

# NEWS RELEASE

## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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**Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations**

245 McKee Road | Dover, DE 19904 | Office: 302.857.5232 | [jason.miller@delaware.gov](mailto:jason.miller@delaware.gov)

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## **DOC announces additional precautions to identify and contain COVID cases; marks first staff and inmate recoveries**

**Dover, DE – The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced an intensive two-week operation to combat COVID-19 within the two facilities where positive inmate COVID cases have occurred, building on the daily temperature checks and close monitoring for 1,000 inmates at these facilities.** This targeted operation will be concentrated in buildings at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) and Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC) that have experienced COVID cases and will include:

- Twice daily temperature checks;
- Distribution of face masks to more than 360 inmates in two additional housing buildings at JTVCC, bringing the number of inmates who have been issued face masks to nearly 900 across correctional facilities;
- Expanded proactive inmate COVID testing;
- Increased use of specialized high-tech cleaning of buildings, on top of the current twice-daily cleanings, utilizing a disinfecting machine that employs an airborne mist to sterilize entire rooms;
- DOC and its contract healthcare provider will offer voluntary COVID testing to all Officers at JTVCC and SCCC in recognition of the continued threat of infection from outside as community spread continues.

The DOC also announced additional COVID-19 test results for inmates and Correctional Officers as it marked the first staff and inmate recoveries from COVID-19.

Three inmates, whose positive COVID tests were administered on April 6, April 7 and April 8, and who have been housed in the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center, have recovered from the illness. Additionally, a Probation Officer whose positive COVID test was administered on April 6 has recovered and returned to work and the first Correctional Officer who received a positive COVID test result in early April is awaiting final clearance to return to work.

The DOC further announced that proactive testing and contract tracing have helped identify additional positive inmate COVID test results at JTVCC and SCCC.

- **Through proactive testing, DOC has identified 7 positive test results for JTVCC inmates.** 5 of these individuals were asymptomatic and had already been moved as a precaution to an isolation tier within the JTVCC treatment center. 2 of these individuals were already being treated in the JTVCC infirmary for flu-like symptoms.
- **Through proactive testing, DOC has received positive test results for 9 asymptomatic inmates at SCCC.** All 9 work release inmates had been employed at a local poultry processing plant and all were already isolated at SCCC, where they have been receiving close monitoring and daily temperature checks. These inmates have been transported to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center. [DOC suspended all Sussex County work release operations on Monday, April 20.](#) Today, DOC suspended work release operations statewide, which impacts 14 work release offenders - all in New Castle County.
- **Through contact tracing, DOC has identified 4 isolated COVID-19 cases of inmates in two medium security buildings at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) where a Correctional Officer who recently tested positive was assigned.** As part of its continued proactive, preventative measures, these buildings have been under close monitoring by security and medical personnel, including twice daily forehead temperature checks using a non-invasive infrared thermometer. Immediately after registering fevers, each inmate was immediately admitted to the infirmary for evaluation and COVID-19 tests were subsequently administered. Positive test results were received on Monday, April 20. Three of the inmates are being treated at an area hospital and are in stable condition; one remains in the JTVCC infirmary. None are on a ventilator.

Note: Any inmate who registers a fever above 100 degrees is immediately isolated and administered a COVID-19 test.

- **Three additional Correctional Officers assigned to JTVCC have tested positive for the illness.** One Correctional Officer was last on duty 10 days ago - on April 12, one was last on duty 6 days ago - on April 16, and one was last on duty 5 days ago - on April 17. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, both Officers began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed sought medical attention, at which time a COVID-19 test was administered. The positive COVID-19 test results were received by the Officers on April 20 and April 21 and subsequently verified by the DOC. This brings the total to 21 Correctional Officers statewide to test positive for the virus.

This brings the total to 41 inmates statewide, limited to two correctional facilities -- JTVCC and SCCC - to test positive for the virus. Of these cases:

- 3 have fully recovered from COVID-19 infection;
- 24 have no symptoms. All are being housed in the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center;
- **13 exhibit symptoms**, including 8 who are receiving treatment at a local hospital, 2 who are receiving treatment at the JTVCC infirmary and 3 who remain at the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center. None are on a ventilator;
- 1 has died from complications from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and COVID-19.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates or the officers for privacy protection.

"Careful monitoring, early detection and testing are helping us to effectively manage the threat of COVID-19 in our facilities, along with isolation and treatment. DOC officers, supervisors and healthcare professionals on the front lines are helping us to effectively contain this virus," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.**

**DOC's Medical Director, Dr. Awe Maduka-Ezeh said:** "The Department of Correction is doubling the safeguards recommended by the CDC to determine when our inmates have recovered from COVID-19 and are safe to be taken out of isolation, by requiring that 14 days, rather than 7 days, have passed since the positive COVID test was administered, that 3 days have passed during which the patient remains fever and symptom-free AND that a follow up COVID test returns negative prior to releasing from the COVID isolation ward."

The DOC is employing a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any Level V prison, Level IV violation of probation or work release center, or Probation and Parole Office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.
- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. **All Correctional Officers have been wearing face masks since April 10. Face masks have also been provided to nearly**

**900 inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, and certain inmates with institutional jobs, such as food service.**

- Most Probationer visits with Probation Officers were transitioned to phone check-ins in March to support social distancing measures.

In addition, the DOC [has temporarily suspended in-person prison programming to reduce the movement of people into facilities and movement of groups of people within facilities](#). Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, are being transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19 and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decoration* on Facebook and Twitter.

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