

For Immediate Release

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All Residents at Lansing Correctional Facility to Receive COVID-19 Testing

TOPEKA, Kan. – Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) Secretary Jeff Zmuda announced today that all residents at Lansing Correctional Facility (LCF) will be tested for the COVID-19 virus.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, more than 70 LCF staff members and more than 70 LCF residents have tested positive for the virus. Beginning April 20, the facility was able to begin increased testing through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

Earlier this week, 240 men from an open-dormitory living unit at LCF were tested for the virus. Polymerase chain reaction nasal swab tests were used, and based upon early results, approximately 75 percent of initial testing samples were found to be positive and asymptomatic. The expanded testing will allow for everyone to be tested in the facility.

“Social distancing in a prison setting is difficult. For years, correctional facilities have been built to house a large number of people in a small amount of space,” Zmuda said. “We want nothing more than for all of our residents to be healthy and safe while they are in our care and we believe this testing will assist us in ensuring that they receive the attention that they need and deserve.”

All positive cases will be medically monitored, including those who are asymptomatic who may later develop symptoms of the virus.

“From day one, we have known a more robust testing strategy is key to understanding the spread of COVID-19. A limited supply chain prevented us from doing so, until recently,” KDHE Secretary Lee Norman said. “Unfortunately, the results we received from Lansing confirm how quickly this virus spreads and the unique characteristics of being positive, but not showing any signs or symptoms. Increased testing is beneficial, but it also may reveal the broader spread of the virus. As we work to reopen our state, it is absolutely critical Kansans follow our guidance related to mass gatherings, social distancing and wearing of masks in public.”

As there is no identified treatment for COVID-19, increased monitoring will occur, and residents will continue to be transported to a hospital when and if symptoms progress or their health warrants. A facility-wide quarantine will be in place for a minimum of 14 days.

The Lansing Correctional Facility, formerly the Kansas State Penitentiary, opened in 1867 during the presidency of Andrew Johnson and is the oldest and largest state correctional facility in Kansas. Serving only males, the facility capacity is 2,432 residents. LCF currently houses 1,732 men, including those moved from the Wichita Work Release Facility earlier this week.

For current information on COVID-19 in Kansas, and to sign up for updates, go to the KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center at kdhe.ks.gov/coronavirus. For information on the KDOC’s response to COVID-19, visit <https://www.doc.ks.gov/kdoc-coronavirus-updates>.

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