Quest Diagnostics contract to support NDOC, Veterans COVID testing needs

Humboldt Conservation Camp offenders positive for COVID-19

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The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) recently secured and launched a $10 million contract with Quest Diagnostics for COVID-19 testing through the end of the year to support ongoing efforts at the Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) and State Veteran's Homes.

This contract will help reduce the burden on the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory (NSPHL), where NDOC testing currently accounts for 26 percent of the total number of tests. With the diversion of testing to Quest through the end of the year, there should be a notable decrease in turnaround time for other entities that continue to send specimens to the NSPHL.

This contract is supported through the State's allocation of CARES Relief Funds (CRF) and will cover 100,000 molecular tests throughout the state with the goal of reducing test result turnaround time for laboratories statewide. In addition to institutional settings, such as correctional and skilled nursing facilities that complete a high volume of tests, testing through Quest will be available to county partners experiencing surges in cases and increased demand.

As part of the contract, Quest provides the delivery of collection kits to each facility as well as the courier and processing once the specimens have been completed.

The priority for this testing will be institutional settings, and the prioritization of these facilities is one tool to help officials prevent the spread of the virus and protect vulnerable populations.

The contract comes at a time when Nevada is experiencing an increased surge in cases statewide, including in correctional facilities.

This week, 79 offenders at the Humboldt Conservation Camp (HCC) in Winnemucca tested positive for COVID-19. All 95 offenders at the camp, which is supervised by Lovelock Correctional Center (LCC), were tested on Nov. 12 as part of routine and ongoing testing by the Department.

Offenders who tested positive are isolated in their two-man rooms in two of three wings of the camp, while the 16 offenders testing negative are being housed in cells in the remaining wing. All offenders who tested negative on Nov. 12 were retested Thursday and results are pending.

Of the offenders who tested positive, nine are reporting symptoms, including light chills, cough and loss of taste and smell. The entire population of the camp will be retested Nov. 25.

Of the 11 staff assigned to the camp, six are out with COVID-19 or have had close contact with someone who tested positive for the virus and are in quarantine to monitor symptoms and avoid further spread. Five staff are working in the facility and relief staff are being temporarily reassigned from LCC.

Carlin Conservation Camp near Elko currently has one positive offender. The offender is isolated from the population. The camp is in modified movement status while awaiting results from Nov. 16 tests of the entire population.

Warm Springs Correctional Center
Offenders at Warm Springs Correctional Center in Carson City remain on quarantine lockdown, and the majority of cases report feeling no symptoms.

Some offenders report mild symptoms and three individuals were transported to the hospital, and all three have been discharged. One remains on oxygen, with numbers in the high 80s.

Safety of offenders and staff continues to be the highest priority of all Nevada Department of Corrections facilities, and staff are working to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of offenders on lockdown.

While Warm Springs Correctional Center is on lockdown, each unit is rotated through for a 30-minute shower and phone break, resulting in an average of three to four opportunities to call home and shower each week. Additionally, offenders are being given up to an hour outside as NDOC works to balance safety while reducing the spread of the virus and maintaining as many of the privileges as possible.

Meals are being provided from Northern Nevada Correctional Center, and offenders receive a hot breakfast and dinner and a sack lunch.

NDOC Safety Protocols
Nevada continues to maintain one of the lowest rates of COVID-19 cases among inmates, according to the latest data from the Marshall Project, a non-profit that tracks COVID-19 testing, results, and recoveries at jails and prisons throughout the United States.

In order to help contain the spread of the virus in NDOC facilities the Department is continuing to maintain a rigorous set of protocols for cleaning and movement within facilities.

The Department is taking every precaution to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus and is working to provide N95 masks for all staff with direct contact with offenders.

Other precautions include:
Offenders

- All NDOC offenders are screened for COVID-19-like symptoms on a regular basis and are tested when clinically indicated. Any NDOC offenders who display any flu-like symptoms will be immediately tested for COVID-19 and treated as though they are positive and isolated.
- NDOC offenders at all facilities are offered hand sanitizer and cleaning products at request.
- All common areas frequented by offenders are sanitized at a minimum of every 2 hours and as needed.
- NDOC offenders will be evaluated by a facility medical provider if they are symptomatic and may be transferred to a negative airflow cell if available and/or a higher level of care if indicated. NDOC offenders will be evaluated by a facility medical provider if symptomatic or if clinically indicated and may be transferred with a warden's approval to a higher level of care.
- Offenders who have been housed outside of NDOC for greater than 24 hours and are transferring into NDOC facilities will require a minimum 14-day quarantine and a COVID-19 swab test on day 7 after their transfer or sooner if they develop any symptoms. For the offender to return to general population they will require a minimum 14-day quarantine with 72 hours free of symptoms with a negative COVID-19 test result.

Employees

- All NDOC employees are screened for symptoms, and symptoms of others in their homes before being allowed into any institution or work facility.
- Employees are tested for COVID-19 every two weeks.
- All employee temperatures are taken and recorded.
- No contractors will be allowed to enter the facilities unless there is an emergent need approved by the facility warden.
- Supervisors are required to ensure that all NDOC employees and contractors always wear face masks while on NDOC property while maintaining social distancing of at least 6 feet from others.
- NDOC employees will be tested for COVID-19 by NDOC medical staff prior to being sent home. The quarantine time is a minimum of 10 days with at least 72 hours free of any symptoms prior to the employee being allowed to return to work.

Information on COVID-19 protocols at the Nevada Department of Corrections can be found at http://doc.nv.gov/About/Press_Release/covid19_updates/

Information and resources related to Nevada's COVID-19 response can be found at NVHealthResponse.nv.gov

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