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Press Release

Department of Corrections Provides Updates on COVID-19 Prevention Plan

The Colorado Department of Corrections has been actively working to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into the prison system. At this time the department has tested 9 inmates, six of those tests were negative and the 3 other tests are still pending results. The department does have additional tests available that can be used if any inmate begins to show symptoms.

In order to continue to prevent the introduction of the virus into our facilities and parole offices, the department has already taken numerous proactive steps. Information about the department's initial response can be found HERE. In addition, a list of FAQs can be found HERE.

"It is critical that we do everything possible to keep COVID-19 out of our corrections system in order to protect our staff, inmates and parolees," said Dean Williams, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections. "The introduction of COVID-19 into the corrections system could have devastating results, so we have taken decisive action to try and prevent the introduction of the virus, while still protecting public safety. We will continue to work with our partners across the state to best manage this crisis. I am grateful for the dedicated men and women who work in DOC facilities and offices across the state who have truly risen to the occasion in managing this crisis."

Today, the department is announcing additional adjustments in order to best protect and support our staff, inmates and parolees:

1.) The department has worked with the phone vendor GTL, and will begin signing people up for video visitation options today. Information about video visitation can be found HERE. In addition, GTL has agreed to provide inmates with 1 FREE 10-minute phone call per week during this COVID-19 crisis. Free video visitation options will also be forthcoming.

2.) In accordance with the Governor's order to reduce the in-person workforce by 50 percent, the Department of Corrections headquarters in Colorado Springs has physically closed. Headquarters team members will be covering essential needs and will be working remotely. A small number of staff will continue to work in the

building to support critical needs that cannot be done remotely. Facilities and offices across the state will still receive the support they need from the headquarters team. The department has already deployed remote working equipment to a large portion of the headquarters staff and will continue to provide those resources to additional staff members over the coming days.

3.) Today, the Department of Corrections facilities and parole offices have begun to implement staffing plans that will limit the amount of staff in facilities and offices at any given time while ensuring the safety and continuity of operations. These staffing levels will allow for better social distancing, without creating other safety risks. Staffing numbers will differ from facility to facility due to security levels, physical plant, and programs, however appointing authorities have maximized scheduling to the greatest extent possible. The parole offices are implementing staffing plans that will allow for remote work while still maintaining appropriate and necessary supervision of parolees.

4.) As a law enforcement partner in managing this crisis, CDOC has been evaluating areas in which we are able to aid the criminal justice system in not overloading the jails and our correctional institutions. In order to accomplish that goal, CDOC is temporarily suspending arrests of parolees for low level technical parole violations. This will help alleviate the influx of people into county jails, and reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections coming into jail and prisons. Low level technical parole violations may be dealt with through alternative interventions to incarceration such as referral to treatment, increased contact with the parole officer, electronic monitoring, and house arrest. These low level technical violations might include things like not being able to locate employment, establish a residence, see their parole officer in person, restitution requirements, etc. **The temporary suspension still allows for arrest of offenders that are a risk to public safety**. The department will also look at the list of people who are currently in jail for low level technical parole violations to determine if any of them could be released and managed in other ways. As the COVID 19 pandemic progresses, we will continue to evaluate our management of technical parole violators taking into consideration public safety and the impact on the criminal justice system and make appropriate adjustments.