



Greetings brothers and sisters,

**First**, thank you for taking the time to fill out the COVID-19 questionnaire on the MCO web page. Unless you tested positive for the virus, you probably received very little feedback since completing the form. That is because the situation with the virus has been so fluid, that we have not had an opportunity to wrap everything into a tight package for you to digest.

This communication is seeking to disseminate some of the more highlighted areas that MCO has undertaken on behalf of its members. While this may seem a bit lengthy, it **is important that you be informed of what is being done on your behalf.**

**Second**, if you have tested positive, please contact The Law Offices of Charters, Tyler, Zack & Shearer, P. C. at (248) 321-4474. Advise them that you are a state corrections officer and contracted the virus. They will screen your case to determine if you are entitled to benefits. A new workers' comp rule has been drafted for first responders, health care workers, and corrections officers that presumes you have contracted the virus from your work site.

In addition, MCO has finally convinced the employer to begin notifying employees who have contracted the virus to apply for work comp benefits. This is a major achievement. Employers typically do not encourage their employees to fill out worker compensation claims against itself. However, these are – indeed – different times.

Filing for work comp benefits is a legal right, and you should not be concerned about doing so. It is one venue in which some of your precious leave accruals may be restored to some degree.

**Third**, everyone is aware that when they are put off work - for the purpose of isolation because of symptoms or potential contact - they are burning their own leave credits. While this is unfair, it is legal. However, MCO has filed a grievance to have the leave restored. **THIS IS AN UP-HILL BATTLE**, and you should not be mistaken about this. MCO is also seeking intervention from the Governor's office to restore the leave through executive action.

**Fourth**, MCO has signed a Letter of Understanding for our members to receive hazard duty pay. While dollars and cents are not worth a single life, it is important that our members receive some type of incentive/reward for being on the front lines in the fight of this pandemic.

MCO understands the hazard pay is linked to working time, and that being placed off work reduces the hazard pay stipend. It is a subject that MCO has woven into its initiatives, with a goal of recouping monies and leave time lost by the membership.

**Fifth**, initially, the employer was not allowing members to get tested while placed on a quarantine status. After several follow up meetings the employer has begun to have employees tested at a rapid-testing center in Detroit. In addition, members who seek out their own tests are being allowed to return to work prior to completion of the isolation period, if the test is negative and the department accepts that test as valid. This, obviously, saves leave accruals and lost time. The details of what specific tests the employer is accepting are being pursued by MCO at this time.

**Sixth**, when the employer adopted its face mask protocol, MCO immediately went to work getting the employer to allow members to wear their own masks. And, while, initially, the employer balked at the idea, MCO convinced them otherwise. MCO also distributed masks to all members.

**Seventh**, leadership in MCO called for a State-level Labor Management meeting. The meeting consisted of MCO Leadership and its legal counsel, Office of the State Employer executive staff, and Director Washington, Deputy Director McKee, and MDOC HR Director Jonathan Patterson.

Issues brought to the table by MCO included: 1) Line-up pay for COVID-19 protocol procedures, 2) PPE and testing of employees, 3) Hazard pay issues, and 4) Lifting of annual leave and comp time caps. All areas essential to combating the virus in prisons, and its effect on our heroic members who confront this national emergency.

**Eighth**, the MCO Legal Department has initiated, both, contractual and Civil Service grievances to object to issues facing the membership.

**Finally**, please be clear on this: MCO Central staff and the State Executive Board are aware of the adversity you are facing. In addition, we are quickly becoming aware, daily, of the newest problems that arise in the lives of our bargaining unit members. And, while our hands are tied in some instances because of the emergency powers granted to the government in these extraordinary times, our fight does not stop. Daily, union staff and the Board are involved in collective thinking and strategizing to find solutions that will help you cope with the pressures of your career.

MCO will continue to post updates on the [COVID-19 page on our website](#), in the [KYI newsletter](#), and in our members-only [Facebook group](#).

Again, we thank you for letting the MCO Legal Department know about your situation.

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