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Bergen County Sheriff's Office Corrections Officer Tests Positive for COVID-19

HACKENSACK, N.J. – A Bergen County Sheriff's Office Corrections Officer employed at the Bergen County Jail has tested positive for COVID-19. The test was declared presumptive positive on Wednesday by the New Jersey State Department of Health and has been sent to the Center for Disease Control for confirmation.

The Bergen County Jail is following CDC and Federal Bureau of Prisons COVID-19 guidelines for law enforcement. Administration officials are also working in close cooperation with the Bergen County Department of Health Services and the New Jersey State Department of Health.

Upon medical evaluation, the officer was asked to self-quarantine for 14 days. Seven additional corrections officers in close contact have also been asked to self-quarantine out of precaution. Medical staff at the Bergen County Jail are closely monitoring inmates who may have been in contact.

Over the last two weeks, Sheriff Anthony Cureton has ordered his administration to take several proactive measures to prepare for and mitigate the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus including:

- Offering disinfectant spray, a bleach-based solution to sanitize floors and surface space, hand sanitizer, and soap in every housing unit at the jail. The administration is encouraging both staff and the jail general population to use these tools often and liberally;
- Implementing a rotational out-of-cell schedule to practice social distancing for the jail general population. This is done on a two-hour rotation basis where half the unit is in-cell and half is out;
- Dramatically increasing sanitation frequency in housing units at the jail and within the Sheriff administrative offices;
- Modifying the intake process for all incoming detainees and inmates. Upon intake, detainees and inmates are screened to determine who has been to a country impacted with the virus or if they may have been in contact with someone who has contracted the virus in the last thirty days;
- Putting protocol in place for jail medical staff to continually monitor our incarcerated population by increasing screenings;
- Making accommodations to continue to allow attorney-client visits through partitioned visitation booths;
- Nursing staff screenings of all employees, vendors, detainees, and inmates who enter the jail;
- Postponing all tours of the Bergen County Jail until further notice.

“With the spread of this virus, it has become increasingly clear that those who are dedicated to serving in public capacities during this health crisis including law enforcement and healthcare professionals are at greater risk of exposure. My administration is doing everything in our power to mitigate the spread of this virus with several precautions aimed at protecting our officers and those in our care at the Bergen County Jail. The fact of the matter is, inmates and detainees are less likely to contract COVID-19 than the general public since the jail is a self-contained environment. However, staff at the jail is taking all necessary steps to mitigate exposure from this single incident,” stated Sheriff Anthony Cureton.

Jail staff has determined that no ICE detainees were exposed. At this time, no inmates nor ICE detainees have displayed symptoms of COVID-19.

The Bergen County Jail has a fully operational 24/7 medical unit within the facility with a full-time doctor and nursing staff. It is among the cleanest and most advanced facilities in the state with exceptional medical care. The Bergen County Jail is in full compliance with the standards set forth by the New Jersey Department of Corrections, is a triple accredited facility, and has undergone two successful inspections from Nakamoto and the US Marshals Service in the past calendar.

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