



Ned Lamont
Governor

STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER



Rollin Cook
Commissioner

TO: All Staff

FROM: Rollin Cook, Commissioner

DATE: May 12, 2020

SUBJECT: Mass Testing for the novel coronavirus

In keeping with my commitment to communicate often during the pandemic, I want to update you regarding the Department's latest efforts with regards to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. Incredibly, we are approximately two-and-one-half months into the healthcare crisis and together we have overcome many challenges. Our next challenge comes as the community focus turns to testing of as many individuals for the novel coronavirus as possible. To that end, we are finalizing plans with the Governor's unified command structure under the statewide Emergency Operating Center (EOC), to begin mass testing for both employees and the incarcerated population.

The first facility to have its asymptomatic staff tested for the presence of the novel coronavirus will be Osborn CI, starting this Thursday, May 14, 2020. Additional information regarding testing and signup procedures will be provided in a rollcall announcement. A statewide facility schedule for future testing will also be forthcoming. Any staff member who is experiencing symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus should contact their personal healthcare provider.

Efforts to have staff tested for the virus began in early May with mobile testing at each of the Department's district houses. Additionally, we continue to encourage our employees to take advantage of other on-going testing opportunities offered throughout the state. One such opportunity is the New Haven location which continues to offer testing of first responders on a daily basis. As this option is expected to be discontinued at the end of the month, please contact your assigned facility liaison to secure a testing date/time as soon as possible.

As far as the offenders are concerned, a plan for large scale testing of the population, leaning on assistance from contracted vendors is in proceeding, with the goal to begin testing this week at the Osborn Correctional Institution. The expectation is that there will be an uptick in the number of positive test results, some of which may be deemed asymptomatic. The significant increase in the number of tests when compared to the Agency's initial policy of testing only those who presented with COVID-19 related symptoms, will undoubtedly require us to adjust our pandemic response plan.

Phone: 860.692.7780 ♦ Fax: 860.692.7783
24 Wolcott Hill Road ♦ Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109
Website: www.ct.gov/doc

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One such plan being finalized is to medically isolate COVID-19 positive offenders from the Osborn facility, at the Osborn facility - rather than the current practice of transferring them to the Northern Medical Isolation Unit. Ultimately, the number of offenders who do test positive for the virus will determine which operation plan is implemented.

Once all offenders at the Osborn facility have been tested, the testing will move to successive facilities until every offender has been tested.

The testing of all staff, as well as offenders, is essential for the public health and safety of us all. I know that I can count on all of you to do your part – whether it is getting tested or helping others to get tested - to continue to help this Agency contain the spread of the coronavirus.

One of the hardest parts of a never before seen scenario is trying to anticipate for unknown variables.

Fortunately, some of our strongest attributes are the ability to assess a situation, adapt to new circumstances, and overcome the challenge. These qualities and abilities have served us well in the past and remain critical to our successful operations today.

Although, we may not be out of the woods yet, I sincerely hope the worst is behind us – all thanks to you. We will continue to evaluate our response, learn from our past experience and implement strategies that help us succeed and better address any resurgence we see in the near future. You have my unending gratitude for your continued dedication during these challenging times. Stay safe.