DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Inmate Memorandum

To: **All DOC Inmates**

From: **Commissioner Paul Schnell**

Re: **Latest Information on DOC COVID-19 Response**

Date: **March 18, 2020**

I am writing to you today after spending the morning meeting with the Governor's office and planning for the latest developments of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic with the Department of Corrections leadership team. This has been our focus for much of the last several weeks.

As of this memo, we still have not detected COVID-19 in any facility or DOC office.

We continue to be focused on preserving your health and well-being throughout this uncertain time. Here are some updates on measures we are taking.

Programming
Because we have to consider this a many months long process, we are planning to keep facility programming and other activity operational for as long as possible. We are working on how to do this in a way that keeps you safe while allowing us to avoid any sort of lockdown simply for health reasons. This planning includes:

- Work assignments
- Education
- MINNCOR
- Flag time
- Industry
- Recreation

Employee Screening
We are taking a number of steps to do everything we can to prevent from COVID-19 from coming into facilities. One step is every person entering any DOC facility is subject to mandatory screening for existing symptoms and recent travel. Those who are experiencing certain symptoms identified by health experts are required to go home. They cannot return until they are cleared by a doctor.

Hand washing stations
We are also installing new hand-washing stations at the entrances to each facility. Every person entering the facility is required to wash their hands immediately when they enter the facility. Our goal is to have hand-washing stations in place permanently.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Hand sanitizing stations
MINNCOR is rapidly producing new hand sanitizing stations to deploy at strategic points throughout facilities to avoid cross-contamination between separate units. These are being shipped today.

Soap
As you know, we have begun distributing additional soap to the facilities.

Phone Calls
We have finalized plans to permit each person two free 5 minute phone calls each week. When you begin a call, you will be asked if you want to use one of your free calls. The call will automatically disconnect after 5 minutes. The two calls are available starting **today**.

Video Visiting
We are still working with our video visiting vendor to implement free video visiting while in-person visiting is suspended.

Protecting Medically High-Risk Inmates
We are identifying medically high-risk inmates and are planning for the possibility of reorganizing some living situations to better protect everyone from potential infection.

In-Facility Procedures When Inmate Develops Symptoms
We have updated existing plans for what to do if an inmate develops symptoms of infectious diseases to make sure the plans are effective for handling COVID-19. We have procedures to make sure a person is appropriately medically isolated and to make sure anyone else that person has had close contact with is also appropriately quarantined in a non-punitive way.

Please know that we will be forthcoming and transparent if COVID-19 is discovered in a facility. We are being aggressive in how we are preparing for that possibility. But you should also understand that the procedures for responding to COVID-19 are similar to handling other flu-like illnesses. And we are still in the middle of a strong flu season.

So you might see health services and others asking questions, providing care to, or otherwise attending to inmates in a way that you might think looks like they are related to COVID-19. But that might not be the case.

Preparing for Worst-Case Scenarios
We are coordinating with the Department of Health to prepare for how to provide critical levels of care both within and potentially outside the facilities should an inmate contract COVID-19 and have their condition deteriorate significantly.