

COVID-19 Update from Hampshire Sheriff Patrick J. Cahillane

April 21st, 2020

Testing Asymptomatic Individuals

On Thursday, April 16th, the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction, in partnership with Cooley Dickinson Hospital, administered COVID-19 tests to 23 asymptomatic inmates who had been living in an area where 12 individuals had previously tested positive. The results were returned on the evening of Friday, April 17th, and of the 23 asymptomatic individuals, eight tested positive and 15 tested negative. That's almost 35 percent positive in a group of inmates with no symptoms, who have been practicing physical distancing for several weeks, have been supplied with protective masks and have been quarantined for the past 10 days.

As of Saturday, April 18th, all asymptomatic positive individuals have been moved to a separate unit where they can be closely monitored. Our total number of positive cases currently stands at 20 inmates and 4 staff.

We took this extra step to help identify the asymptomatic individuals in our population who are carrying the virus, to learn how easily this virus can spread, and to help people in the community understand the importance of following the guidelines set down by the state Department of Public Health, as well as local community ordinances. To me, this testing makes it clear that we do not know how many people in our community are infected.

I would urge our local legislative delegation to file legislation calling for mandatory testing for all citizens of the Commonwealth to help stop the spread of this virus.

Thank you Cooley Dickinson Hospital for your partnership and your help in leading this effort against COVID-19.

Over the weekend, I received reports from police departments in the area that two more of our former inmates who had been released in the past two weeks had been found dead.

Both were described as “unattended deaths,” the common euphemism for a drug overdose. Another former inmate released by the courts on April 2nd was found dead on April 8th. His was also an “unattended death.”

My heart goes out to the friends and family of these men and I wish them all well during this time of pain and uncertainty.

As always, thank you to all our essential frontline workers.

Patrick J. Cahillane
Sheriff, Hampshire County