

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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DOC provides update on COVID-19 mitigation efforts

Dover, DE - Proactive screening and testing have identified additional inmate COVID-19 cases at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC), the state's largest prison in Smyrna, and the first positive inmate test results at Baylor Women's Correctional Institution (BWCI) in the eight months since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Correction reported today.

As increased community spread outside of correctional facilities has elevated the risk of the infectious virus entering its system, the DOC has implemented daily symptom screening by medical staff, including temperature and pulse oxygen level checks, for more than 1,700 inmates at several prisons and work release centers, on top of existing rigorous prevention, screening, testing and cleaning efforts. A week ago these screening measures and rapid COVID-19 tests identified a cluster of positive cases in one housing building at JTVCC. Ongoing screening and testing have identified a total of 45 JTVCC inmates with positive COVID-19 test results from that same housing building and three additional tiers in other housing units. Additionally, proactive screening and testing this week at BWCI identified that facility's first positive inmate test results since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. After an initial positive test result was received at BWCI the entire housing unit was immediately placed in quarantine, all inmates in the unit received a COVID-19 test, and movement was limited across the prison compound. Those test results have all been returned, with 32 inmates testing positive at BWCI. Through contact tracing, the DOC has identified a contract behavioral healthcare professional who has tested positive as the likely source of the infection at BWCI, despite wearing proper PPE.

"DOC redoubled our screening, prevention, and testing measures within our correctional system as community spread increased outside of DOC facilities and that effort paid off with early detection of clusters of infection at two prison facilities," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "Over the past eight months the Department of Correction and our healthcare provider have learned how to effectively mitigate COVID-19 and we are working aggressively and methodically to eradicate these clusters of the virus from our facilities. All inmates who have tested positive are receiving round-the-clock treatment, and our extensive screening, testing, and cleaning continues across every correctional facility."

Three additional inmates tested positive for COVID-19 this week, including one work release offender from Sussex Community Corrections Center and two cellmates from Howard R. Young Correctional Institution. All have been moved to the JTVCC COVID-19 Treatment Center. Of the 80 total inmates with active COVID-19 infection today, 47 are asymptomatic and 33 have minor symptoms. None are hospitalized or require supplemental oxygen. Of the 48 male inmates, 47 have been transferred to the JTVCC COVID-19 Treatment Center and one is being housed in the JTVCC infirmary for observation. Of the 32 female inmates, 31 are in the BWCI COVID-19 Treatment Center, a stand-alone housing unit on the prison compound with 24-hour medical and security staff, and one is being housed separately in quarantine.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates for privacy protection.

Today's update comes more than a week after the DOC temporarily suspended in-person visitation statewide as a precaution against COVID-19 and two days after the DOC temporarily suspended work release programs statewide on November 18 to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission from the community into DOC facilities.

The DOC continues to employ a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the introduction and spread of COVID-19, 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 time they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleanings 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.
- Face masks have been provided to every inmate at all Level V prisons and Level IV work release and violation of probation facilities statewide.
- Voluntary COVID-19 testing is being offered to all correctional staff and medical personnel at every DOC facility.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19, including a tracking chart of active inmate and staff cases, and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.