

Commanders: Moving forward in the COVID environment

By Public Affairs Staff 18 June 2020



Dunham Army Health Clinic Commander Lt. Col. Jennifer Saenz, USAWC Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem, and CBPA Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Courtney Short speak at a virtual townhall meeting.

Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem welcomed the Facebook Live audience to the 5th virtual commanders' townhall since mid-March [www.facebook.com/usawc] Responses to audience questions are embedded, below.

"... [N]ow that we successfully got the 2020 academic year resident class to graduate and most of them have now started to hit the road, the focus of this [townhall] shifts to the influx of people coming into this community....

"I do want to thank everybody who was involved with all the craziness of the last 3+ weeks -- between the Garrison, the Clinic, the War College staff and everybody else that it took to get graduation to occur with a great ceremony ... and, then, to get the families and students to start hitting the road. Great work by everybody, and I know they left here with a very

positive Carlisle experience.

“Pennsylvania has moved Cumberland County to green, but that doesn’t mean that COVID cases don’t still occur. We know people without symptoms can spread the virus. Pennsylvania at large has something like 80,000 cases, with most of those towards the Philadelphia area.... COVID 19 isn’t going away. So really the focus has evolved over the last several months -- from the early days of complete shutdown to, now: how do we execute our educational research mission, and execute the Carlisle Garrison activities, and the hospital activities in a positive and a safe way while we still execute the mission we have from the Department of Defense going forward. That is the focus.

“Commanders at all levels are focused on health and protection. We have health advisors and the clinic commander here and the focus will continue to be how do we execute this in a safe manner. So, today we will talk about this new operating environment....

Changing personnel at Carlisle Barracks this Summer --

“[To] graduates who are still here, good luck as you head on out of here.... [W]e do still have some students who just graduated and those families are staying in the area -- a few who are transitioning to faculty, and another group that will be Blue Star families. **Blue Star families** are those who have one of the family members who is now deployed, to Afghanistan, Iraq and a few other places, that we then form in their own seminar group so we as a community can support them. Unlike regular units in the active force -- when you deploy, when a lot of people are all going from the same unit, there is a natural connective help -- here, it tends to be disparate groups of people going lots of places. So, this is the way we can show faith and help them through a tough year.

“The Distance Education Program continues.... Because of COVID and risks of high-end travel for a very short period of two weeks, we decided to do both the first and second resident courses virtually. FRC -- that’s the students who are in between the first and second year of the DE program -- we’re doing that as we speak and we are doing that this week and next week. Toward the end of July, we’ll have the Second Resident Course for two weeks and we decided to do a virtual graduation on the 24th of July. It will stream and I encourage you to watch that.

“Additionally, we have 16 Basic Strategist students, typically captains and majors and a sometimes a few lieutenant colonels, who are here and just started TDY [course].

"Beginning July 6th, we have the next influx of international students.... The G9 office tracks each individual. We had the Japanese officer arrive just last week. So for the few who might come in early because of how [flights] line up, we'll take care of them.

"From July 15-25, ... the new incoming class of 2021 will arrive. That's the No-earlier-than and No-later-than date. If that needs to be altered, coordinate with the G1 office. It is not automatic, so coordinate with them for any exceptions to policy. A few we already know will come later than that due to mission requirements and getting moving trucks and driving across country in a COVID-19 world isn't the easiest. So that will naturally happen.

Arrival Process, Summer 2020 – sign-in, health screening, more --

"...[W]hen a newcomer signs in, you do have to sign-up in person ... with G1 if it is a weekday or, if not, come on Monday. Come in in mask. The G1 will sign you in and direct you to the Dunham Clinic and, at Dunham, they will do the screening and test as appropriate. [Also] the G1 will give you a finance appointment about 48 hours later You will not be able to do your finance appointment unless Dunham has given us a roster that you have completed your health screening. That's a kind of a forcing function.

"Then, you'll go into a restricted movement for 14 days. How restrictive will depend on where you're coming from and the health screening," said Kem.

Most of the in-processing will be virtual. Centralized In-processing will be limited to the few steps that must be completed in-person, like getting your IT accounts and laptops set up, to make sure we don't have connectivity problems when the first full academic week takes place virtually. This Centralized In-processing will be scheduled, July 27-29, by seminar. The 15-17 seminar members will in-process together because that's the group you will be with in the coming weeks. That will help give some sense of control, of isolating, if there were to be cases break out.

Note: On or about July 4, the USAWC Chief of Staff will email directly to incoming with details of inprocessing steps: what's virtual, what's not, and how to proceed.

Dunham Commander Lt. Col. Jennifer Saenz on healthcare screening protocols for newcomers to Carlisle Barracks

Up until this point, Dunham has primarily done diagnostic testing, which means that individuals who are potentially exposed, exposed, or symptomatic get tested to determine whether they have COVID or not. When we talk about the incoming class and student testing, it's what we call surveillance testing or asymptomatic testing. That's an additional risk reduction method as we put 375 students together, in multiple class rooms. So we are going to start that with the incoming class.

