

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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DOC proactively tests entire inmate population at Sussex Correctional Institution for COVID-19 and one-third test positive; only one in ten COVID-positive inmates are symptomatic

Dover, DE - Two weeks after proactive monitoring and testing identified a cluster of inmates with COVID-19 at the Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI), all 973 inmates have been tested for COVID-19, with one-third (303) inmates testing positive and two-thirds (650) testing negative. 20 test results remain pending. Additionally, 17 inmates at Morris Community Corrections Center (MCCC) in Dover have tested positive for COVID-19. The MCCC cluster of cases originated with the transfer of three SCI inmates who had completed their Level V sentence and were transferred to complete their Level IV term of incarceration.

Of the 320 inmates who have tested positive for COVID-19, **90% (288 inmates) are asymptomatic, while only 10% (32) are showing any symptoms of the disease.** Four of those 32 inmates are in area hospitals receiving treatment in stable condition and none are on a ventilator.

In addition, 21 SCI officers have tested positive for the disease, and another 18 SCI officers are in self-quarantine awaiting COVID-19 test results. The DOC offered voluntary testing for all SCI officers due to the high rate of community spread in Sussex County. Voluntary testing also was offered to MCCC officers, with no officers testing positive from that facility.

"This infectious disease predominately hit three open dormitory-style housing units at SCI. While the number of inmates who have tested positive at SCI is a big number, 90% of the inmates have no symptoms. Our proactive testing is working to identify inmates and officers who may be silent spreaders of the virus," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "We have isolated the inmates with the illness in our COVID-19 Treatment Centers where they are receiving round-the-clock monitoring and care by medical professionals. We are taking extraordinary measures to protect and treat our inmates and staff and reduce the risk of new infections, including unprecedented relocation of inmates to different housing units at SCI and extensive specialized decontamination cleanings to contain further spread of the virus."

Except for at SCI and MCCC, there are no COVID-19 cases among inmates at the remaining seven DOC Level IV and Level V facilities.

[Two weeks ago, immediately after three SCI inmates showed symptoms of COVID-19 infection and tested positive for the illness, the DOC initiated contact tracing to identify and isolate individuals who came into sustained contact with these inmates.](#) After additional positive inmate test results were received the DOC implemented aggressive mitigation efforts on top of its existing rigorous COVID-19 protocols. These mitigation efforts were expanded to Morris Community Corrections Center in Dover after positive inmate cases at that facility were traced to inmates who had recently transferred from SCI. These additional mitigation efforts include:

- Quarantine, and twice daily temperature checks, screenings for symptoms and pulse oxygen level testing for inmates at SCI and MCCC.
- All SCI and MCCC inmates were tested for the COVID-19. Testing was prioritized for inmates over 60 years of age and those with underlying health conditions, and three dozen SCI inmates over 60 and those with underlying health conditions who tested negative for COVID-19 were moved last week to a vacant housing building at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center to keep them in a COVID-free environment.
- In-person visitation at SCI and MCCC was suspended as a precaution to protect inmates and staff from transmission of the illness.
- All programming was temporarily suspended in an effort to restrict movement across the facility. Inmates are continuing to be provided recreation time, including in outside recreation areas.
- Voluntary COVID-19 testing is being offered to officers and medical personnel at SCI, MCCC, and other DOC facilities.
- Additional deep cleanings are being conducted, including decontamination of housing units with specialized fogging machines.
- SCI stopped accepting new commits on a temporary basis.

Today, the DOC provided an update on additional COVID-related measures being implemented this week:

- Due to the continued rate of infection in the community, DOC is temporarily suspending visitation across all DOC facilities, effective midnight on Tuesday, July 14. This measure is being taken as a precaution to reduce the risk of transmission from the community and also to direct correctional staff to core safety and security functions.
- DOC has sped up implementation of new virtual video transmission capabilities across Level IV and Level V facilities to enable expanded medical and behavioral health telemedicine and inmate programming.
- As an additional precaution, Inmate temperature checks, screenings for COVID-19 symptoms and pulse oxygen tests will be restarted this week at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI) and Baylor Women's Correctional Institution (BWCI).

As of July 13, 87 COVID-positive inmates have been transferred to the COVID-19 Treatment Center at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC), 2 are being treated in the JTVCC infirmary, and 4 are being treated in stable condition in area hospitals. 227 SCI inmates who tested positive remain at that facility where most have been transferred to the SCI COVID-19 Treatment Center which opened on July 11. **Nearly three dozen other SCI inmates who tested COVID-negative and who are over 60 years old and/or have underlying health issues have been temporarily transferred from SCI to a vacant building at JTVCC to protect their health in a COVID-free environment.**

Currently across all correctional facilities, 35 DOC staff and 8 healthcare contractors have tested positive for COVID-19, while 87 DOC staff and healthcare contractors assigned to DOC facilities have recovered from the illness. No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates or staff members for privacy protection.

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 every inmate at all Level V prison and Level IV work release and violation of probation facilities statewide, more than 4,300 in total.**

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.