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RANDALL A. LIBERTY
COMMISSIONER

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Statement from Randall A. Liberty, Commissioner Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections does not have any confirmed cases of COVID-19. We continue our phased approach to the prevention and management of COVID-19.

The information contained in this statement outlines measures the Department is taking in response to COVID-19 and attempts to answer questions we have received in recent days.

Phased Approach

- Phase One- As described in previous statements, the focus of phase one was prevention and preparation.

- Phase Two—The DOC entered phase two on March 13, 2020 due to concerns of community transmissions. We remain in phase two, which, as noted in previous statements consists of active preparation for potential cases of confirmed COVID-19 among inmates or staff. Additional steps we are taking as part of phase two, that have not been previously discussed include:

    - Daily briefings at all facilities
    - Suspension of self-serve dining
    - Preparing education, vocational and wellness material for print distribution
    - Uploading of educational, vocational and wellness material on to tablet technology
    - Pre-planning with local hospitals
    - Review of protocols for isolation
    - Isolation areas designated at each facility
    - Limit staff working among multiple facilities
    - Itemizing, ordering, and analysis of future PPE inventory need

- Phase Three—The Department will enter phase three when there is a suspected or confirmed case within a DOC facility. This medical determination will be made between DOC staff, Wellpath, Maine CDC, and MEMA, as necessary. Actions taken during phase three will likely include the following, however not all measures may be initiated at the same time in every facility:
    - Notification protocols among State agencies and medical community
    - Increased use of PPE throughout facility
    - Suspension of programming, as necessary
    - Cohort intakes in isolation
    - Alternative method for medication distribution (not related to COVID-19)
    - Alternative method for food services, as necessary

- Triage sick calls

Releases

- During the week of March 16, 2020 the DOC began an immediate review of adult clients for placement to Supervised Community Confinement (SCCP).
- SCCP is a community-based program that allows incarcerated clients to be transferred from the correctional institution to housing in the community while finishing their sentence.
  - Clients classified as community custody, have a current release date of less than two years, have been discipline free for 90 days or more, have served a designated period of time within a State managed facility, and have an approved transition plan are eligible.
- SCCP is a widely used program during normal operations, however we have increased the amount of staff reviewing client requests for SCCP in response to COVID-19.

- SCCP Releases
  - As of March 27: 57 adults have had SCCP investigations and cases considered
  - As of March 27: 29 adults have been released to SCCP
  - By April 3: Anticipate 15 adults will be approved for SCCP
  - By April 10: Anticipate 12 additional adults will be approved for SCCP

- Juvenile community and juvenile facility staff have reviewed the current detention and committed population at Long Creek Youth Development Center to identify youth to be released as soon as possible.
- Juvenile Services field and facility staff consider the following factors when reviewing appropriateness for release:
  - Severity of offense history
  - Stable home environment
  - Length of time incarcerated
  - Progress in treatment at facility
  - Supports/treatment available in the community
  - Length of time left until the maximum release date

- Juvenile Release:
  - As of March 27: 12 detained youth have been released and 5 committed youth have been released.
  - By April 1: Anticipate 4 committed youth to be identified for release.

Communications

- Phone calls: Effective March 24, 2020 all inmates were provided 20 free minutes for phone calls. These calls will be available for inmates until the minutes have been used.
  - The Department is able to do this by absorbing the costs of these phone calls.
- SMS text messages: Effective March 24, 2020, 20 free SMS text messages were provided to active messenger accounts. These messages will be available through April 15, 2020.
- Skype visits: In early April Skype video chat will be made available to each inmate at a rate of one, twenty-minute video chat per month.

Operations

- Transports—Transporting of inmates between facilities and to certain community-based medical appointments is a routine correctional practice that ensures inmates receive their necessary programming, housing or medical and behavioral health services.

- The DOC will continue transports if necessary; however we have significantly slowed down the rate of transports since the start of COVID.
- Health screening and temperature checks were done and will continue to be done on any inmates scheduled for transfer. Staff assigned to transports have and will continue to have health screens and temperature checks prior to starting their shift.

- Programming—For the time being, all programming is running as normal, except for volunteer- led programs. Adhering to the Governor's call for stronger engagement of physical distancing, the DOC is or already has implemented the following practices, whenever possible:

  - Educational, Vocational and Wellness programming, including college classes are either:
    - Reduced to less than 10 per classroom
    - Delivered via ITV or other form of technology, or
    - Classes larger than 10 moved to larger rooms to ensure distance between the participants.
    - Increased opportunity for in-cell work through tablet technology and print material.

  - Behavioral Health Groups:
    - Typically have less than 10 individuals anyway
    - Groups with more than 10 moved to larger rooms to ensure distance between the participants.
    - Increased opportunity for in-cell work through tablet technology and print material.

- Intake—In response to concerns about COVID-19 we have changed our intake practices.
  - All general population adult intakes and transfers are going through Maine Correctional Center only.
    - Except for IMHU clients or approved county jail safekeeps, who continue to go directly to Maine State Prison.
  - In addition to standard intake protocol, individuals are now also screened for COVID-19 symptoms, this includes temperature checks.

- Social/Physical Distancing
  - Outdoor recreational time is encouraged, ball fields, yard, walking areas that naturally provide distance between individuals.
  - Additional material has been loaded to tablets, so inmates have more access to individual learning time while in pod/unit.

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