

## **COVID-19 Update from Hampshire Sheriff Patrick J. Cahillane**

**August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### **Staff Furloughs**

As of 3:30 pm on Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, there are no cases of Covid-19 inside the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction. Although we have not had a case since May 1<sup>st</sup>, we, as a staff, know that we must remain vigilant and work hard to prevent future outbreaks.

On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Hampshire Sheriff's Office began implementing a WorkShare program, offered by the state Department of Unemployment Assistance, for 77 of our full-time employees from our medical, kitchen, maintenance, education, treatment and administration units, as well as our captains and lieutenants. This is a voluntary decision on the part of the associations representing these employees and is intended to prevent the possibility of future layoffs, given the uncertainty of the state's budget situation, and the additional uncertainty related to the coronavirus.

Each of the 77 staff members involved will be furloughed for 12 days – one day per week – between now and October 24<sup>th</sup>. Furlough days are being staggered to assure that we meet the twin requirements of adequate staffing and adequate spacing to help guard against the coronavirus. Negotiations are ongoing with the Correctional Officers and Sergeants Union regarding voluntary furloughs.

I want to personally express to every member of my staff my deepest gratitude for their continued devotion to duty during these difficult and unprecedented times. I am mindful of the additional stress our WorkShare program is causing, but I want everyone to know that this plan will help us weather the crises of Covid-19 and budget instability, and help us continue to evolve our correctional practices so that we may better serve the men in our care and the people of Hampshire County.

Covid-19 and the civil unrest fueling calls for additional criminal justice reforms are circumstances beyond our control. What is within our control is how we respond to these challenges, how we maintain as many of our services as our budget will allow.

We are a public agency and must be willing to lead by example. We also have to be active participants in solving the problems that confront us during these times. We have a duty to protect the health and well-being of our men and our communities. We will not shirk that responsibility.

Thanks again to my staff for their dedication. We're all in this together.

Patrick J. Cahillane

Sheriff, Hampshire County