.csg.org/covid19/

Department of Family and Protective Services

Community supervision agencies should be aware that some hospitals in Texas have experienced an increase in cases of child abuse since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Agencies should be educating offenders about stress during this time and providing resources to cope with stress. Those suspecting child abuse or neglect can report these incidences to the Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline [800-252-5400](tel:800-252-5400) or online at www.txabusehotline.org

Public Broadcasting System

PBS is offering a free weekday newsletter for parents while schools are closed that includes ideas for activities and tips to help kids play and learn at home. PBS Kids website has fun educational games and activities for younger children.

www.pbs.org/kids www.pbs.org/parents

National Association of Texas Counties

This website provides information about county declarations and policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and provides an interactive map that is continuously updated as new declarations and policies are issued. This may be helpful for administrators and judges for considerations on how to respond in their own communities.

www.naco.org/resources/featured/coronavirus-disease-2019

National Center for PTSD

This agency provides links to the general public, providers, community leaders and health care workers on how to deal with and manage stress in general, or associated with the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/index.asp

National Center for State Courts

NCSC has developed an interactive map of court closures and other changes to standard court practices, and has provided an emergency response bench book for judges and court administrators available for download.

www.ncsc.org/

National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC)

For local law enforcement operating jails or for counties that have a residential facility for adult and/or juvenile offenders, NCCHC has important resources on their website including a free webinar that has been recorded and made available for anyone to view at any time. Individuals with questions about COVID-19 in corrections can also visit their blog or email questions.

www.ncchc.org/blog

Email questions to: info@ncchc.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Emerging research is showing predictions of a rise in domestic violence and intimate partner violence, in addition to child abuse, during the pandemic, especially with many people losing their jobs, practicing self-isolation at home, and local shelter in place orders. Supervision officers should be mindful of this and check in by phone with offenders periodically to ensure they have the proper tools to deal with the stress of this unusual crisis, and provide them with useful information to address their needs.

[800-799-7233 \(800-799-SAFE\)](tel:800-799-7233)

Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)

TDCJ website prominently displays a link about COVID-19 on their home page and mainly advises it is expanding testing to keep the virus out of the 104 prison units across the state and provides information about changes in processes for screening intakes and visitation for correctional facilities. If you have probation clients concerned about friends or family who are incarcerated, the TDCJ Facebook page has several video posts about the vigorous cleaning protocols in place and a report that no positive tests for COVID-19 so far inside any facilities.

www.tdcj.texas.gov/

Texas Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)

This page provides information about procedural, policy and office-closure information to Texans receiving HHS services, as well as information for providers on how to assist those affected by coronavirus. The site also includes information about the 2-1-1 hotline for Texans wanting information about COVID-19, as well as information for referrals local to their area - referrals for things such as financial assistance for rent and utilities, housing assistance, crisis counseling, and senior services.

<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Texas Education Agency

For parents with children at home due to school closures, the TEA website provides information about these closures and extensions, how teachers and school districts are in the process of instructional continuity planning to help with continuous learning for students and other helpful information.

www.tea.texas.gov

Texas Youth Helpline

A 24-hour hotline available to provide peer counseling to youth and family members for family conflicts, delinquency, truancy, abuse and neglect and runaways, is a valuable resource whether the offender is a juvenile or an adult. Adult offenders with children experiencing problems during this COVID-19 crisis can call 24-hours a day for assistance, text them at 512-872-5777 or chat online.

www.texasyouth.org

United Ways in Texas

The United Way is an organization that strives to help “improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities...” The link below lists all of the United Ways around the State of Texas and offenders needing assistance can call 2-1-1 for referrals for various needs including financial assistance with rent or utilities, food pantry information, etc.

www.unitedway.org/local/united-states/texas#

WEconnect and Unit Recovery

A list of online/zoom recovery meetings that will follow an open format and are available to anyone in or seeking recovery. Join the calls at 9:00am, 12:00pm, 3:00pm and 9:00pm EST daily.

[zoom.us/my/allrecovery](https://zoom.us/j/2656499375)

unityrecovery.zoom.us/j/2656499375

Additional online/phone recovery meetings are available at:

www.intherooms.com/home/

<https://www.smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php>

<https://recoverydharma.online/>

https://aa-intergroup.org/directory_telephone.php

<http://na-recovery.org/>

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization has up-to-date information about the Novel Coronavirus pandemic. They are bringing COVID-19 facts to billions. Text ‘hi’ to the number +41 79 893 18 92 they have set up for the App “WhatsApp” which can be downloaded on your smartphone.

<https://www.who.int/>