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For Immediate Release

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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS COVID-19 RETESTING IN ST. ALBANS UPDATE

Test results support contact tracing, containment effort mitigation practices

Waterbury, Vt., May 4, 2020 – The Vermont Department of Corrections’ second round of mass testing of inmates and staff at Northwest State Correctional Facility (NWSCF) in St. Albans is complete. Of the 155 inmates and 154 staff members tested, seven inmates (4.5% of test group) and one staff member (0.6% of test group) tested positive for COVID-19.

The seven new positive inmate tests came out of one unit at NWSCF, which only houses inmates that the department’s contact tracing work showed as having potential exposure to the 38 prior inmate positives at NWSCF. The one new positive staff member worked in the same unit.

“To go from 38 positive inmate tests to seven, and from 17 positive staff tests to 1 at this facility speaks to the extraordinary efforts of the officers, medical staff, planning teams and the people working tirelessly throughout the department to mitigate the spread of this virus,” said Interim Commissioner Jim Baker. “The challenging circumstances that our inmates must adapt to while living in the face of the unknown, as we all are, is also notable. We are in the early stages of partnering with the Council of State Governments and Recidiviz on new data modeling system, and early results show Vermont has one of the lowest rates in the nation for the virus spreading within a corrections system.”

These final retest results bring the total number of inmate positives from NWSCF to 45. The seven new COVID-positive inmates have already been transferred to the department’s surge facility at the Northeast Correctional Complex (NECC) in St. Johnsbury, bringing the total number of COVID-positive inmates at NECC to 18.

The first round of mass testing at NWSCF was conducted on April 8 after an inmate tested positive. Those tests resulted in 38 total positive inmates and 17 positive staff. Twenty-three of the original 38 positive inmates that have since had two consecutive negative tests are being returned to NWSCF. Eleven inmates from that first round are still pending two negative tests and will remain at NECC pending two consecutive negative tests. Four inmates have been released.

“It is too early to fully understand the data we are receiving on test results, but early indications are that the unprecedented infrastructure built to manage the pandemic is showing success,” Baker continued. “Vermont DOC has demonstrated that the development and refining of protocols based on the evolving science is bringing positive results. I am thankful for the cooperation of the Vermont Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and the incredible work of the staff at the DOC.”

Daily updates on the COVID-19 response in Vermont’s correctional facilities can be found at <https://doc.vermont.gov/covid-19-information-page>.

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