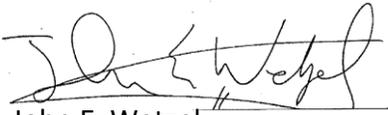




TO: All Inmates

FROM: 
John E. Wetzel
Secretary of Corrections

DATE: December 10, 2020

SUBJECT: Statewide Safety Measures

As we enter our ninth month of managing, adjusting, and adapting to the pandemic, the Commonwealth is experiencing COVID cases much higher than our original peak in the Spring. The DOC has always taken the safety of our population seriously, and our ability to react quickly has helped keep you all safe.

Earlier today, I directed our institutions to permit no more than 8 person cohorts from now until December 23, 2020. This step allows us to further limit the spread amongst our population, and minimize any additional risk to you. Assuming the number of cases do not increase, the Department will move to 16 man cohorts on December 24.

Although we are decreasing our cohort numbers state-wide, that does not mean a decrease in services for you. You will continue to receive showers, phones, and time for kiosks. Video visitation will continue. If you have employment, but are unable to participate due to COVID precautions, you will continue to be compensated.

The Department is also extending free cable through March.

We, working along side Dr. Christian Conte, have a plan to provide additional activities, in-cell programming, religious services, and educational activities during this time. Parole hearings will continue uninterrupted.

The commissary limit will remain at \$100, and all inmates will be permitted to mail, at no cost, a maximum of twelve (12), one ounce, first class letters per month as previously communicated.

We are also using this time as an opportunity to move people around the system to encourage social distancing, and to implement additional mitigation strategies for the reception of new male commitments and parole violator receptions.

I understand how hard this time has been for all of you, but I appreciate your continued efforts in the management of this pandemic. Even as we see record highs in positive cases of the virus, I keep coming back to one thing: hope.

It would be easy to focus on this short-termed inconvenience, however, keep in mind that we are far more equipped and ready to handle this virus and keep everybody in our facilities as safe as possible. And you have done a remarkable job of helping by wearing your masks, focusing on hygiene, and social distancing.

On top of the knowledge and tools we have in place, there was more good news this week when the United Kingdom began distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine. The United States is not far behind, and while we will provide more details on the vaccine in the near future, it is an encouraging reminder that all this is temporary and we are almost through it.

This would not be how any of us would like to approach the holiday season. But I can't stress enough: we will continue to aggressively monitor and isolate this virus and keep you as safe as we possibly can. I appreciate your support as we do what we can to mitigate this virus and get us to the end of this pandemic.

If you have any questions, please contact your unit team for assistance.