



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**Milwaukee County House of Correction to Launch Soft Opening of
Alternate Care Facility on Saturday, November 28**

MILWAUKEE, WI – This Saturday, the Milwaukee County House of Correction (HOC) will launch a soft opening the HOC Alternate Care Facility (ACF) in Franklin to address a rise in COVID-19 cases. Built in May, the ACF will open one, 30-person capacity dorm over the weekend to treat staff and justice involved individuals infected with COVID-19. Care for those at the ACF will be provided by Wellpath, Milwaukee County’s contracted provider of correctional healthcare, and Milwaukee County Sheriff Deputies and HOC Correctional Officers will provide security to staff the facility.

“Our first-priority is making sure staff and the people in our care are safe. In addition to interval testing, increased contact tracing, and other risk mitigation efforts implemented last week, this weekend the Alternate Care Facility will undergo a soft opening to ensure a smooth process for opening more dorms and treating more people in the coming days and weeks,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “The additional capacity at the ACF will allow for greater isolation needed on the ground to treat those who are infected and control the spread of the disease.”

HOC recently conducted facility-wide COVID testing, administering more than 1,000 tests to employees, contractors, and people in custody on November 12 and 13. Testing uncovered several dozen positive tests among staff and individuals in HOC care. In response, HOC immediately began isolating and quarantining people to help contain the spread, in addition to implementing new risk mitigation strategies to help prevent further transmission. Opening the ACF is an additional strategy to house asymptomatic and low-acuity patients to remedy the community spread of the disease. Those in need of acute care will be taken to the nearest hospital.

At this stage, only justice involved individuals in the care of the Milwaukee County HOC will occupy the ACF. At this time, Milwaukee County has not received any requests from the Wisconsin Department of Correction to take individuals from other state facilities. However, the County remains open to working with the State and regional partners on housing and treating justice involved individuals when a formal request is made.

Currently, there are 145 positive cases amongst the population in the care of HOC. About half of these 145 cases were known positive cases transferred to HOC from the Milwaukee County Jail



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(MCJ). All transfer cases from the CJF are medically cleared prior to transport to the HOC. Upon arrival to HOC, all transfers are quarantined for 14 days minimum and must test negative for COVID-19 at the end of their quarantine period before they can integrate into the general population. 27 HOC staff members tested positive and 19 staff are currently in quarantine.

There are no COVID-19 positive individuals that currently require advanced care. All individuals who are positive are experiencing mild symptoms or are asymptomatic.

Contract tracing remains underway to determine the sources of infection. The highest risk posed to congregate living facilities like HOC comes from outside sources like staff and contractors. At the HOC facility, increased risk mitigation efforts are underway including interval testing conducted every two weeks for all employees starting shortly after Thanksgiving.

In addition, enhanced contact tracing in congregate living facilities and stricter health screenings for all in-person employees and contractors will take place immediately. Stricter protocols will also be enacted for the transfer of individuals from CJF to HOC. HVAC enhancements to decrease the spread of the airborne virus and increased disinfecting measures will take place as soon as possible.

Lastly, changes to meeting protocols between justice involved individuals and external staff will emphasize tele-meeting and, if necessary, advise physical spaces that allow for appropriate distancing.

Milwaukee County will continue to provide updates online via a COVID testing dashboard with test results of individuals in the care of the County and staff at congregate living facilities. Information is available to the public at county.milwaukee.gov.

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