YRS Gives COVID Update, Temporarily Suspends Visitation

WILMINGTON – As public health officials report rising cases of coronavirus and Delaware grapples with increased community spread, the **Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families** announced Friday it is taking immediate action to protect staff and youth in its secure care juvenile facilities.

Proactive screening and testing have identified that two youth residing at Stevenson House Detention Center have tested positive for coronavirus. The two positive youth cases are the first at secure care facilities since the COVID-19 pandemic started eight months ago.

"Since the pandemic began in March, the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services has prioritized the safety of our staff and youth by bolstering cleaning and screening protocol all the while continuing to provide needed services. We could not have done this without the dedication of our staff and the flexibility of our families during this time," said **Josette Manning, cabinet secretary of the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF), which oversees the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services.** "The coronavirus pandemic has impacted Delaware families in so many ways, which is why we have taken immediate action to protect our youth and staff. It hasn't been easy, but our staff, youth and families have risen to the challenges of COVID-19 and embodied the true meaning of resilience."

Once the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (YRS) received the positive youth test results on Friday, staff initiated cleaning and notification protocol and worked to stand up a specialized COVID-19 care unit to care for youth. Staff are also wearing personal protective equipment as a precaution. Families of youth at Stevenson House Detention Center have been notified and youth are being monitored for symptoms during this time. As part of the facility's monthly testing protocol, youth will receive COVID tests on Monday.

In order to protect personal health information, the Department cannot disclose additional information on the positive cases.

Additionally, effective immediately, YRS is temporarily suspending visitation to all of its Level IV and V secure facilities. YRS secure facilities include the New Castle County Detention Center, Stevenson House Detention Center, Ferris School and the Residential Cottages. Between the secure facilities, the Division currently cares for less than 80 youth.

During this time, YRS will offer increased phone and video calls for our youth to ensure they remain in contact with their families. The Division will continue to serve youth and meet their rehabilitative needs with core programming, which includes education and counseling.

In the last eight months since the pandemic began, 28 total secure care staff members have tested positive for coronavirus. YRS' response to coronavirus has been multi-pronged. The Division has implemented COVID-19 protocol in accordance to the Division of Public Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. Measures include:

- Training on proper cleaning techniques and screening protocols
- Providing personal protective gear to facility and community-based staff
- Daily temperature checks for youth and staff
- Staff must wear face coverings and all youth have been provided face coverings at no cost
- Youth are quarantined for 14 days upon entry to a secure care facility and monitored for symptoms
- Special COVID-19 care units have been established in order to care for positive youth

- COVID-19 testing is available to all youth monthly and all staff every two weeks
- YRS has also purchased two disinfectant foggers to rotate between facilities for cleaning

Additionally, given the increase in COVID positive cases statewide, DSCYF will be working to post regular COVID secure care updates online at kids.delaware.gov.

The Children's Department provides services to children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance use problems, and/or have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts, as well as prevention services targeted toward all youth. For more information, please visit www.kids.delaware.gov.

Media Contact: Jen Rini, jen.rini@delaware.gov