



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY CONFIRMS FIRST COVID-19 POSITIVE INMATE

Three employees test positive for COVID-19

HONOLULU – The Hawaii Department of Public Safety (PSD) has been notified that a new inmate housed at the Oahu Community Correctional Center (OCCC) tested positive for COVID-19. It is the first confirmed inmate case within the Department of Public Safety. The inmate was brought to OCCC on Monday and placed in a mandatory 14-day intake quarantine, as is procedure for all new inmates. The inmate was tested on Tuesday, after the department learned of possible exposure to COVID-19 prior to entry.

“The facility acted quickly to implement the Department’s COVID-19 pandemic protocol for correctional facilities, in an effort to mitigate any potential spread of the virus,” said Nolan Espinda, Public Safety Director. “Since the beginning of this pandemic, we have been working closely with the Department of Health (DOH) to ensure all DOH and CDC guidelines are followed in our facilities, so we can maintain the health and welfare of our staff and the incarcerated population.”

All facilities follow the PSD Pandemic Response Plan which falls in line with CDC and DOH guidelines for identifying and isolating inmates who fit the CDC and DOH criteria for testing.

- If an inmate presents with symptoms of a respiratory illness or has had possible contact with a known COVID-19 positive individual, PSD Health Care Division’s staff will perform a full evaluation, including testing for COVID-19 and common infectious respiratory illnesses such as influenza.

- Health care staff conduct onsite specimen collection using the nasopharyngeal swab and submit the specimen for testing.
- Inmates pending testing are immediately placed in medical isolation.
- The facilities have longstanding outbreak management plans in place to quickly identify, isolate and treat communicable diseases. The staff remain vigilant in their efforts to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19.

In unrelated cases, one adult correctional officer (ACO) at the Halawa Correctional Facility (HCF) and two ACOs at the Waiawa Correctional Facility (WCF) have reported positive COVID-19 test results. The HCF ACO received the positive test results Thursday (8/6/20). The two WCF ACOs tested positive August 4 and August 6.

“DOH is conducting contact tracing and we will follow through with implementing their guidance and directives. Thankfully, the risk to other employees and inmates is believed to be minimal because all staff regularly practice the necessary safety and sanitation precautions called for in their facilities Pandemic Control Plan, all of which have been ingrained in everyone over the past few months,” said Director Espinda.

Staff have reminded the inmates of proactive ways they can help prevent the spread of germs, including covering their coughs and sneezes, frequent handwashing, sanitizing their common living areas, refraining from sharing cups and utensils with others, and limiting close contact. They have also been reminded, if they aren't feeling well, to report it immediately.

PSD will continue to closely monitor the spread of COVID-19 and make additional operational and preventative decisions as the situation in Hawaii evolves.

For more information on PSD's planning and response to COVID-19, inmate testing data, and information detailing the efforts made to safeguard the inmates, staff and public, visit our webpage at: <http://dps.hawaii.gov/blog/2020/03/17/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources/>

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