



STATE OF NEVADA
Department of Corrections

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Press Release

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NDOC Leadership Responds to Hunger Strike

The Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) announced Thursday some clarifications in policy that have been cited as part of the impetus for the hunger strike at Ely State Prison.

"We are listening to these offenders and want to fix those areas where we may have been inconsistent," said Acting Director William Gittere. "Some of the claims are false, but some of them have merit, and we want to correct them."

The most significant change, announced to staff Thursday, is a clarification in the method of applying administrative sanctions, which include revocation of privileges, such as phone time and commissary.

Where the regulation governing disciplinary sanctions is clear — disciplinary segregation must be applied concurrently rather than consecutively — the language in the regulation governing more minor administrative sanctions is more nebulous.

"Going forward, just like disciplinary segregation, we will not impose consecutive sanctions," Gittere said. "Any administrative sanctions beyond the current action will cease. This will bring us in line with the spirit intended when the revised regulation was created."

The hunger strike began at Ely State Prison on Dec. 1 with 39 offenders. On Friday, 24 offenders were participating. Of those, 19 have been on strike for nine days, one for three days, one for three days and four are on their second day. Twenty of the offenders involved are classified as maximum security under High-Risk Potential security protocols.

The Nevada Department of Corrections is committed to building a safer community by striving to incorporate progressive best practices in all aspects of corrections. NDOC houses more than 12,000 persons with felony convictions in 18 facilities statewide. For more information visit www.doc.nv.gov.

The principal motive cited by participants has been the portion size of meals being served.

“Our supervisors are monitoring each feeding and personally observing the food deliveries to ensure proper portion sizes daily,” Gittere said. “Our Support Services team is in contact with the vendor regarding the terms.”

Other offenders listed individual complaints as their reason for joining the strike.

Gittere said understaffing issues are making it difficult to meet the daily requirements like recreational time outdoors, but officials are working on the problem.

“We understand offenders are dissatisfied that we can’t turn around these changes as quickly as we’d like,” he said.

Other complaints include:

- **Lack of Privileges Offered at Other Institutions:** At some facilities, offenders are provided the opportunity to participate in fundraisers and food drives. Those programs are not available at Ely State Prison. NDOC is structured to incentivize good behavior — as an offender completes certain requirements and avoids disciplinary behavior, he can classify to a facility with fewer controls and more privileges. Offenders classified as maximum custody under High-Risk Potential protocols are afforded fewer privileges.
- **Lack of Programming:** For the first time in the history of ESP, offenders have access to free college classes through Great Basin College. Offenders can work on classes daily. ESP offers other education services as well, which includes high school equivalency and high school diploma courses. All education programs are available to all custody levels, to include those with High-Risk Potential. Work assignments are available for eligible offenders in all custody designations (maximum, close, medium and minimum.) The frequency depends on the job and work location. In-person religious services are offered for those offenders housed in level 1 general population, minimum custody, and the Condemned Men’s Unit. Most religious services are conducted once per week. Re-entry programming for those offenders housed in level 1 general population

and minimum custody. Classes are scheduled two times per week for each group/class.

- Changing PIN Numbers for Phone Access: PIN numbers are never changed without notifying the offender. They are changed when an offender not assigned to the number is discovered to be using it. When PIN is changed, the original owner is notified, as a means to prevent fraudulent activity.