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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 25, 2021

Re: Coronavirus and KDOC updates

I encourage you to stay tuned to local and state media for developments in the coronavirus pandemic and vaccinations. The number of positive cases – and the very sad news of deaths due to COVID-19 – are both increasing in frequency within our state. Each of us has a responsibility to follow public health guidance, and I urge you to do everything you can to protect yourself and others. We will keep you advised regarding any changes to policy and mitigation procedures for KDOC staff and/or residents.

In the past several months I have mentioned that illegal substances coming into our facilities through the U.S. Mail pose a serious health risk for residents and staff. This is linked to an increase in the number of residents who are gaining access to the drugs and at least two deaths in recent months. In addition, this led to the serious illness of a staff member who became ill at work after being exposed to such substances while providing emergency support to a resident under the influence.

KDOC has over the last four years seen increases in the number of residents who are in an altered state because they have consumed an illegal substance. This threatens not only the lives of these residents, but the health and safety of other residents and staff who come into contact with the substance or with second-hand exposures. Specific staff training has been aimed at opioid exposures, and staff have been trained in the recognition, response and administration of Narcan (Naloxone). This treatment helps save lives, but the reality is that we are seeing an increase in synthetic forms of illicit substances that are not opioid based. These are coming into the facilities through the mail. We have added screening strategies in our mailrooms, supplied training to staff and made educational materials available to all residents.

Effective Sept. 1, 2021, Ellsworth Correctional Facility will pilot new mail handling procedures requiring that mail be photocopied. General mail will be photocopied by staff and then given to the resident. Legal, official and privileged mail will be photocopied by the resident under staff supervision. Specific guidelines about these new mail handling procedures will be published and made available to all residents and staff.

Controlling access to harmful substances is a critical step in addiction recovery. Every facility has resources that can help residents fight addiction and learn new, healthier coping skills. Educational materials have been placed on tablets and made available through TV programming (where available) to help message the seriousness of ingesting illicit substances like synthetics, K2, spice, and/or others referred to as designer drugs.

continued

In addition to staff who are there to help, there are residents in each facility who have been trained as peer recovery coaches as a way to help individuals with addiction. Please reach out for the help and support that you need.

We will update you on how the pilot is going at ECF, and if or when we decide to implement the procedures in all facilities you will be notified.