

Recommendation Status Evaluation

County has implemented most
recommendations from first audit of its
response to COVID-19 pandemic

October 2021



Multnomah County Auditor's Office

Jennifer McGuirk, Multnomah County Auditor

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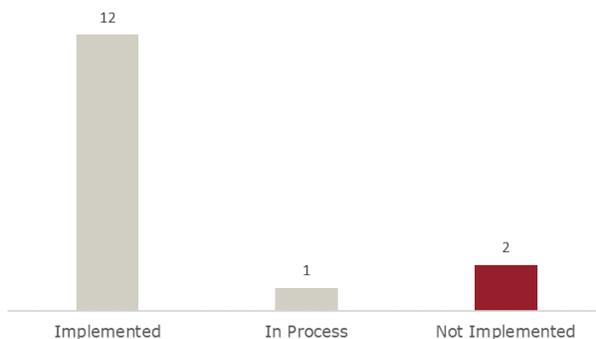
Report Highlights

What We Found

The county implemented most of the Auditor's recommendations from the first audit report on the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office did not implement our recommendation to expand the use of free-phone calls or modify lobby video visit operations to allow for safe use.

For Library locations, the county did not implement our recommendation to add COVID-19 specific cleaning and disinfecting requirements into its contracts with janitorial providers prior to adding substantial in-person capacity.



Source: Auditor's Office

What the Statuses Mean

- Implemented – Auditee has fully implemented, or auditee has resolved the issue to meet the recommendation's intent.
- In Process – Auditee has started implementation.
- Not Implemented – Auditee has not implemented, or does not intend to implement.

Why We Did This Evaluation

The Auditor's Office follows up on audit recommendations to support county government's accountability. This evaluation focused on recommendations with the following deadlines:

- Immediately upon the report's issuance, which was February 9, 2021
- July 1, 2021 or sooner
- Prior to adding in-person capacity at county locations

We made several recommendations that were of an ongoing nature or due in 2022, and we will evaluate their status at that time.

Status of Recommendations

Implemented

Recommendation 1: County Public Health officials should revise guidance on the public facing website for nonprofit shelter providers within county boundaries to improve clarity, in line with state requirements.

Auditor's note: The county updated the website, which directs readers to state guidelines.

Recommendation 2: Joint Office of Homeless Services management should include clauses to follow Public Health guidelines in new contracts with shelter providers and in new amendments to contracts with shelter providers.

Auditor's note: New county contracts and new amendments with shelter providers include a clause to follow Public Health guidelines.

Recommendation 3: To be consistent with CDC guidelines, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office should begin exchanging the cloth masks of adults in custody on a daily basis if they are used upon issuance of this report.

Auditor's note: On February 12, 2021, the MCSO issued orders to update face covering protocols for the Inverness and downtown jails. The updated order implemented a daily exchange of cloth face coverings for adults in custody. Corrections Health reported that MCSO implemented the mask exchange policy.

Recommendation 5: Upon issuance of this report, we recommend that juvenile detention managers consistently enforce face covering policies with their staff.

Auditor's note: In regard to enforcing face covering policies, management sent staff letters of expectation, staff reminder emails, and assigned a manager to ensure safety protocols.

Recommendation 6: The Adult Care Home Program should perform a review of all recent communication with each ACH and ensure that each ACH has received sufficient information and is aware of requirements and guidelines pertaining to the pandemic. A particular focus is needed in the areas of exposure, infection control, physical distancing, and reporting. A review should be performed as soon as possible and no later than 30 days from issuance of this report. If contact is needed the contact should be made within at least 90 days from the issuance of this report.

Auditor's note: The ACH Program performed several communication strategies. We reviewed support for many of their strategies and are satisfied that they made sufficient effort to connect with ACH providers to ensure they are aware of requirements and guidelines pertaining to the pandemic.

Recommendation 7: As soon as possible, the Oregon Occupational Safety & Health (OSHA) COVID-19 temporary rule implementation committee should complete all new OSHA requirements: Risk assessment, infection control plan, protocols for potential exposure, and employee training.

