

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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DOC reports on employee COVID-19 testing, announces additional recoveries and test results

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that it has completed an initial round of proactive COVID testing of Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) and Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC). **Of more than 300 of these proactive COVID tests administered, only 6 test results for Correctional Officers and 1 test result for a contract healthcare provider have been returned as positive.** All are assigned to JTVCC. A small number of these proactive test results remain pending. All seven, asymptomatic individuals are self-isolating at home. Contact tracing has been conducted to identify potential risk to others with whom they may have had close contact.

Additional voluntary testing of correctional staff at other DOC facilities will continue this week in a sustained effort to stop the virus from spreading.

Additionally, the DOC today announced that **a total of 18 inmates have recovered from COVID-19**, including 4 new recoveries in addition to 14 previously announced. Recovered inmates are initially housed in a transitional housing unit in the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center before being returned to their original housing units. Several correctional officers and probation officers also have fully recovered from the illness.

These recoveries come as DOC has administered 40 additional proactive tests of asymptomatic inmates in a medium security building at JTVCC, bringing to more than 140 the number of proactive COVID-19 tests administered to-date on asymptomatic inmates. The latest 40 proactive test results are pending.

“As part of our aggressive actions to identify inmates infected with the virus and keep it contained within a small cluster of minimum and medium housing units at the prison in Smyrna, we are proactively testing inmates with underlying health issues so that we catch any additional cases early and administer treatment immediately before the virus spreads further or the inmate’s conditions becomes symptomatic,” **said Commissioner Claire DeMatteis.**

DOC remains in the second week of an intensive two-week operation to combat COVID-19 at JTVCC and SCCC, 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.

The DOC today also announced additional inmate and staff test results, including the first positive COVID test result for an inmate at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI). Review an informational chart of positive COVID-19 cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility by [clicking HERE](#). **Of the 86 inmates who have tested positive over the last 8 weeks, 24 are symptomatic. The rest have recovered, are asymptomatic due to proactive testing, and 3 inmates with serious underlying health conditions have died of complications related to COVID-19.**

The latest positive test results are as follows:

- **One inmate from Howard R. Young Correctional Institution. This inmate has been held apart from the general inmate population for more than a month in disciplinary housing in a single cell and in treatment for non-COVID symptoms in the infirmary.** When flu-like symptoms were identified through proactive monitoring, the inmate was immediately placed in isolation and a COVID-19 test was administered. The test result was returned on May 2 and the inmate is being moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center. In addition to rigorous screening, cleaning and monitoring, the DOC continues to deploy a specialized fogging machine to HRYCI to disinfect entire rooms. Face masks have also been issued to approximately 200 HRYCI inmates in certain housing units and those with certain institutional jobs, including food service, laundry, and the infirmary. All correctional employees and contract healthcare personnel have been wearing face masks for several weeks to help prevent risk of transmission from the community.

"Through contact tracing, we have identified the likely source of the introduction of the virus at HRYCI and have contained further spread," **Commissioner DeMatteis said.** "We will remain transparent and report any further cases to the public if additional inmates we are monitoring test positive."

Additional COVID-19 test results are as follows:

- **Thirteen inmates from a minimum security building at JTVCC who were identified and isolated at the first sign of illness through proactive monitoring,** including twice daily forehead temperature checks. 10 of the 13 test results came from rapid COVID testing. All 13 inmates have been moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center.
- **One Correctional Officer assigned to JTVCC.** The Officer was last on duty 7 days ago - on April 26. 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

COVID-19 tests were administered. The positive COVID-19 test result was received on May 1. The Officer is continuing to self-isolate at home.

- **Two Correctional Officer cadets assigned to the Lt. Steven Floyd Training Academy.** The Officer cadets were part of proactive testing of asymptomatic Training Academy classes on April 29 that took place after a Correctional Officer cadet tested positive for COVID on April 28. The cadets were last on duty at the Training Academy 4 days ago - on April 29. All Academy cadets are required to wear face masks and practice social distancing. The positive COVID-19 test results were received on May 2. Both cadets are self-isolating at home.

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

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 all inmates at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center and the Sussex Community Corrections Center.
- 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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