

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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Contact tracing, proactive testing identifies new inmate COVID cases

Dover, DE -- After six weeks with no inmates testing positive for COVID-19 in any of the state's correctional facilities, the Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced it is tracking a new cluster of positive cases among the inmate population at Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI) in Georgetown, which marks the first sign of the disease at SCI since the pandemic started in early March.

After three inmates at SCI this week showed symptoms of COVID-19 infection and tested positive, the DOC immediately initiated contact tracing to identify, isolate and proactively test individuals who came into sustained contact with these inmates. As a result, an additional 22 inmates have tested positive.

"This is why we continue to contact trace, proactively test, and closely monitor our inmate population as part of our comprehensive COVID-19 mitigation strategy to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.**

Twenty of the latest test results at SCI came from rapid COVID testing employed by DOC in collaboration with the Delaware Division of Public Health. Of the 25 current COVID-positive inmates across Delaware's correctional system, 17 are asymptomatic and 8 are symptomatic. Twenty-three have been transferred to the JTVCC COVID-19 Treatment Center, while 2 are being treated in stable condition in area hospitals.

Contact tracing and proactive inmate testing are continuing at SCI, including twice-daily temperature checks and screenings for more inmates in three housing areas. No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates for privacy protection.

The DOC is taking the following additional mitigation measures at that facility:

- Contact tracing is being used to identify, isolate and test individuals who came into sustained contact with the COVID-positive inmates.
- All inmates in the housing units in which the COVID-positive inmates had been assigned have been quarantined and are receiving twice daily temperature checks.
- All SCI inmates have been issued face masks.

- In-person visitation at SCI has been suspended as a precaution to protect inmates and staff from transmission of the illness. In-person visitation had resumed earlier this week across DOC facilities. Note: In-person visitation at other DOC facilities will continue at this time with current restrictions in place.
- Voluntary COVID-19 testing is being offered to all SCI and MCCC staff in recognition that the greatest threat to correctional institutions remains transmission from the community.
- Additional deep cleanings, including decontamination with specialized fogging machines, are being conducted.

Currently 9 DOC staff across all DOC facilities and one healthcare contractor assigned to a DOC facility have tested positive for COVID-19, while 87 DOC staff and healthcare contractors assigned to DOC facilities have recovered from the illness.

Review an informational chart of COVID-19 recoveries and cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility [by clicking HERE](#).

The DOC continues to employ 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 two-thirds 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, Sussex Correctional Institution and the Sussex Community Corrections Center and nearly 250 inmates at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution.**

Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, have been 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.