



CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM

NO. 9-2003

April 22, 2003

TO: SHERIFFS, JAIL ADMINISTRATORS, COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION, STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY SUPERINTENDENTS, NYC DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION WARDENS, CHIEFS OF POLICE, LOCAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY MEDICAL DIRECTORS

RE: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

In response to recent media coverage and concern regarding Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), the Commission has been contacted by several local jurisdictions for advice and guidance in the management of inmates and detainees suspected of being either infected with or exposed to this communicable disease. For reference, the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s suspect case definition of SARS is a respiratory illness of unknown etiology with onset since February 1, 2003, meeting the following criteria:

- Measured temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (greater than 38 degrees Celsius) **and**
- One or more clinical findings of respiratory illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or hypoxia) **and**
- Travel (transit in an airport in an area with documented or suspected community transmission of SARS) within 10 days of onset of symptoms **or**
- Close contact within 10 days of onset of symptoms with a person known to be a suspect SARS case.

To contain the spread of this contagious illness, the CDC is recommending isolation for people who are suspected of being infected with SARS, and quarantine for people who have been exposed but are not ill. Since such isolation is often problematic, if not impossible, in a lockup or county jail setting, it is the recommendation of the Commission that the Chief Administrative Officer of any county jail invoke the provisions of Correction Law §508 that allow the removal of a prisoner to a hospital. Similarly, 9 NYCRR §7503.1(a) allows for the utilization of hospital services for situations of an emergency nature involving a lockup detainee. In a situation where an inmate or detainee was first diagnosed by a doctor as exhibiting symptoms consistent with SARS, both Correction Law §508 and 9 NYCRR §7503.1(a) would allow for the immediate removal of such a prisoner to a hospital prior to his admission to a correctional facility. Such immediate removal would serve well to prevent or limit further exposure to other facility staff and inmates.

As with most communicable disease, respiratory and contact precautions should be used to prevent exposure and further infection. For specific information regarding such precautions, as well as information for handling possible exposure and the transport of suspected patients, please contact your County Health

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Department. In addition, more specific information regarding SARS is available at the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

If you have any further questions with which the Commission may offer assistance, please feel free to contact either Peggy Loffredo of the Forensic Medical Unit at (518) 485-2475, or Brian Callahan of the Office of Counsel at (518) 485-2463.

Alan J. Croce, Chairman/Commissioner

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