

Walker State Prison Mentor Message #69

(Wednesday June 24th, 2020)

Information for Resuming In-Person Mentoring Following the COVID-19 Outbreak

Please see the updates below as of the date of this message regarding returning to in-person mentoring at Walker State Prison. Each section contains important information. *[If you are not currently / actively mentoring and are interested in returning sometime in the near future, please contact me ASAP.]*

1. **Start Date**
2. **New Safety Policies for Entry & Mentoring Sessions**
3. **New Prison Safety Measures**
4. **New Mentoring Nights & Groups**

Start Date

Many of you heard that we were aiming to restart mentoring July 1. The Commissioner is now rethinking his approval of that date. As of the writing of this message, we do not yet have a confirmed date for when we will be cleared to begin mentoring. Because tentative dates have changed several times, we are choosing to wait to officially disclose any date until we have something set in stone with the prison.

New Policies for Entry & Mentoring Times

As we work alongside the staff at Walker to discern a plan for what resuming mentoring would look like, we have crafted several initial policies to try and ensure your safety and ease any concerns you may have about returning. As we move closer toward beginning mentoring, the following policies are expected to be followed by all mentors who wish to resume volunteering at Walker for the foreseeable future:

1. All mentors will have temperatures checked upon entry to the prison, and any mentor registering a temperature greater than 100.4° will not be permitted to enter.
2. No physical contact whatsoever between mentors and prisoners shall be permitted.
3. Both mentors and mentees will be required to wear a mask during mentoring sessions.
4. Mentors and mentees will be appropriately spaced from one another during mentoring sessions according to CDC guidelines.
5. Hand sanitizer will be available to all mentors.
6. No more than four volunteers shall be permitted in the bunker at a time.
7. No hand-to-hand transfer of any printed study materials to mentees shall be permitted; however:
 - a. You may mail in printed materials to your mentee via the Chaplain's office
Attn: Chaplain / Walker State Prison / PO Box 98 / Rock Spring, GA / 30739
 - b. You may also drop off materials in the bunker
8. Mentoring pairs will be expected to remain at their tables for the duration of the mentoring session; no walking around will be permitted.

Prison Safety Measures

On the prison side, there has been virtually zero movement allowed in or out of the facility since March. Prisoners participate in wellness checks each morning to determine if they are exhibiting any symptoms. Anyone with symptoms is required to report to medical for evaluation. So far, this has not been necessary. It is our hope that these precautions on both our end and within the prison serve to ease any hesitancy you may feel toward resuming mentoring. However, we understand that there are many other factors which may prevent mentors from resuming in-person at this time. We encourage all active mentors choosing not to resume in-person at this time to continue encouraging your mentee via letter writing.

New Mentoring Nights & Groups

As you have, hopefully, heard by now, mentoring nights have changed due to precautionary measures within the prison related to COVID-19. For the foreseeable future, the

night on which mentors are allowed to engage in mentoring is determined by the dorm in which your mentee is housed. This means that, for a significant number of mentors, the night on which you will be permitted to mentor during this time is different than before. If you have not yet heard which group you are in, please contact me (metanoiamentoring@pcanet.org / 314-800-4191), and I can tell you on which night you will be permitted to mentor for the foreseeable future.

We understand that this shakeup in mentoring nights will disrupt a number of former carpooling and fellowship groups. We also understand that this reality will prevent some mentors from being able to attend. Please understand that we lament this alongside you. However, it is our prayer that—as Spirit-filled brothers in faithful pursuit of realizing our mission to be ambassadors of reconciliation—we would rejoice foremost in our ability to return to the prison in any capacity at all. If you were formerly in a carpooling group or need a ride in order to be able to attend, please contact me ASAP so that I can find others in your new group who may be able to oblige.

Your new group leader will be sending out a full list of who is in your new group soon.

This Mentor Message, along with all other Mentor Messages, can be accessed for future reference on our website at: <https://www.metanoiaprisonministries.org/walker-state-prison-mentoring>

Please feel free to contact me with any other questions!

metanoiamentoring@pcanet.org / 314-800-4191

Be blessed,

Steven Howell