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Agency of Human Services

For Immediate Release:

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Update - COVID-19 at Northwest State Correctional Facility

Corrections current status of Northwest State Correctional Facility and the Northeast Correctional Complex

Waterbury, Vt., April 11, 2020 – Following the positive test result of an inmate on April 8, the Vermont Department of Corrections (DOC) and Department of Health worked rapidly to test all inmates and staff at the Northwest State Correctional Facility (NWSCF). A total of 328 tests were completed. The current results that have come back have found that 32 inmates and 16 staff members have tested positive. We are waiting on nine staff results to come back.

To mitigate the spread of the virus, DOC has been prepared to use the Northeast Correctional Complex (NECC) as a surge location for inmates who test positive. 28 COVID positive inmates have been moved to NECC in St. Johnsbury. The staff that tested positive are being asked to quarantine at home or they can quarantine at an isolation site arranged by the state in Chittenden County. Four inmates remain at NWSCF in a negative pressure room.

“We have been carefully monitoring the spread of the virus and made preparations for a surge location,” said Commissioner of Corrections Jim Baker. “The situation changes by the hour, and while we hoped we would never have to use the surge location, on Thursday we put our plan into action and moved the appropriate inmates to NECC.”

The 28 inmates who have moved to NECC are asymptomatic, and do not require hospital level of care. Consistent with the plans put in place in consultation with the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), the staff has been trained in protocols to mitigate any spread to staff when interacting with the COVID positive inmates.

If inmates who are placed at NECC develop symptoms that require hospital level of care, they will be transported to the University of Vermont Medical Center in lieu of being treated at the Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital.

The 65 inmates who were previously in the work camp portion of the facility, were relocated to other facilities across the state, prior to any COVID positive inmates arriving from NWSCF. The staff at NECC have personal protective equipment (PPE) and have created different areas across the facility where PPE is and isn't required to be worn. These steps will not only work to provide staff and inmate health and safety, but will also allow staff to have spaces to take a break and not need to wear PPE.

NWSCF remains in a full lockdown. All remaining correctional facilities in Vermont remain in modified lockdown. Staff and inmates have been provided protective masks and everyone inside the facilities will be required to wear a mask at all times.

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