

# 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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## DOC announces inmates over 60 years old are fully vaccinated and 50% of inmates will have access to COVID-19 vaccination by next week as vaccine supply grows

*Inmate COVID cases have remained in single digits for more than one month*

**Dover, DE --** As the number of inmates with active COVID-19 infection remains in the single digits statewide, **the DOC projected today that half of the prison inmate population will have access to a COVID-19 vaccination within the next week.**

Through March 30, 649 inmates and 1,265 DOC officers, staff, and healthcare professionals have received at least a first COVID-19 vaccine dose. DOC began vaccinating officers and inmates in January, soon after the FDA granted its first emergency use authorization for COVID-19 vaccines. As directed by the state's distribution plan, vaccines were initially given to officers and healthcare staff who are in daily contact with inmates and to the most vulnerable inmates - those over age 60 with significant chronic health conditions.

Deliveries of vaccines to the DOC have steadily increased. This week alone, DOC has received 1,200 vaccine doses earmarked for inmates that are being administered across every state prison and community corrections facility. Additional doses will be made available to the DOC to meet inmate and officer vaccination demand.

“DOC’s goal is to vaccinate 80% of the incarcerated individuals by June,” **said Commissioner Claire DeMatteis.** “DOC and our Centurion healthcare partners first focused on vaccinating all inmates over 60 years old, and with our educational efforts, only 18 percent of this older incarcerated population declined the vaccine.”

As inmate vaccinations have expanded to a broader, and younger inmate population, DeMatteis said DOC has implemented a multi-step effort to educate inmates that the life-saving vaccines are safe, rigorously tested, and present minimal side effects. DOC is providing inmates with information about the vaccine through several channels, including:

- posting informational flyers in all housing units in English and Spanish;

- showing recorded public service announcements from respected physicians and community leaders of color to address reluctance of some inmates to get vaccinated and to drive high rates of vaccination across racial, ethnic, and demographic groups, and;
- facilitating conversational face-to-face patient education by correctional medical staff to provide inmates with details about vaccine safety and effectiveness, share the importance of getting vaccinated, and answer their questions.

In January 2021 the DOC established incentives to encourage inmates to receive the vaccine, including additional good time credit, free commissary items, free video visitation time, and priority registration for in-person visitation. Additionally, the DOC has partnered with community health providers to schedule second dose vaccination appointments for detentioners and sentenced inmates who are released after receiving a first dose while in DOC custody.

Correctional Officers, Probation Officers, healthcare workers, and staff who have not already registered to receive a COVID-19 vaccine have ongoing access to DOC vaccine clinics, community clinics for first responders and law enforcement officers, and individually through vaccination events and provider sites that serve the general public.

DOC's COVID-19 vaccination campaign builds on the foundation of DOC's comprehensive COVID-19 mitigation efforts, which include:

- Last month, DOC completed the first phase of a project to **install cutting-edge air quality improvement equipment designed to remediate against COVID-19** in Delaware's correctional facilities. The Delaware DOC is the first American correctional system to employ this air purification technology which has been demonstrated to eliminate 99% of pathogens and contaminants, including a new adaption to decontaminate for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The second and final phase of the this project will be completed by the end of April.
- In early January, **contactless wrist thermometer scanners** were deployed to every correctional facility. These body temperature scanners replace forehead thermometers used during the screening process at all facilities.
- In January the DOC deployed more than a dozen **portable electrostatic decontaminating sprayers** to quickly and safely disinfect targeted areas.
- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any prison, work release center, and DOC office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a temperature check. 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.
- The DOC has been a leader in COVID-19 testing. **To-date the DOC has administered 12,665 inmate COVID-19 tests**, mostly proactive tests on inmates with no symptoms of illness, and the DOC has facilitated thousands of staff COVID-19 tests. Voluntary COVID-19 testing is offered daily to all correctional staff and medical personnel at every DOC facility.
- Extra daily cleanings of DOC facilities, including with specialized decontaminating fogging machines, are ongoing.

- 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.

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.

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