Auditor's note: The county made training available for all employees and notified employees of the required training. The county issued protocols for potential exposure that included notifying potentially exposed and affected employees within 24 hours, as required by the OSHA temporary rule. Departments and divisions completed risk assessments and infection control plans in line with OSHA temporary rule requirements. Opportunities for employee feedback were provided.

While the committee implemented the OSHA requirements, it remains up to department leadership, the Chief Operating Officer, and the Chair to ensure that plans and protocols are followed and training is completed.

Many plans were written under the assumption that a large number of employees would be teleworking. As more county employees return to worksites, we advise managers to reevaluate risks and plans. County management should also consider making the protocols for potential exposure more readily available to employees.

Recommendation 8: Central Human Resources should develop a method for employees to provide COVID-19 related feedback anonymously.

Auditor's note: A google form to provide anonymous feedback is now available on the county intranet. The county informed employees of the feedback form via an email to all employees.

Recommendation 9: The Chair or her designee should provide employees with a point of contact for COVID-19 safety coordination.

Auditor's note: The county's Risk Services Manager is the designated point of contact for COVID-19 safety coordination. This designation was identified on the anonymous feedback form and in an email to all employees.

Recommendation 11: Prior to adding in-person capacity at county locations, we recommend that Facilities & Property Management ensure that necessary building modifications, including the installation of partitions, and filter upgrades in HVAC systems have been completed.

Auditor's note: Rather than FPM, program managers verified that their spaces met the county's requirements for reopening, including making HVAC modifications and installing physical barriers, such as partitions. The county required program managers to use a form called the safe space checklist to document their spaces met the county's requirements for reopening.

FPM added high level air filters at 9 county buildings; 7 already had this level of filtration. For all 70 county-managed facilities with HVAC systems, FPM has maintained the maximum outside airflow possible while maintaining building temperature. FPM has deployed

about 90 air scrubbers across 42 buildings. Air scrubbers remove indoor contaminants – including viruses – from surfaces and the air. FPM has installed partitions in 119 spaces, across 44 county buildings.

Recommendation 12: Prior to adding in-person capacity at county locations, we recommend that FPM work with its janitorial contractors to ensure that each location has sufficient staffing capacity to ensure the enhanced cleaning recommended by the CDC.

Auditor's note: FPM is providing advance notice of return-to-work plans for departments to janitorial partners so they can assure sufficient staffing capacity as occupancy increases in buildings.

Recommendation 13a Non-library Locations: We are told that the county is currently in the process of adding COVID-19 specific cleaning and disinfecting requirements into its contracts with janitorial providers. We recommend that Facilities & Property Management complete these contractual requirements prior to programs adding substantial in-person capacity at county locations.

Auditor's note: The county added COVID-19 specific cleaning requirements into its contract with Relay Resources, via amendment.

Recommendation 14: Department directors should provide county-owned computers to employees who frequently telework and should emphasize using county-owned computers for employees who occasionally telework. The county should also provide employees with any other equipment typically used by one person to telework effectively, such as computer mice, computer monitors, and headsets. These examples are meant to be descriptive, not exhaustive.

Auditor's note: Department directors reported that they were following guidance from county leadership and support providing county-owned computers to employees who telework. County Information Technology (IT) supplies equipment, provides inventory, and does IT trouble shooting for county employees. Early in the pandemic, IT worked with departments to determine teleworking needs. Initially there were national supply shortages which meant some employees had to wait for county-owned computers. IT reported that as equipment became available, IT supplied county employees with remote kits, including a laptop, keyboard, mouse, and power supply along with a monitor and docking station if needed.

In Process

Recommendation 10: Based on responses to our office's employee survey, it appears that applying policies is an ongoing challenge. Upon issuance of the report and periodically thereafter, the Chair or her designee should reiterate to managers and employees her expectations that safety policies and recommendations are followed, including the requirement

that employees telework as much as possible.

Auditor's note: In February 2021, the Chair, Sheriff, and District Attorney sent a joint email to all employees calling for compliance. The Chair has sent additional emails to all employees, and an e-newsletter for employees regularly provides updates reiterating COVID-19 expectations. Since this situation is ongoing, we will continue to monitor communications.

