



## **Virginia Department of Corrections**

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# **Virginia DOC working with VDH and CDC to manage COVID-19 outbreak at Deerfield Correctional Center**

**RICHMOND** – The Virginia Department of Corrections has taken major steps to manage the COVID-19 outbreak at Deerfield Correctional Center and reduce the spread among a highly vulnerable population of offenders.

Deerfield Correctional Center (DFCC) is home to Virginia’s largest cohort of geriatric male inmates, many of whom have serious health conditions and reside in assisted living or nursing home environments. For this reason, the VADOC is handling the outbreak at DFCC by following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) guidelines for nursing homes in addition to guidelines for corrections.

“The department’s pandemic response plan consists of more than 900 pages of documents addressing every situation we have faced during this pandemic,” said VADOC Director Harold Clarke. “We responded to the outbreak at Deerfield with months of knowledge and best practices that we’ve developed since the beginning of the pandemic. As we’ve witnessed in nursing homes everywhere, the offender population at Deerfield is unfortunately more vulnerable to the coronavirus.”

On August 31 and September 1, the VADOC Mass Testing Team performed COVID-19 tests on 605 offenders and 232 staff at DFCC. These were individuals at Deerfield who had not tested positive in the three months prior. The team returned to DFCC on September 14 and tested offenders in three housing units, including the assisted living quarters and the infirmary. On September 16, VADOC collaborated with the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia National Guard to conduct point prevalence

testing of 445 inmates and 183 staff members. Routine, clinical testing of symptomatic patients and entire housing units was conducted as ordered by the facility's medical director. In addition, weekly testing of infirmary and assisted living staff began in response to a recently added VDH testing requirement for nursing homes.

"The Western Tidewater Health District has been very involved with the situation at Deerfield Correctional Center," said Dr. Todd Wagner, VDH Health Director for the Western Tidewater Health District. "Since the first cases manifested in April, our emergency management and epidemiology staff have remained in contact with the facility to provide mitigation strategies and support as requested. During the most recent outbreak of COVID-19 at Deerfield, our staff coordinated the delivery of critical clinical supplies and personal protective equipment for the staff at Deerfield."

As a result of the current outbreak, DFCC has experienced the highest overall number of positive cases of COVID-19 among VADOC facilities and the most COVID-19 offender deaths. The VADOC's medical directors and other leadership staff in the Health Services Unit conduct daily calls with Armor Correctional Health Services and Virginia Department of Health representatives to discuss the department's response at Deerfield. The department has taken a comprehensive approach to mitigate the spread of the virus and effectively monitor and treat those infected at Deerfield. To name a few, these actions include:

- VADOC Health Services Unit and Armor Correctional Health - the healthcare provider for DFCC - increased staffing to monitor and care for patients. Additional physicians, nurse practitioners, nursing leadership and other support staff are on-site. Fourteen critical care nurses, fourteen correctional nurses and seven nursing assistants were recently hired to support existing staff. Ambulance services are on site seven days a week.
- Additional security staff have been sent to DFCC to support operations.
- A mobile kitchen and additional food service staff were deployed to assist with meal preparation.
- On top of daily sanitation routines, the Enhanced Sanitation Team performed extensive cleanings at DFCC twice during the month of September with another extensive cleaning scheduled to take place before the end of the month.
- A mobile shower unit is on-site for use by offenders in areas of the facility used for isolation.
- Offenders at DFCC have received more than 25,000 bars of soap since mid-March and hand sanitizer stations are available in the infirmary and assisted living quarters.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is readily available for offenders and staff at DFCC. To date, nearly 4,800 sneeze guards have been issued along with more than 3,100 surgical masks. Both are available for replacement upon request. More than 1150 KN/N95 masks have been distributed to DFCC.
- All medical staff are wearing N95 masks and all kitchen staff are wearing KN95 masks.

- VADOC ensures consistent monitoring of inmates and staff for PPE and sanitation compliance.

“As always, we will continue to offer support and guidance to the staff at Deerfield as they navigate through the challenges of this pandemic,” said VDH Health Director Dr. Wagner.

“During an intensive call with CDC representatives, the VADOC Health Services Unit asked what more could we do to intensify our efforts at Deerfield,” Director Clarke explained. “The CDC representatives were complimentary of our processes, describing them as ‘forward thinking’ and at the time, they could offer no additional advice above our current practices. We are committed to our extensive pandemic plan and we will continue to follow the guidelines of the CDC and VDH.”

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