STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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JANET T. MILLS
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RANDALL A. LIBERTY
COMMISSIONER

March 20, 2020

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Statement from Randall A. Liberty, Commissioner Department of Corrections

We have been working around the clock to ensure the safety and security of the incarcerated population, staff and others. We have an internal Incident Command (IC) center set up in our Central Office in Augusta and IC's set up at each of our correctional facilities. These ICs are managing the prevention of COVID-19 as well as preparing for the impact of COVID-19 on our incarcerated population, probationers, staff and others who have business with the Department. On March 2, 2020 we began planning a phased approach to responding to COVID-19 in consultation with the Maine CDC, MEMA and the Governor's Office.

Our first phase which we stayed in until Friday, March 13, 2020, focused on prevention and preparation. This phase included:

- Increased cleaning practices and providing cleaning supplies to staff and clients, including living education areas, computers and tablets, gym equipment, and common areas.
- Posting of signage about hand washing, symptoms, and general fact sheets about COVID-19;
- Utilizing medical questionnaires related to COVID-19 during new client intakes;
- Provision of flu vaccine to those who want it but have not received it;
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for med-line and MAT staff;
- Review of recommended and necessary supplies;
- Updates for staff on: identifying signs and symptoms, infection control and quarantine protocols, and our planning efforts.

On Friday, March 13, 2020, we moved into phase two of our plan. This decision was made in consultation with the Maine CDC and MEMA. Phase two focuses on changes to procedures due to confirmed COVID-19 cases in Maine's communities. These plans included:

- Review intake process to limit to spread of germs;
- Review of lobby procedures;
- Review of monitoring staff related to COVID-19;
- Review of contact and visitation;

- Review of dining options;
- As per the Governor's direction on March 12, 2020 all non-essential State employee travel outside the State of Maine was suspended.
- Suspended all non-essential Department of Corrections in-person meetings. Now to be conducted electronically until otherwise directed.

Effective March 14, 2020 the Department implemented the following practices, in keeping with national trends to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Visits for family, friends, other non-professional visitors and volunteers who lead programs and activities were suspended.
- Alternate reporting requirements for adult and juvenile probation clients went into effect, these new measures included reporting via phone, video chat, or email.
- Home visits, site visits, and certain field work performed by adult and juvenile probation staff were suspended.
- Juvenile and adult Community Correction Officers were advised to detain only those who pose an immediate threat to public safety, and juvenile community correctional officers to seek alternative out of home placements as safely as possible and within existing resources.

Effective Monday, March 16, 2020

- All general population adult intakes and transfers to go through MCC only. This does not apply to IMHU clients or approved county jail safekeepers, which continue to go directly to MSP.
- All juvenile intakes to go through Long Creek, including those in Northern Maine.

Effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020:

- All work release programs, community restitution programs, and other community-related activities were suspended.

Additional measures we are taking to plan and respond to this pandemic include:

- Implementation of enhanced screening procedures for Department staff entering facilities prior to starting their shift. These measures include monitoring of health and questions about recent travels and exposure to possible or confirmed COVID-19.
- Development of a Frequency Asked Questions document for staff with specifics about staff monitoring, facility practices and general COVID-19 information.
- Expanding DOC client's ability to communicate with loved ones during the suspension of visits:
    a. Providing an additional two stamps for inmate letters, free of charge.
    b. Providing 20 free text messages, per week for those whose loved ones have active messenger accounts.

c. Working to provide 20 minutes of free phone calls, per week for all DOC inmates. This we anticipate being available on or before March 24, 2020.

- Immediate review of consideration for adult and juvenile clients for placement to Supervised Community Confinement (SCCP) or Community Reintegration status.
    a. Clients deemed low risk, on community custody, or currently not serving a sentence for a violent crime are being reviewed first.

- Potential reassignment of DOC's clerical staff to support the needs of Maine's Department of Labor specific to processing calls and claims.

- Temporary day care opportunities for DOC staff have been developed and licensed, in collaboration with the Office of Children and Family. These services to begin Monday, March 23, 2020 and will be available for facility staff.

- Juvenile community and juvenile facility correctional 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.
    a. To date 5 out of the 21 detained youth have left or will have left by March 22nd .
    b. To date 5 out of 29 committed youth will be released by March 27th.
    c. An additional 4 committed youth have been identified to be released by April 1st provided that necessary support services are set up.
    d. Field and facility staff meet regularly to identify youth who could be safely released in the future.

- Long Creek is currently connecting with the courts through use of video detention reviews and first-time appearances in order to maximize the use of social distancing for youth, families, field staff, facility staff, and court staff.

To date there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff or inmates. The Department of Corrections is doing everything in our power to prevent and prepare for COVID-19. We will continue to provide updates about any changes to our practices. If we have a confirmed case, we will make this public information following the procedures and guidelines of the Maine CDC.

Thank You,

Randall A. Liberty Commissioner, Department of Corrections