

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 **Michael Harris**, a 40 year-old inmate with chronic health conditions from Sussex Correctional Institution (SCI), died on Tuesday evening, January 19 at Beebe Hospital from complications from chronic illnesses, including Asthma, Diabetes, Chronic Pain Syndrome, and COVID-19.

Harris received a rapid COVID-19 test at SCI on January 10 and tested positive after displaying symptoms of illness. He was immediately moved to the SCI COVID-19 Treatment Center where inmate patients receive round-the-clock monitoring and care. On January 13 as his symptoms progressed Harris was admitted to Beebe Hospital for additional treatment and monitoring. On January 19 Harris's condition suddenly deteriorated and he was placed on a ventilator. Harris was pronounced dead by hospital staff at 11:10 p.m. on January 19.

Harris's body was released to the Delaware Division of Forensic Science to determine cause of death. Harris, from Dover, DE, has been in and out of DOC custody for the past 23 years. Most recently, he has been in DOC custody since February, 2020 and was found guilty on December 16, 2020 of Manufacturing/Delivery/Possession with the Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance and Endangering the Welfare of a Child. He was sentenced to one year in prison, followed by one year of Level IV DOC Supervision.

Over the past eleven 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 in early November among inmates at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center and Baylor Women's Correctional Institution, followed by clusters of cases at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution and Sussex Correctional Institution later in November, and more recently a cluster of cases at Plummer Community Corrections Center. **Aggressive proactive testing, quarantine, and contact tracing have continued, with 5,172 inmate COVID-19 tests administered since November 1** on top of ongoing screening, quarantine, treatment, and cleaning practices.

Inmate COVID-19 case data as of January 19, 2021:

- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, **10,571 inmate COVID-19 tests** have been administered.
- **1,792 inmates have recovered from COVID-19** since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, including 1,242 inmate recoveries since the November clusters were first identified.
- 84 inmates have active COVID-19 infection, including 21 inmates who are symptomatic. 2 inmate COVID-19 patients are hospitalized and no inmate patients are on a ventilator.
- Over the past four months (since mid-September) more than 1,300 inmates have recovered from COVID-19, while two inmates have died from COVID-related complications.
- Since April there have been a total of 13 COVID-related inmate deaths (including Harris), including 12 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.