

Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

To: Family Members

From: Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Date: April 21, 2020

Re: Coronavirus Updates

First, I'd like to update you on our number of positive cases within the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC). As of today, we have 54 staff members at Lansing Correctional Facility (LCF) and one staff member at Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) test positive. We have 46 residents at LCF and one Wichita Work Release Facility (WWRF) resident, being housed at LCF, test positive.

In the weeks since the COVID-19 pandemic first became the dominant topic of our daily activities, the KDOC has implemented numerous process changes. Some of those, like our suspension of in-person visitation, have impacted you closely and understandably are some of the most noticeable changes we have made.

Over this same time period we've also been preparing to implement the next phase of our response at LCF. As many of you may be aware, we recently completed the work on a reconstructed facility, replacing the 1860s, Civil War era, housing units at that facility. Since that completion we have been testing equipment, conducting searches to clear any remaining construction debris or tools that would pose a safety risk, providing some training on operating the new systems and stocking supplies on the units. In the last two weeks, as that work has progressed, we've been able to use a couple of the units as part of our COVID-19 response and beginning today, we are starting the move of all LCF residents into the new units/pods. The move will take about three weeks to complete. The process of moving the men and all their belongings is no small task so we've asked the Kansas National Guard for aid and we anticipate Guardsmen arriving on Thursday to provide assistance until the move is completed.

These new housing units were a necessary investment by Kansas taxpayers when proposed three years ago and their completion is especially timely. Some of the many benefits of the brand new units include: the new surfaces will be easier to clean, modern air handling systems reduce the risk of circulating the virus, all cells are either two or four person instead of the dormitory-style housing used previously for some residents, new equipment such as mattresses and improved safety for staff and residents alike due to the design of the units. In addition, the 1,920 total beds are 15 separate 128 bed units, in two buildings, that can be managed and operated individually if necessary, to keep our residents in smaller, separate groups compared to the old units. The units will not be intermingling with each other nor will they come into contact with any of the men who are in isolation, being monitored for their symptoms.

During the construction, staff and residents have had some questions about the design of these new units. We expected this and it isn't much different than any of us moving from one home to another, it will be different and take some time for staff and residents to get familiar with the space. However, we are hearing from both groups that they are ready to move, and this is the right time to proceed.

We understand this move may be stressful in some ways. For family members, I'd like to ask for your help in this move by lending your written and verbal support to your loved ones as they transition into their new home. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.