NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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Department of Correction proactively strengthens its COVID-19 precautions and screenings

Dover, DE – Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) Commissioner Claire DeMatteis today announced that DOC proactively has further enhanced its COVID-19 operating procedures to build on rigorous screenings, protections and cleanings already in place to help keep officers, inmates and staff safe and healthy.

"The DOC currently does not have any known cases of COVID-19. Five inmates have been tested and all results are negative," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said**. "Under the leadership of DOC's Medical Director and senior nurses, we are determined to stay a step ahead of this novel coronavirus by continuing to incorporate best practices for infectious disease control, just as DOC does every year to prevent widespread contamination of influenza in our facilities."

Today's revised DOC COVID-19 protocols include further measures relating to:

· Prevention

· Screening and surveillance

· Protections for at-risk staff and at-risk inmates

· Staff safety and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

· Testing and isolation of symptomatic inmates

Every person – including staff, contractors, volunteers and delivery persons – entering a DOC facility undergoes screenings that consist of a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer. New inmates undergo a medical screening at intake, including COVID-19-related questions and temperature check, and newly arriving inmates are now held in a separate housing unit for 14 days where they receive close monitoring by medical staff. Moreover, every DOC facility has prepared separate isolation areas to be used to house inmates who demonstrate symptoms of respiratory infection and fever.

Additionally, effective immediately, the DOC is only allowing work release offenders to report to employers that employ the same rigorous COVID-19 screening and cleaning procedures as the DOC. Every work release offender receives a COVID-19 screenings that consists of a series of questions and a temperature check with a thermometer when returning from a work shift.

"Securing and maintaining employment is a critical driver of reentry success, but in the current circumstances we have to maintain a balance between supporting offender employment and supplying labor to industries that continue to operate against the risk to public health,"

Commissioner DeMatteis said, noting that DOC continues to assess the work release program on a daily basis to support the safety and well-being of officers, staff, inmates and the community.

Today's action is just the latest step taken by DOC to prevent the spread of COVID-19 into the correction system. Most recently:

- On March 25, DOC suspended all group treatment programs at Probation and Parole offices to help reduce community spread of COVID-19. These offenders continue to be supervised by their assigned Probation Officers and treatment providers have been directed to make and maintain telephone contact with probationers who are enrolled in treatment programs and to immediately report any concerns or inability to contact a probationer to the assigned Probation Officer.
- On March 22 the DOC suspended access to DOC facilities by program volunteers who are over age 60 or have underlying health conditions.
- In mid-March, DOC transitioned most in-person probationer visits to phone visits in an effort to support the social distancing measures of the state's COVID-19 response. Certain high-risk probationers continue to be required to meet in person with their Probation Officers at Probation and Parole offices, where significant precautions are being taken to screen individuals upon arrival and to limit contact.
- On March 11, the day of the first positive COVID-19 test result in Delaware, DOC suspended visitation as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus.

Visit http://doc.delaware.gov and follow DOC on Facebook and Twitter to get the latest news and information about the DOC's COVID-19 response.

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