

Update/MCI-Norfolk

The rapid testing performed throughout the Institution [12/8-12/9] has resulted in a large number of positive tests. Those testing positive are told to gather [bed-roll, clothing, tv, cosmetics, etc.] enough for 10 days. These men are moved to the 8-Block, and Probation [quarantine units]. During this wave, Probation was re-opened as an overflow, but was closed again, on 12/15, when remaining men were moved to the 8-Block, at night in the rain.

-On Monday [12/7] Unit 4-2 (FN.1) was tested using the C19-PCR test (data from a 11/03/20 test, including where the test is processed is attached). On 12/12 and 12/13 numerous men (including ██████████ of the Lifers' Group) tested positive and were quarantined.

-Wednesday [12/9] Unit 2-2, where I reside was tested and six men (including ██████████ of Lifers' Group) tested positive and were moved to quarantine. The block as of 12/21 is still on a restrictive status. (FN#2).

The Institution remains in a restrictive lockdown. Only men who have already tested positive are being allowed to report to work assignments, such as: kitchen, property, laundry, supply, and ADL (Assisted Daily Living Unit). Only two Inmate Maintenance workers are being utilized at this time due to the correctional officer who is posted to the maintenance building being out with COVID. Today, large numbers of men who have tested positive for COVID were allowed to return to work in Industries. We are still being afforded access to the yard with our respective housing units 4 times per week, and limited canteen items are being delivered to units by staff. The Superintendent, during a brief visit to Unit 2-2 told men to be patient, and that we were still going to receive the Christmas meal. Though this meal is a good break, and could easily have been excused away this year, the meal is as much for staff as it is for the inmate population. The meal which is paid for from the Inmate Benefit Fund/Food Account, has been the subject in years past of something they tried to do away with because of the work. A large number of men volunteer their time to make the meal a success. The tradition has continued as these holidays are very stressful, and the meal is seen as reducing this stress. The food overall remains the same, bad, I hope to send a detailed account by next week. But it is like an ebb tide, one week a little better, the next, unidentifiable. Last week we were served "shaved steak", or something being called shaved steak, a soy product, but nevertheless probably healthy. Another day we were served real hamburgers, which are the ones we are supposed to receive, and the next day I received corn flakes with a piece of chocolate cake with frosting. We have been receiving expired chips, and "granola bars." Also, the serving of the very processed meatloaf patties has increased. The last week, of 14 meals 5 of them included chicken stew with chunks of processed chicken, and a few days of chicken patties. If they stuck to the dietitian approved menus and recipes which is required by policy, there would be few complaints.

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I wanted to point out that when someone goes to the hospital, they are told that they will be quarantined upon return and are then offered to refuse the hospital trip. They will sometimes allow a man to return to his housing unit if the trip is less than 48 hours, other times they quarantine anytime the inmate leaves the unit, which they have been doing during this recent wave.

Recently two men from my housing unit went to an outside hospital. One who had had chest pains was gone for a couple of days, and by policy, or procedure should have been quarantined. This inmate returned to the institution with a negative test result in hand and was still quarantined. He asked if he could be tested again at the institution as the results of a PCR test come back in 2-4 days, his request was denied. This man was forced to quarantine for 14 days. The other man, goes to the hospital for a blood transfusion once a month, and usually returns directly to the unit. He was offered to refuse the trip, upon returning to the institution with a negative test result he was quarantined. It is unclear what happened, and I am trying to confirm this, but this individual is now listed as an active case, meaning that he was tested with the rest of the institution last week and contracted COVID after testing at the hospital, or while in the SMU quarantine.

With all the televised PSAs about not ignoring symptoms of heart attack, and stroke, etc., still men are refusing trips, and struggling through ailments so as not to end up in quarantine. With the DOC having rapid testing, there should be no need to quarantine a man who opts to take a hospital, other than for the period awaiting for a rapid test, or a PCR test at the Institution. It is difficult enough to be approved by WellPath (medical provider) and the DOC that these trips are usually long overdue and needed. The 'threat' of quarantine for 14 days is being used as a deterrent.

Last night [12/20] about 7:30 pm Superintendent Alves made his rounds of the Institution, and spoke to a resident in Unit 2-2. Mr. Alves started by saying he "did not want to talk about food" that "they are trying." The man asked about an inmate who was rumored to have died due to COVID-19. The Super confirmed that the man was alive and in a COVID Unit. When the man asked how many men at Norfolk have died of COVID, the Super responded "technically, one." The one he referred to was James White who died in his cell. When the man asked about Milton Rice, and others, the Super said they did not die in prison. Here is a problem, it depends on how such questions are asked. As the death certificates are written at an outside hospital, that is their place of death. As well a question such as how many cases of Covid, is turned into how many active cases, as opposed to how many cases in total. I have heard and read of such calculated confusion on NPR and in transcripts, and articles.

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FN.1

Unit 4-2 was the only unit that was tested using the PCR test because there was a death (James White) in the unit due to COVID, and there were concerns of many men being symptomatic and self-quarantining to avoid 8-Block/Probation.

FN.2

Unit 2-2 and 4-2 were the only units who had very, very few cases until the 8th and 9th. 2-2 had 1 case, then this wave 7 (we just learned that a man who returned from an outside hospital tested positive, contracting Covid on the way back to the institution or while in the SMU. We also learned that Housing Officer tested positive after working a quarantine unit and was the source of infection in unit 2-2. The officer is [REDACTED].