Internal Memo

Date: March 30, 2020
To: All DOC Inmates/Residents
From: Commissioner Paul Schnell
RE: COVID-19 Update

As we continue life in these uncertain times dealing with COVID-19 by social distancing, washing of hands for a minimum of 20 seconds, and Governor Walz’s Stay-at-Home order, this worldwide pandemic has officially reached Minnesota’s correctional facilities.

Over the weekend, we received a positive COVID-19 test result for an inmate at the Moose Lake facility and a staff member at our Red Wing facility. Thankfully, as is the case for most people who contract COVID-19, these individuals are experiencing only mild symptoms and do not require hospitalization.

These are the first confirmed cases among staff and inmates – but we expect they will not be the last. It is possible that 40 to 80 percent of Minnesotans could at some point contract this virus. The Governor issued the Stay-at-Home order to slow the spread and give health care systems the opportunity to manage those who do need critical care.

The individuals who tested positive and the people identified as having had close contact with them have been placed on quarantine status (meaning isolation from others). The individuals who tested positive were quarantined as soon as they developed symptoms related to COVID-19. Additionally, the inmate’s living unit at Moose Lake has been put on a precautionary lock-up status while we receive guidance from the Department of Health.

All facilities have or are in the planning stages to modify programming that will allow for the recommended social distancing. Information will be posted as those plans are finalized. In the meantime, please continue to take personal steps to protect yourself:

- Practice social distancing – Minimum 6 ft whenever possible
- Continue to wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at a time.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Continue to take an active role in cleaning areas you’ve been in contact with and surrounding surfaces
- If you are sick, contact our Health Services.

Remember, by practicing these suggested steps, it will help slow down the spread of COVID-19.