

As of this morning, there were 69 people in our custody who were COVID-positive, the overwhelming majority housed in quarantine units at the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent. Approximately 40 employees were out on COVID leave today. As with previous increases of COVID-19 cases our jails, the current situation coincides with widespread transmission in our community.

Cases have been identified across the facilities, both through the booking process and via internal testing. The transfer of inmates and resources from the MRJC to KCCF occurred in late November and early December, when our case counts were in the low single digits. This was done in coordination with Jail Health Services to help alleviate staffing issues. We are readjusting housing assignments now based on the current number COVID-19 cases in our facilities.

This is not an either/or situation; we remain focused on both addressing the impacts on our staff and protecting the health of people in our custody.

When DAJD consolidated people in custody at the King County Correctional Facility just over a month ago, the goal was to reduce staff overtime. This is what we said in November when you asked about the transfer:

*“This movement should allow us to redeploy a set number of corrections officers from the MRJC to KCCF in an effort to reduce overtime.”*

At the time, we also noted that measures designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 have forced us to operate our secure detention facilities in a more labor-intensive manner. These measures include single-bunking inmates in individual cells, limiting the capacity in dormitory-style housing, and reserving special housing units for people who are COVID-positive or deemed vulnerable to this illness.

The current outbreak of COVID-19 in our region has compounded our staffing challenges, since we can't have employees in the workplace if they test positive or exhibit symptoms.

This all comes at a time when corrections and many other industries nationwide are facing fierce competition for qualified applicants. Hiring will continue to be a priority for us, and we have been actively recruiting to fill vacancies. We started offering hiring incentives last summer to successful job applicants. Applicants with at least a year of prior corrections or law enforcement experience are eligible for a \$10,000 sign-on bonus. Applicants who do not meet these qualifications are eligible for \$5,000.

We also are providing most current employees with the chance to earn incentives for referring successful applicants for corrections officer or juvenile detention officer positions. This incentive was recently increased by \$1,000, and is now \$3,500.

We continue to explore the causes of mandatory overtime and will aggressively pursue longer-term solutions.

We are eager to provide staff with more (COVID) testing options, but we are facing the same shortage in testing supplies as other employers and individuals throughout the country. We

have already ordered and are awaiting test kits for staff and hope to have additional supplies within the next week to 10 days.

Staff at the Department of Adult & Juvenile Detention continue to perform outstanding work under very challenging circumstances.