Not Implemented

Recommendation 4: With normal no-cost visiting options suspended because of COVID-19 precautions, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office should either expand the use of free-phone calls or modify lobby video visit operations to allow for safe use as soon as possible and no later than 90 days within issuance of this report.

Auditor's note: The MCSO has not yet reopened the free jail lobby video visit operations. Although the MCSO did not expand the program as recommended, it did secure enough money, via a combination of federal and county general funds, to continue to pay for two 10-minute phone calls per week for adults in custody.

Sheriff's response: Sheriff Reese provided a response that is at the end of this report.

Recommendation 13b Library Locations: We are told that the county is currently in the process of adding COVID-19 specific cleaning and disinfecting requirements into its contracts with janitorial providers. We recommend that Facilities & Property Management complete these contractual requirements prior to programs adding substantial in-person capacity at county locations.

Auditor's note: The contract covering libraries is with ABM through Washington County, and according to FPM, Multnomah County does not have control over the contract language. FPM did not approach Washington County about adding specific language due to the fact that the existing contract language includes "contractor shall comply with all federal, state and local laws, codes, regulations and ordinances applicable to the work in this contract."

Objectives, Scope, & Methodology

The objectives of this evaluation were to determine the status of recommendations from the first audit report on the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic that had the following due dates:

- Immediately upon the report's issuance, which was February 9, 2021
- July 1, 2021 or sooner
- Prior to adding in-person capacity at county locations

Auditors evaluated the status of recommendations based on interviews, documentation, and other available evidence.

Updating the Status of a Recommendation

During each audit our office conducts, we develop recommendations intended to improve government operations, particularly with regard to effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and equity. Our goal for evaluating the status of recommendations is to help ensure management implements these recommendations for improvement.

We recognize that after we publish an evaluation on the status of recommendations, management may fully implement a recommendation that we reported was in process or not implemented. Management can then provide evidence to the Auditor demonstrating why the recommendation's status should be changed in the Auditor's future reporting. The final decision on whether to change any recommendation's status rests with the Auditor.

Staff

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Response Letter



Multnomah County Sheriff's Office

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September 27, 2021

Jennifer McGuirk, MPA, CIA
Multnomah County Auditor
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Room 601
Portland, OR 97214

Dear Auditor McGuirk,

I would like to thank you and your staff again for your ongoing examination of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) response to the COVID-19 pandemic and for this opportunity to provide written feedback to the working draft of your Recommendation Status Evaluation. MCSO continues to place the highest value on the compassionate and safe care of all persons in our custody. I have the following updated status information to report regarding MCSO's progress toward implementation of Recommendation 4.

Recommendation 4

"With normal no-cost visiting options suspended because of COVID-19 precautions, the MCSO should either expand the use of free-phone calls or modify lobby video visit operations to allow for safe use as soon as possible and no later than 90 days within issuance of this report."

Auditor's Note

The MCSO has not yet reopened the free jail lobby video visit operations. Although the MCSO did not expand the program as recommended, it did secure enough money, via a combination of federal and county general funds, to continue to pay for two 10-minute phone calls per week for adults in custody.

MCSO continues to recognize the critical need for Adults in Custody to maintain contact with family, friends, and other members of their support system. We have explored every option to maintain these positive connections and will continue to do so.

I am happy to report the funding we secured to pay for the two 10-minute phone calls per week for each adult in custody has been extended through September 30, 2022.

MCSO's Correction Services Division had also developed a plan to reopen jail lobbies to provide no-cost visitation access via lobby kiosks as COVID-19 case numbers declined and mitigation measures were lifted throughout the state during the early months of summer 2021. Like many other County Reopening plans, however, the Corrections Services Division determined it was appropriate to delay these plans due to the mid-

summer surge in COVID-19 cases related to the Delta variant. As case numbers decline again, MCSO will move forward with reopening no-cost visitation opportunities in the jail facilities' public lobbies. Our tentative reopening date is October 16, 2021. The implementation plan will initially include opening every other kiosk to allow ample social distancing between visitors. Scheduling for these visits will be managed through the Securus website used for all MCSO video visitation.

As a result of these ongoing steps toward implementation, I respectfully request that your Recommendation Status Evaluation identify Recommendation 4 as being In Process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Reese".

Michael Reese
Multnomah County Sheriff