NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

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Department of Correction suspends visitation as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus

Dover, DE – The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) announces that, effective Thursday, March 12, is temporarily suspending visitation to all of its Level V prison and Level IV work release and violation of probation facilities as a precaution to protect inmates and staff from coronavirus (Covid 19). These measures come as state authorities announced today the first presumptive positive coronavirus diagnosis in Delaware and is part of ongoing efforts to minimize the risk of community spread of the virus to DOC facilities.

"The health and safety of our staff, visitors and the individuals under our supervision are our first priority, and we are temporarily suspending inmate visitation as a necessary step to reduce the risk of this illness entering and spreading within our facilities," **said Commissioner Claire DeMatteis**. "We appreciate the understanding and cooperation of family members and others who are impacted by this temporary measure."

Visitation is being suspended temporarily until the DOC implements enhanced screening measures. The DOC currently offers a variety of phone and video visitation to inmates in order to facilitate family and community support that is important to their wellbeing. While visitation is suspended, the DOC will increase the use of video visitation as available in its facilities.

In January 2020, the DOC initiated screening of symptoms of respiratory illness for inmates, staff and volunteers as a precaution during the annual flu season. At that time, the DOC also began screening inmates at intake for recent travel outside the continental US in recognition of the spread of coronavirus in China. In late February, even as incidents of the flu trended downward within its facilities, the DOC expanded these screening measures to all visitors as an early precaution against coronavirus. DOC will continue to reassess its prevention measures on an ongoing basis.

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