

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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DOC reports that inmate COVID-19 vaccinations surpass 50% as DOC completes systemwide installation of advanced COVID-fighting air purification technology

Benchmarks reached as inmate COVID-19 cases have remained in single digits statewide for three consecutive months

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) announced today nearly 60 percent of male inmates at the state's largest prison have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and nearly two-thirds of female offenders are fully vaccinated.

Statewide, more than 50 percent of inmates have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, nearly 60 percent of officers, medical personnel and professional staff are vaccinated.

The steady increase in vaccinations comes as DOC completes the installation of cutting-edge COVID-fighting air quality improvement systems in all of the state's correctional facilities and community corrections centers. These measures, supported by ongoing COVID-19 mitigation practices, have kept inmate COVID-19 cases in the single digits for more than three months and are helping to advance the Department's phased return to normal operations.

"Since early January more than 3,400 inmates and staff have received COVID-19 vaccinations and we are well on the way to achieving our vaccination goals," **Department of Correction Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "This strong emphasis on vaccinations and our investment in new ventilation technology that remediates against COVID-19 along with our ongoing comprehensive mitigation strategy have driven COVID-19 cases to the lowest levels in a year. Thanks to the dedication and hard work of our exceptional officers, staff, and contract healthcare provider there are hopeful signs that we are nearing the end of this very challenging public health epidemic."

By the third week in April every inmate in DOC custody had been offered the COVID-19 vaccine. **To-date 2,256 inmates - more than 50% - have received at least one COVID-19**

vaccine dose while in custody, including 1,748 inmates (41%) who are fully vaccinated. Moreover, 83% of DOC's highest risk inmates - those over the age of 60 - are vaccinated.

Correctional healthcare staff continue to circulate throughout inmate housing areas on an ongoing basis to offer information and vaccinations to unvaccinated inmates. This vaccination effort is supported by a comprehensive outreach campaign within DOC facilities that includes printed educational materials in Spanish and English and a video education series that features informational messages and testimonials from local and national leaders, doctors, community advocates, and Correctional Officers. In addition, DOC has facilitated in-person visits by community leaders and medical professionals to provide face-to-face education and vaccine advocacy to the inmate population. DOC is offering inmates several incentives to encourage vaccination, including bonus good time credits, special meals, and commissary gift bags.

The attached photo was taken May 7 during a visit to a COVID vaccination clinic at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution by Dr. Joan Coker, Dr. Velma Scantlebury, and Dr. Neil Hockstein. The doctors visited the facility at the request of DOC leaders to encourage and administer inmate vaccinations. More than 90 inmates agreed to receive COVID vaccines that were administered that day as a result of their information-sharing and advocacy.

Baylor Women's Correctional Institution leads state prisons in the percentage of inmates who have been vaccinated at 63%, followed by the state's largest prison facility James T. Vaughn Correctional Center at 59%. Other prison and community corrections facilities have registered inmate vaccination rates from 43% to more than 80%. DOC has set an inmate vaccination goal of 80% by the end of June.

This past week the DOC also completed a project to install cutting-edge air quality improvement equipment by Eagle X Pro that has been demonstrated to eliminate 99% of pathogens and contaminants, including a new adaption to decontaminate for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. [In February, the DOC became the first American correctional system to employ this technology, beginning at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution \(HRYCI\) in Wilmington.](#) Through last week 159 Eagle X Pro corona discharge units have been installed into the air supply ducts of HVAC systems across all prison, work release, and violation of probation facilities. These HVAC systems are set to continuously circulate air to ensure a continuous flow of its virus-fighting ions throughout climate-controlled indoor spaces 24 hours a day.

Meanwhile, **cases of inmate COVID-19 infection have remained in the single digits for more than three consecutive months, since the first week in February. Currently, only three inmates are COVID-positive, none of whom are symptomatic.** . The majority of new COVID-positive cases over the past several months have been new intakes who are pre-trial detentioners, not sentenced offenders.

A total of 11,750 inmate COVID-19 tests have been administered over the past year, and as a further safeguard when returning to the community DOC has offered voluntary COVID-19 antigen testing to all inmates as they prepare for release. Of the 1,249 inmates who have elected to receive antigen testing since last December, 1,248 test results have been negative and only one was positive.

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 inmates, officers, staff, and correctional healthcare personnel are offered on-site COVID-19 vaccinations.
- 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 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.
- Extra daily cleanings of DOC facilities 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.
- 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 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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