



THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS

"Security, Custody, Control"

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March 17, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bureau of Corrections Offers COVID-19 Vaccine To Staff & Inmates

ST. THOMAS, USVI – The Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections (BOC) is now one of the first correctional agencies nationwide to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to all inmates. Sixteen inmates, ranging in age from 20 to 66, have taken the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine since the rollout began on February 22, 2021.

In collaboration with the Department of Health, BOC began offering COVID-19 vaccines to all staff in January 2021. Forty-three (43) BOC staff have voluntarily taken the COVID-19 vaccine so far. BOC is now an authorized provider of both the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. It received approval from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") to administer the vaccines after applying in December 2020.

BOC has also begun conducting COVID-19 testing at each facility using Abbott's Binex NOW COVID-19 Ag Card, which can give accurate results in as little as 15 minutes. All new intakes at BOC's facilities are tested for COVID-19 and quarantined for 14 days regardless of test results.

Jails and prisons have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide, more than 200,000 inmates have been infected with COVID-19, and at least 1,454 have died as of November 2020. During the same time, 46,155 prison staff were infected with COVID-19, with at least 98 reported deaths.

BOC's medical team and its sworn staff mitigated the threat posed by COVID-19 with effective COVID-19 protocols, including temperature checks, 14-day quarantine for all new intakes, suspension of in-person visits and work details, compulsory wearing of a face covering, and enhanced disinfection and sanitizing of frequently used areas.

"By any measure, BOC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a success," BOC Director Wynn Testamark said. "We have no known or suspected cases of COVID-19 at either of our facilities right now. The John Bell facility on St. Croix has remained COVID-19 free since the

pandemic began over a year ago. "We were the second to last correctional agency in the country to suffer a COVID-19 outbreak," Testamark added.

"When COVID-19 penetrated the St. Thomas Jail in August 2020, we did not panic. We managed the outbreak to such an extent that no inmate required hospitalization, and, thankfully, none died."

BOC has stockpiled sufficient PPEs such as N95 respirators, surgical masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves in preparation for any anticipated COVID-19 resurgence. "To ensure the safety of our employees, their families, and those entrusted to our care, BOC continues to work closely with local and federal partners to chart the best course of action," Testamark said.

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