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Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

To: Juvenile and Adult Facility Residents and Family Members

From: Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Date: August 5, 2021

Re: Coronavirus and KDOC updates

There is much news these days surrounding the resurgence of the pandemic virus and the variant referred to as Delta. Again this week, our number of individuals testing positive for the virus increased slightly and we all are dedicated to doing everything we can to thwart the spread of the virus. I urge you to pay close attention to the news and to information from Governor Kelly, KDHE and the CDC and make sure you are doing everything you can to keep yourself and your loved ones safe and healthy.

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) recently awarded its Champion of Justice awards to four KDOC staff who go above and beyond their job descriptions in support of victims. For those of you with internet access, you can read more about each individual on the KDOC website at <https://www.doc.ks.gov/kdoc-announces-champion-of-justice-awards> but I want to highlight a little bit about each of them here.

The overall 2021 Champion of Justice Award went to Kendra Vestal, Ellsworth Correctional Facility discharge planner in the reentry program. Kendra was instrumental in making the Batterer Intervention Program accessible and successful for three residents at ECF this year. The program required participants to use zoom technology rather than attend in-person. While maintaining an already busy work assignment, she took on the added responsibility of making sure the residents had materials and access to technology and worked with them through the successful completion of the program.

Additionally, three staff were named 2021 Champion of Justice Honorees:

- Cora Gibson, a parole officer with the Hutchinson Parole Office, was a vocal advocate for a victim whose safety was in question when the offender was discharged from supervision sooner than expected. Gibson wrote a letter on behalf of the victim to the Crime Victim's Compensation Board, securing funding for the victim to relocate and helping the victim find housing to increase safety.
- Logan Hall, a parole officer with the Great Bend Parole Office, was recognized for his dedication to advocating on behalf of the victim and maintaining confidentiality while addressing the victim's concerns. One of his nominators wrote: "He has gone out of his way many times to meet with victims in person to discuss release plans, safety concerns and also when working on reintegration."
- Jillian Pollard, a parole officer with the Kansas City Parole Office, approaches offender supervision with compassion and humility while remaining responsive to victim services and the needs of the victims. "Her empathy, resourcefulness, and collaborative nature are an asset to our work and the people we serve," nomination materials said.

Thank you to these staff – and so many more – who are dedicated to doing whatever it takes to create a *Pathway for Success* for each individual.

We have taken a step at Ellsworth Correctional Facility that I wanted to make you aware of. We are temporarily closing the East Unit due to ongoing staffing shortages at the facility. Residents will be transferred to the central unit at ECF or to other KDOC facilities until our staffing levels improve to where we can reopen the East Unit.