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Harper Provides Additional Detail on December Segregated Housing Report *Facility Also Has Additional COVID Cases, Other Mitigation Measures in Effect*

PITTSBURGH – Warden Harper today provided additional detail on the December segregated housing report and indicated that additional changes to the report forthcoming as the team works internally to revise its contents and provide further explanation of the data within it.

“Let me be clear. We are in full compliance with referendum and Chapter 205 and are not circumventing the ban,” said Harper.

The January report, reflecting December data, has a total of 294 incarcerated individuals listed on it. The list includes persons who received medical and mental health examinations with professionals certifying that the person’s confinement is necessary for medical reasons or to ensure the safety of others.

“As discussed in the meeting, the reason listed for each was safety. When asked to clarify, I didn’t provide more detail and, in hindsight, should have done so,” said Harper. “Safety was the term selected to define those persons when a better description would have been more appropriate. That number, for December, totaled 87.”

Harper indicated that this category also includes those who were ordered into isolation or quarantine due to a positive COVID test, because of an exposure, or because they were identified as a close contact. The report for January will show even more, and higher numbers for that reason.

The list also includes those individuals who either refused to leave their cells when offered recreation time or did not use the full four (4) hours of recreation time. That distinction should have been noted accordingly. Other than the 87 noted above, all individuals in segregated housing were allowed to spend four (4) hours, or more, outside of their cell but either refused it or did not remain outside of their cell for the four (4) hours.

Moving forward, we will find a better way to indicate that distinction as there is a clear difference between individuals who are not given a chance to recreate, versus those who choose not to recreate. Finally, what is not reflected in the report, because none exceeded 24 hours, are intermittent lockdowns for reasons such as an elevator not working, short staffing, or a shakedown. Some of these items, depending on the severity, would result in a lockdown of the facility and are necessary for the security of the facility. Once the issue is resolved, operations would return to normal and recreation time is again offered.

“We will endeavor to make the report easier to understand with more detail and will be better prepared to discuss these items at the February meeting,” added Harper.

The jail continues to address rising COVID cases in the facility, likely due to the omicron variant, the facility continues to adjust processes and increase surveillance testing measures. While testing has not confirmed the variant, at the rate of positivity within the community and the facility and because the virus is more communicable and infectious in current cases, it is believed to be omicron.

Currently, there are 174 positive cases of COVID in the facility. Today's population is 1,590. As a result, 11 units are on isolation status and three (3) are on quarantine status. Additionally, all intake units currently have both isolation and quarantine status incarcerated individuals. Medical providers are seeing positive cases on a daily basis. The number of employees with positive COVID cases is currently 19 and an additional 16 are currently in quarantine.

Every admission to the facility receives a rapid antigen test upon admission to our facility within the initial sally port at time of initial pat search. If positive, they are separated from others (though they could be housed with another positive person within intake). Every person who is booked (following their preliminary arraignment) is also tested again with a rapid antigen test during their healthcare processing period.

There are designated housing units available to isolate persons and ensure they are able to receive showers, commissary, and tablets. On days 7 and 14, rapid antigen testing is repeated to persons who have been committed to our facility. Day 7 is to identify those persons that may have been exposed prior to incarceration but were not testing positive (due to a lower viral load) at their time of intake. Testing on Day 14 is to remove them from their quarantine period and go to housing units based on their classification status.

Due to protocols related to attending in person court, individuals are also tested prior to their court proceedings. Those that have been positive in the last 90 days and have completed their isolation time period do not require retesting).

If a person on a housing unit tests positive, the entire unit is placed on isolation status. A "baseline" testing will happen for that housing unit on the day of the positive test or the following day. If there are additional positive cases from the unit, isolation status will be maintained for that unit and retesting will occur within 3 days. If there are no more additional positive cases on the unit, at time of retesting, the unit would move to quarantine procedures and incarcerated individuals monitored for symptoms. If no additional positives exist, typical operations are resumed for the unit after a 14-day quarantine has been completed.

For cell mates with "discordant results" (i.e. one is tested as positive and the other is tested as negative), the cell mates are split up and the exposed cell mate is tested 3-5 days following exposure. PCR testing is utilized as frequently as possible.

The medical team also continues to offer vaccines for incarcerated individuals. Moderna, Pfizer and Janssen are available. Currently, 719 individuals, or 45% have completed their vaccination series and 60, or 4%, are partially vaccinated. This number will continue to fluctuate as the population is transient in nature. To date, the facility has administered over 2,000 doses of vaccine.

Mandatory masking, regardless of vaccination status, continues in the facility. The administration has continued to work with the Courts and Sheriff's Office regarding mitigation measures, and the same has been conveyed to local law enforcement agencies through the Chiefs of Police Association asking for their cooperation when bringing individuals to the facility for booking. Staff and inmate workers have been encouraged to wear N95 masks in high risk areas like intake. N95 masks and full PPE is required on isolation units.

Additional collaboration continues with pre-trial services. In cooperation with the Public Defender's Office and District Attorney's Office, all individuals assigned a monetary bond are being reviewed on a daily basis to determine whether the person may be eligible, or considered, for a bond reduction.

As a result of spread and as a mitigation measure, recreation time is being reduced. General population housing units are permitted to have 15 incarcerated individuals and two incarcerated individual workers out for recreation. Physical distancing is enforced, and mask wearing is mandatory. Recreation time on quarantine units is limited to 8 incarcerated and individuals and two incarcerated individual workers out for recreation at any given time.

Additional updates on testing and changes to positive cases will be provided on the jail's main webpage each Friday moving forward. That web address is <https://allegHENYcounty.us/jail>.

The JOB Segregated Housing Report may also be found on the jail's webpage at <https://allegHENYcounty.us/jail/inmate-information.aspx>.

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