"The testing is part of a package," Saenz said, referring to screening, the restriction of movement order, and personal protective measures. "It does not replace wearing your mask, social distancing, and personal hygiene and disinfection measures. It is a piece of a bigger package. Different groups will do things differently.

"For the International Fellows, there is a 14-day requirement for quarantine. When International Fellows arrive, they will come to Dunham, they will get screened -- both the students and the family members. Once they complete their 14-day quarantine, they will come back to Dunham and receive their COVID-19 testing.

"For the military students coming in, you will actually be tested twice. Initially, upon arrival, you will come to Dunham and get screened and tested, and then there will be a 14-day restriction of movement -- certain areas you can and cannot go to -- and then at the end of the 14 days, you will do a second test," said Saenz.

"Surveillance testing is tiered testing....Everyone will come through Dunham. They'll be screened. We'll provide education but, currently, the permanent party will not be tested on the way in.

"Students will be tested twice, the family members will not, but we'll provide education and screening to family members as well." added Saenz.

Commandant Maj. Gen. Kem:

"Be wary about when you use the word quarantine because it has different meanings in different states, different locations When we say that people get quarantined when they arrive, the health screening and other things drive exactly what the conditions will be. Across the Army, we tend to use the term quarantine less, unless it specifically applies because you are tested positive and other things come into play, like how to isolate. The term we intend to use is Controlled Management Restricted Movement. You may come and be told here is what you are allowed to do [e.g., commissary and grocery store, and clinic if you call ahead of time]. So, try

to avoid using the word quarantine because it means so many different things to different people.”

Dunham Commander:

“When you come through the clinic, we’ll outline for you – grocery stores, activities outside, classes that you can go to. So, we’ll define areas and provide education – but don’t get stuck on the language of quarantine versus restriction.

“The key to that is social distancing -- in your quarters, driving around and getting to know the area, wearing your mask when you go to the grocery store, outdoor activities with your family – keep social distancing measures in place and avoid high-population gatherings.

Travel and leave guidance --

- Most if not all hotels in this area are open. Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau is tracking hotel availability, to include bed-and-breakfasts, which may entail less public exposure
- For leave enroute, it depends on your Service policy. “The Army has delegated to the first general officer in the chain of the command to approve leave in the month of June. It can actually continue into July. It is your departing command that really approves your leave. If they do not grant it and you have a specific reason for taking it, reach out to G1, and we can review it,” said Kem.
- Guidance for travel through or around high-COVID areas? Conditions change quickly and, it’s really a county-by-county basis and consideration as to what you are doing enroute. Check online resources, follow all safety measures to keep you and your family safe.
- Leave in the local area after signing in before mandatory events? As soon as you have signed in here and you want to take leave, the G1 (personnel officer) will work with you on that. It does require the Commandant’s signature. We ask you to provide a memo that explains what you are going to do, even in the local area, because it helps you fully illustrate what you plan on doing.
- Approval is required if traveling beyond the 150-mile radius.

Garrison Commander Lt. Col. Courtney Short referred to a comprehensive Garrison Playbook mapping out conditions-based planning as to when and how to open services.

- Jim Thorpe Fitness Center is open, by appointment only for 1-hour time slots, with heavy cleaning, social distancing, and masks when moving to and from the assigned cardio or strength training pod. offers adequate capacity and safe, tested operations; the other two gyms are not planned to open now.
- Pool: Safety inspections and cleaning ongoing for an opening planned for July 3, at 50 percent capacity to maintain social distancing.
- Child Development Center and Youth Services (school-age)

Summer Camp both start next week at approximately 50 percent occupancy – organized in small groups, no family-style dining and no field trips. Middle School and Teen programs are not opening yet. For Childcare and YS Camp, go to militarychildcare.com to register for future openings.

- The Welcome Expo is planned – outdoors, spread out. Welcome Expo introduces Carlisle Barracks newcomers to learn at booths about the wide range of activities and programs and school on and off base.
- Playgrounds are open on base; use health safety protocols.

Dunham Clinic Commander about clinic operations, school physicals, more –

“Over the last couple weeks, we’ve been completing a risk assessment on all the services that [Dunham] provides, and how we restore services with mitigations in place to maintain safety for staff and patients. Over the last couple weeks, we’ve increased our face-to-face appointments by about 20-25 percent. It had been predominately virtual up until this point.

“Be patient with us. We’re not going to open the flood gates right away. It’s not smart – not safe for the patients or the staff – so we will continue to open things slowly.

“A couple weeks ago, we started doing mammography again. Optometry is doing acute and readiness-associated appointments. Physical therapy is doing limited services, primarily acute, post-op services.

- Immunization appointments will open as of Monday, June 22
- Blocks of time will open in early July for school physicals and sports physicals. “The intent of opening those appointments now is to knock out a lot of the permanent party physicals before the new class comes in,” said Saenz.
- Pharmacy refill pick up has returned to the Dunham office in the Exchange mall.” We’ll continue curbside service (at Dunham) indefinitely for new prescriptions.”