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Widespread COVID-19 Testing Planned for All Adult Institutions

Missouri Department of Corrections sent this bulletin at 05/22/2020 11:45 AM CDT

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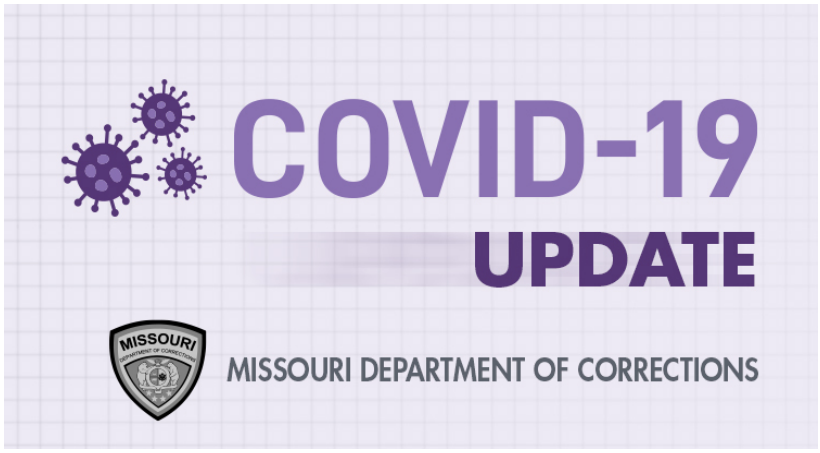

Dear Corrections team:

Increasing COVID-19 testing capacity, with the goal of completing 7,500 tests per day, is one of the four major components of Missouri's Show Me Strong Recovery Plan and a key to reopening the state. Missouri's testing strategy includes **sentinel testing**, a process of testing most or all members of a large group of people living or working together in close contact, even if there are no known cases of COVID-19 in that location.

Beginning **Tuesday, May 26**, all Missouri Department of Corrections adult institutions will participate in sentinel testing.

Now that the testing capacity has increased, the state is positioned for widespread testing of confined populations, which gives us the information we need to stop the virus within each location and keep it from spreading to your families and your communities. We want to keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy.

We plan to test all offenders and staff at **Southeast Correctional Center** and **South Central Correctional Center** beginning **Tuesday, May 26**.

The following week, beginning **Sunday, May 31**, we will test all staff and offenders at **Algoa Correctional Center** and **Chillicothe Correctional Center**.

Department leaders currently are developing a plan for effective and efficient testing at other facilities throughout the state in the coming weeks.

Before, during and after this process takes place, we will continue to adhere to the viral containment plans implemented at all facilities. If some members of the corrections community test positive for COVID-19, we will continue our strategy of isolating offenders and sending staff home.

If everyone at a site tests negative, it means what we're doing is working and your dedication is paying off. It *does not* mean the pandemic is over. It also does not mean we can immediately return to "normal." A test result is a snapshot in time; someone who tests negative today can contract the virus tomorrow. We will continue to test everyone who has symptoms throughout this process. However, the sentinel test results *can* help us to keep you safe and can give us the information we need to make informed decisions about the future and a gradual return to more regular operations.

Community testing will launch over the next 10 days in Boone, Cape Girardeau, Greene, Jackson, Jefferson and St. Charles counties.

This random sampling of Missouri citizens gives the state a better sense of COVID-19 prevalence, which helps inform COVID-19 response and ease uncertainty. Low prevalence guides the community toward returning to somewhat normal operations. Higher prevalence lets leaders know quick and proactive steps must be taken to keep the virus from spreading. As our department comes together to support the governor's plan for safely returning the state to normal operations, all of us must do our part. If you do not work in an adult institution, please participate in community testing.

Please stay tuned for updates on these new testing strategies and testing locations. We are grateful for your flexibility and your dedication as we take this next big step toward a safer Missouri.

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