



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 1, 2020

CONTACT: Gillum Ferguson
gillum.ferguson@tn.gov
615-253-4516

**COVID-19 Unified Command Group to Launch Mass Testing
Strategy of State's Prison Population and Staff**

Trousdale Turner Correctional Center Yields 1,246 Positive Cases

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Tennessee Governor Bill Lee's Unified Command Group (UCG) is announcing today a mass COVID-19 testing initiative will begin next week for all Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) staff and the inmates in their care.

"Knowing the extent of the virus's spread within our correctional facilities is critical as incarcerated individuals remain one of the most vulnerable populations during this pandemic," said Gov. Lee. "Thanks to our increased capacity, we'll test all inmates and staff statewide in order to take appropriate actions to safeguard the health of these vulnerable individuals."

Today, TDOC confirmed more than 1,246 COVID-19 positive cases, out of 2,450 total tests, among staff and inmates at the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center in Trousdale County, following a targeted testing event at the facility that began on April 28.

"We've been in close coordination with TDOC as it began targeted COVID-19 testing of inmates and staff in early April," said UCG Director Stuart McWhorter. "Given the increases in positive cases at the Bledsoe County and Trousdale Turner correctional facilities, despite the vast majority being asymptomatic, we are going to take the next steps in partnership with TDOC, Tennessee Department of Health (TDH), and

Tennessee National Guard to support a broader testing strategy to promote the health and safety of staff and inmates. We will also coordinate plans with our local jails to assist them in safeguarding the health of their populations in the coming days.”

TDOC and TDH analysis of the test results confirm 98 percent of those who tested positive are asymptomatic.

TDOC is now working with its healthcare services provider and contract prison provider, Centurion Managed Care and CoreCivic, to begin COVID-19 testing next week of all staff and inmates at 10 other TDOC correctional facilities in the state.

While CoreCivic will be responsible for testing all inmates and staff in its managed facilities, UCG will coordinate with the Tennessee National Guard to augment testing capacity for staff at state-run facilities, where Centurion will be testing only inmates.

“The Department of Correction is taking a proactive approach to ensure all staff and the entire inmate population is tested for COVID-19,” said TDOC Commissioner Tony Parker. “Our sixth round of mass testing will begin early next week with the remaining 10 facilities conducting testing. With the support and leadership of Governor Lee, Tennessee is leading the nation in our approach to widespread mass testing.”

“The Department of Military has been working closely with TDOC for weeks on preparedness for various courses of action as situations develop,” said Tennessee’s Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Jeff Holmes. “This plan is entering an implementation phase and we are prepared to support this mission. “

The statewide mass testing initiative also follows additional, targeted facility testing TDOC conducted at the Bledsoe County and Northwest Correctional Complexes on April 10, and at the Turney Center Industrial Complex on April 19.

COVID-19 testing at the Bledsoe facility indicated 583 positive staff and inmate cases, among 2,322 tested; 40 positive cases out of 902 staff and inmates tested at Northwest; and 40 positive cases out of 313 staff and inmates tested at Turney Center.

As with the Trousdale Turner results, the vast majority of individuals’ positive test results at the other three TDOC facilities were asymptomatic.

TDOC immediately follows positive COVID-19 tests with contact tracing for potential exposure.

All inmates who test positive and are asymptomatic receive daily medical monitoring and health assessments. Inmates who are asymptomatic will be monitored at their facilities while medical teams check daily for symptoms.

Those who may become symptomatic but don't require additional care, such as respiratory support, will be treated in place or at local hospitals, depending on their needs. Staff will self-quarantine and are monitored for symptoms and are encouraged to contact their healthcare provider.

TDOC has delivered more than 93,000 masks for staff, inmates, county jails, and health care workers. COVID-19 disinfection and safety measures are ongoing at all TDOC facilities and TDOC is practicing recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and TDH.

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