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May 8, 2020

Parent Communication

TO: Parents / Family Members
Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center Residents

FROM: Valerie P. Boykin

SUBJECT: COVID 19 Update

I am writing to provide my seventh update to you since March 16 regarding the COVID 19 pandemic and its impact on Bon Air and the residents.

First, let me say that at this time, we only have one resident at Bon Air who is being treated / monitored for the COVID 19 virus. I told you earlier about the two-week quarantine that we implemented on April 5 to get a handle on the extent of the virus as we began to aggressively test youth who showed any symptoms including even a slightly elevated temperature of 99°F. Through that effort, 26 youth were identified who tested positive in only a few units. While this was concerning to all of us, these aggressive steps have helped us in our efforts to get a handle on the situation. Only three new cases have been identified since that time and the spread has been slowed. The Health Department has advised that it may take some time to totally eliminate it on campus just as it is difficult to eliminate in the community.

As I mentioned in my last letter, we have been able to have outside contractors come in and sanitize the facility. This involved moving staff and residents from an area, the professional cleaners spraying down all surfaces with a disinfectant in the area, and then bringing back staff and residents when it was safe to do so. This sanitization, in combination with slowing of the spread of the virus, has allowed us to begin easing quarantine restrictions across campus. Rest assured we are doing this based upon guidance from medical professionals.

While things are not back to "normal," restrictions have been eased, and residents are enjoying more time out of their rooms while still being encouraged and directed to maintain social distancing, to wash their hands regularly, and to practice healthy habits. The social distancing is still challenging for them and requires regular reminders. Daily cleaning is completed on each unit. Youth and staff continue to wear masks.

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We are slowly adding more of our normal programming, though we know that this may take a while just as the state will reopen things slowly. I had a talk with the student government leaders last week and they gave me some valuable insights into what will help them get back to activities that more closely look normal.

This week, our Division of Education is moving to the computer based Edgenuity program in the living units, in addition to the individual paper learning packets. This is new for the units and we hope that the technology cooperates. The living units do not have the same technology wiring as the school. We are also beginning to start back up with some of the group based treatment programming. For the past few weeks, only individual treatment was done on a modified basis to promote social distancing. Group work will now be in smaller settings to help with social distancing.

We continue to make phone calls available to allow you to check in with your child. Please let us know if this is a problem. We are exploring more ways for you to be able to see your child as you speak to them.

I hope this update is helpful. I do hope that there is regular contact between you and staff at the facility. To promote more communication and provide additional updates, I will be hosting a Bon Air Parent Town Hall meeting in the near future. Keep an eye out for the details. If you have questions, please submit them by Wednesday, May 13 to our Family Engagement Coordinator Diane Leiter at diane.leiter@djj.virginia.gov or 804-314-5242 and Parent Advocate Tamla Brookins at tamla.brookins@djj.virginia.gov or 804-916-0146. This meeting is for parents / guardians and the assigned DJJ staff only.

Feel free to reach out to your child's assigned counselor to send any questions that you may have in advance of the call. As always, the health and safety of each resident and employee remains my major concern and we hope to share the steps that we are doing in response to COVID 19.

Be well and stay safe.

Attachment

cc: DJJ Executive Team
Shaun Parker, Residential Program Manager
Regional Program Managers
Russell Jennings, Bon Air Superintendent
Court Service Unit Directors