

# NEWS RELEASE

## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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

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## DOC partners with Division of Public Health to leverage rapid testing capability; provides update on COVID-19 recoveries and additional test results

**Dover, DE** -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that a partnership with the Delaware Division of Public Health is now allowing the DOC and its healthcare personnel to administer and process rapid COVID testing at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC). Although the number of rapid test kits remain limited, the DOC is leveraging specialized on-site processing equipment to secure rapid testing results within 30 minutes.

“The use of rapid testing and results is one more tool we are using to quickly isolate and contain any new cases of COVID-19 in the state’s largest prison to prevent widespread contamination,” **said Commissioner Claire DeMatteis**. “It is a comprehensive protocol of testing, twice-daily temperature checks, screenings, intensive cleanings and minimizing movement throughout the prison to stay one step ahead of this virus.”

Additionally, the DOC today announced that a total of 11 inmates have recovered from COVID-19, including 2 new recoveries in addition to 9 announced last week. These inmates are currently housed in a transitional housing unit in the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center. Several correctional officers and probation officers also have fully recovered from the illness.

These recoveries come as DOC continues 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 of more than 1,750 inmates at these facilities. This targeted operation is concentrated in buildings at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) and Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC) that have experienced COVID cases and includes:

- Twice daily inmate temperature checks for more than 1,750 inmates;
- Distribution of face masks to all inmates at JTVCC and SCCC, bringing to more than 2,100 the number of inmates issued face masks across correctional facilities;
- Expanded proactive inmate COVID testing;
- Increased use of specialized cleaning, on top of the current twice-daily cleanings, utilizing a disinfecting machine that employs an airborne mist to sterilize entire rooms;

- Voluntary COVID testing to all Officers at JTVCC and SCCC in recognition of the continued risk of infection from outside as community spread continues.

Review an informational chart of positive COVID-19 cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility by [clicking HERE](#). The latest positive test results are as follows:

- **Twenty inmates from minimum and medium security buildings at JTVCC who were identified and isolated at the first sign of illness through proactive monitoring,** including twice daily forehead temperature checks. *Eleven test results came through rapid COVID testing administered and processed on-site Sunday, April 26 and Monday, April 27 at JTVCC through a partnership with the Delaware Division of Public Health;* eight test results came from tests administered late last week and returned on Sunday, April 26; and one test was administered at an area hospital on April 27 during treatment of an inmate for a non COVID-related healthcare need. Eighteen of the inmates have been moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center and two are being treated at an area hospital.
- **Three Correctional Officers assigned to JTVCC.** The Officers were last on duty 11 days ago - on April 17, 6 days ago - on April 22, and 4 days ago - on April 24, respectively. All Officers have been required to wear face masks since April 10 while on duty. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officers began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed sought medical attention, at which time COVID-19 tests were administered. The positive COVID-19 test results were received by the Officers on April 26 and April 28 and subsequently verified by the DOC.
- **One Correctional Officer assigned to the Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC).** The Officer was last on duty 17 days ago - on April 11. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer 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 result was received by the Officer on April 25 and subsequently verified by the DOC.
- **One Correctional Officer assigned to Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI).** The Officer was last on duty three days ago - on April 25. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer 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 result was received by the Officer on April 28 and subsequently verified by the DOC.
- **One Correctional Officer assigned to Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI).** The Officer was last on duty six days ago - on April 22. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer 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 result was received by the Officer on April 28 and subsequently verified by the DOC.

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

"Seven weeks after COVID was first detected in Delaware the virus remains isolated in our correctional facilities to two buildings in one prison in Smyrna and one Community Corrections Center in Georgetown," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said today.** "We have had zero cases in prisons in Wilmington, New Castle and Georgetown and none in Community Corrections facilities in Wilmington, New Castle and Dover. We are leveraging all of tools that are available, including rapid COVID testing through our partnership with the Division of Public Health, to contain this illness and make the best treatment decisions at the earliest possible moment."

Note: The Department of Correction is doubling the safeguards recommended by the CDC to determine when 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. For inmates with immunocompromised underlying health issues, DOC has adopted an even stricter recovery standard of 21 days.

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 been provided to inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, those with certain institutional jobs, such as food service, and those in housing buildings where inmates have tested positive for COVID-19.
- 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 *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.

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