

# 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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## Coronavirus Update: Inmate COVID-19 cases down to 4 statewide

*98% of inmates who tested positive in July have recovered  
In-person visitation to resume at DOC facilities on September 1*

**Dover, DE** – One month after identifying an outbreak of COVID-19 at Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI), 98% of inmates who tested positive are recovered and normal operations are resuming, due to aggressive mitigation, tracing and treatment protocols. Today, **just 4 inmates across Delaware's correctional system - all from SCI - have active COVID-19 infection**, the Department of Correction announced today.

"DOC and our medical professionals have demonstrated that we can effectively stop the spread of COVID-19 by comprehensive testing, immediate isolation and treatment of infected inmates, with ongoing screening and cleanings," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said**. "With no new COVID-positive cases in two weeks, we are resuming normal operations at SCI. Inmates have access to outside recreational time, substance abuse treatment, counseling services, commissary, and routine medical care."

Recoveries are marked when an inmate has demonstrated no symptoms of illness for 14 days, consistent with CDC guidance. However, DOC is exceeding CDC guidelines by continuing to isolate recovered inmates in a COVID-19 "step-down" housing unit while follow-up testing is conducted. Recovered inmates must receive two consecutive negative test results before returning to the general inmate population.

The three inmates who remained at the SCI COVID-19 Treatment Center have been transferred to the COVID-19 Treatment Center at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center. One SCI COVID-positive inmate remains hospitalized but is not on a ventilator. The now-emptied SCI building is being thoroughly disinfected before it reopens as the prison's residential substance-abuse treatment housing unit. In-person drug treatment programming will resume at SCI next week.

**DOC also announced today that it began installing video tablets at SCI this week as part of its system-wide initiative expand inmate video visitation and programming. Meanwhile, every inmate at SCI continues to receive 2 free 5-minute phone calls each week to keep in touch with family and community supports while in-person visitation remains temporarily suspended.**

**DOC plans to resume in-person visitation at all DOC facilities on September 1st.**

DOC's aggressive COVID-19 mitigation efforts at SCI began [in early July, 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. Additional mitigation efforts included:

- Twice daily temperature checks and screenings for symptoms and pulse oxygen level for all inmates. *As of August 11, 900 inmates across 5 DOC facilities continue to individually receive daily symptom checks.*
- All SCI and MCCC inmates were tested for 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 to a vacant housing building at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center to keep them in a COVID-free environment. *As of August 11, DOC has administered more than 1,500 inmate COVID-19 tests, including more than 1,200 proactive tests of asymptomatic inmates.*

[Click HERE to review a current tracking chart of active inmate and staff COVID-19 cases and recoveries.](#)

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 who enter any DOC facility or 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.
- Inmates who present symptoms of COVID-19 are immediately isolated and tested, including through rapid COVID-19 test capabilities available at JTVCC and SCI. Inmates who test positive are transferred to a COVID-19 Treatment Center designed to hospital standards that is staffed around the clock by security and medical staff.
- Extra daily cleanings take place in all facilities, including the use of 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. 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. DOC has sped up implementation of virtual video capabilities across Level IV and Level V facilities to enable expanded medical and behavioral health telemedicine and inmate programming.

Inmates across Delaware's correctional system 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.