

# 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 highlights reductions in incarcerated population amid COVID-19, announces results of latest proactive testing

**Dover, DE** -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today highlighted the significant reduction in Delaware's incarcerated population since COVID-19 spread to Delaware and the mid-Atlantic region over the past two months. These reductions have accelerated a six-year decline in the incarcerated population driven by lower crime rates, implementation of a statewide bail reform initiative, and the Carney Administration's efforts to strengthen reentry services which are helping to drive the state's recidivism rate lower.

Reductions in the incarcerated population since March come amid *fewer admissions of newly-arrested individuals, release from incarceration of a modest number of pre-trial detainees through modification of bail conditions by a court, court-ordered release of individuals held in Level IV custody in civil failure to pay child support cases, and increased use by DOC of graduated sanctions in lieu of detention to keep probationers in compliance with their conditions of community supervision.* Highlights of Delaware's lower incarceration include:

- **10% reduction in Delaware's inmate population** (Level V prison and Level IV violation of probation/work release) since March 1, **driven by a 25% reduction in the pre-trial detentioneer population** over the past 8 weeks.
- **33% decrease in Delaware's work release/violation of probation population** who are held in Community Corrections facilities in Wilmington, New Castle and Georgetown.
- DOC's Level V **prison facilities are today operating at 73% of operating capacity.** This excess capacity across all facilities has freed up space that the DOC has used to spread out inmates, where possible, create extra space for inmate programming and create separate housing tiers for new commits for their first 14 days of incarceration. In addition a vacant building at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center has been converted to a COVID-19 treatment center.

These reductions in Delaware's incarcerated population come as the DOC has worked collaboratively with the Delaware Judiciary, Attorney General's Office, the Office of Defense Services, and other stakeholders **to facilitate more than 1,300 video court proceedings for individuals held in DOC custody from mid-March through May 1 to provide inmates with timely access to a judge and to advance the judicial process during the state's COVID-19 response.**

"Our criminal justice system has responded with urgency to COVID-19 to insure access to justice continues during this health pandemic," **Commissioner Claire Dematteis said.** "DOC is proud to partner with judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and law enforcement officers to leverage technology to keep the wheels of justice turning by accommodating more than 1,300 video court proceedings for inmates in our correctional facilities and probation offices over the past six weeks. Along with the substantial reduction in our state's incarcerated population, it shows that our state is conscious of and responding to the impact of COVID-19 on all of our residents."

The DOC today also announced:

- **A total of 34 inmates have recovered from COVID-19**, including 16 new recoveries in addition to 18 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.
- Final results from a round of proactive COVID testing of asymptomatic Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) and Sussex Community Corrections Center (SCCC) last week. **Of 351 proactive COVID tests administered, 8 test results for Correctional Officers and 1 test result for a contract healthcare provider were returned as positive.** All are assigned to JTVCC. All nine individuals are self-isolating at home and contact tracing has been conducted to identify potential risk to others with whom they may have had close contact. Additional voluntary testing of asymptomatic correctional staff at other DOC facilities is being administered this week in a sustained effort to stop the virus from spreading.

**The DOC today also announced additional inmate and staff test results.** Review informational chart of positives COVID-19 cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility [by clicking HERE](#). **Of the inmates who have tested positive over the last 8 weeks, including the new test results announced today, only 14 are symptomatic.** The rest have recovered, are asymptomatic due to proactive testing, and 3 inmates with chronic diseases have died of complications related to COVID-19.

The latest positive test results are as follows:

- **Proactive COVID-19 tests of 41 asymptomatic inmates in a medium security building at JTVCC has resulted in 37 positive test results.** All inmates are in a building that has been subject to close monitoring for more than two weeks, with twice-daily forehead temperature checks. The inmates have been moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment Center and all remain asymptomatic, with no fever, cough, shortness of breath or other sign of the virus.
- **Four inmates from a medium security building at JTVCC who were identified and isolated at the first sign of illness through proactive monitoring,** including twice daily forehead temperature checks. Three of the four test results came from rapid COVID testing processed on-site at JTVCC. Two of the inmates were moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center and two are being treated in the infirmary in stable condition.

- **One Correctional Officer assigned to Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI).** The Officer was last on duty 4 days ago - on May 1. 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 Officer is continuing to self-isolate at home.
- **One Correctional Officer cadet assigned to the Lt. Steven Floyd Training Academy.** The Officer cadet was last at the Training Academy 8 days ago - on April 27. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officer cadet began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed sought medical attention, at which time a COVID-19 test was administered. The cadet continues to self-isolate at home.

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

"Proactive testing for inmates and employees is a key part of our efforts to contain the spread of COVID in our facilities," **Commissioner DeMatteis said.** "Asymptomatic inmates may never develop symptoms, but proactive early detection, especially for inmates with a long history of serious medical problems, enables us to quarantine and monitor these individuals and immediately begin treatment should symptoms appear."

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 more than half of DOC's inmate population, including inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, those with certain institutional jobs, such as food service, all inmates at the James T.**

**Vaughn Correctional Center and the Sussex Community Corrections Center and nearly 250 inmates at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution.**

- 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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