

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

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DOC announces inmate death

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced that **Jose Rivera**, a 54 year-old inmate with chronic health conditions from James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC), died on Tuesday evening, December 22 at Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus from complications from chronic illnesses, including Asthma, Allergic rhinitis, and Osteoarthritis, and COVID-19.

Rivera received a rapid COVID-19 test at JTVCC on December 5 and tested positive after displaying symptoms of illness, and he was admitted that same day to Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus for observation and treatment. As symptoms progressed additional medical interventions were undertaken and Rivera was placed on a ventilator on December 16. As Rivera's condition continued to deteriorate his family was engaged in treatment decision-making and he was placed on comfort care. He was pronounced dead by hospital staff at 5:00 p.m. on December 22.

Rivera's body was released to the Delaware Division of Forensic Science to determine cause of death. Rivera, from Wilmington, DE, has been in DOC custody since 2015 and was serving a 21-year sentence for Strangulation and Violating a No Contact Order.

Rivera is the first inmate to die from COVID-related complications in more than three and a half months. Over the past seven weeks as community spread has spiked across Delaware the DOC has experienced elevated numbers of COVID-19 cases. Proactive screening and testing identified initial clusters of COVID-19 cases last month among inmates at JTVCC and Baylor Women's Correctional Institution, followed by clusters of cases at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution and Sussex Correctional Institution later in November. Aggressive proactive testing, quarantine, and contact tracing continues **with more than 3,200 inmate COVID-19 tests administered since November 1** on top of ongoing screening, quarantine, treatment, and cleaning practices. See the attached COVID-19 Update for information about ongoing prevention and mitigation measures.

Inmate COVID-19 case data as of December 22:

- 752 inmates have recovered from COVID-19 since the November clusters were first identified. A total of 1,302 inmates have recovered from COVID-19 since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.
- 262 inmates have active COVID-19 infection, of whom **90% have no symptoms of illness**. 27 inmates with active COVID-19 infection are symptomatic, including 13 who are hospitalized. No inmate patients are on a ventilator.
- There have been 12 COVID-related deaths (including Rivera), including 11 from complications from serious chronic diseases and COVID-19 and 1 from COVID-19.

If you are a crime victim in need of assistance, you are encouraged to call DOC Victim Services at 302-857-5440.

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.