



Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office

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MEDIA ALERT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Cases on the Rise in the Mecklenburg County Detention Center

(CHARLOTTE, NC) - The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office in seeing an increase of COVID-19 cases in the Mecklenburg County Detention Center (MCDC) despite efforts to mitigate and control the spread of the coronavirus in the detention center. From the onset of the pandemic MCSO has worked diligently to develop and implement protocols aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus in the detention center. The protocols implemented proved to be very effective and from early March until June 10th there were no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Mecklenburg County Detention Center.

The first confirmed case in the MCDC was an out of state transfer that came to the facility and was exhibiting symptoms; by protocol the resident was medically isolated and tested. As the science and information about the coronavirus continues to evolve MCSO continues to evaluate and adjust our protocols in response to COVID-19. MCSO in consultation with our contracted healthcare provider (Wellpath) and Mecklenburg County Public Health continue to work through the challenges posed in the high risk environment of a detention center. All persons coming into the MCDC are screened for symptoms, issued a face covering and placed in a quarantine/isolation housing unit for 14 days where they are monitored for symptoms. As the state and Mecklenburg County continue to see a rise in the amount of COVID-19 cases MCSO expanded its testing of residents in the MCDC. As a result of mass testing in quarantine/isolation housing units we have seen a corresponding increase in positive cases.

MCSO operates the largest municipal detention center in the state with a population of approximately 1350 residents. There are currently 43 residents that have tested positive for COVID-19. Some tested have shown mild symptoms and others have shown no symptoms at all. MCSO is also challenged with dealing with residents that aren't accurately reporting their symptoms in order to avoid extended quarantine/isolation. There are approximately 45 admissions into the detention center everyday which further compounds the risk of exposure and spread of the virus. Transfers from other detention facilities that may not have the same standard of care also pose additional challenges in our fight against the virus. Thus far we have not experienced any hospitalizations or deaths related to COVID-19 at the MCDC.

MCSO operates fully accredited detention centers and takes the care of our resident population very seriously. Sheriff McFadden says; “I care deeply for the residents housed in our detention center and the personnel and service providers that work in this high risk environment. Since the start of this pandemic we have worked hard and aggressively in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic even before the rapid spread of the virus in Mecklenburg County. I want to ensure that we keep our detention centers safe and provide the best possible care for our residents. Considering new research showing that many people carrying the coronavirus experience few or no symptoms, I think it’s prudent that we continue to expand the testing of our resident population as a proactive approach in our response to this pandemic.”

MCSO anticipates that with expanded testing there will be a continued rise in the number of positive cases in the short term of our resident population. Additionally, since early March there have been nine detention officers at the MCDC that have tested positive for COVID-19.