



## CIC | Corrections Information Council

### CIC Ongoing Monitoring of Covid-19 Outbreaks at FCI Fort Dix

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Over the last year, the CIC has continued to monitor conditions at BOP facilities, particularly the BOP's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Several facilities have experienced serious Covid-19 outbreaks, including recently at FCI Fort Dix in New Jersey. Fort Dix has the highest total number of individuals who have tested positive for Covid-19 of any BOP facility. This includes individuals who tested positive but have since been marked as "recovered." The facility has 2,700 residents, and 1,664 have tested positive since the BOP began testing and tracking coronavirus in March 2020 (note: some individuals who tested positive may have been released or transferred from Fort Dix since receiving their positive test.) According to the most recent roster provided to the CIC in early January 2021, there are 69 DC individuals currently at Fort Dix. The CIC has no information about how many DC individuals at the facility have tested positive for Covid-19.

In early October 2020, the BOP transferred more than 150 individuals from FCI Elkton in Ohio to Fort Dix. Elkton had been severely affected by Covid-19, and several individuals who were transferred tested positive for Covid-19. Shortly after the transfer, Fort Dix had a large increase in Covid-19 positive tests. By November 9, 2020 there were at least 228 active cases among incarcerated individuals at Fort Dix. In response, the BOP instituted a moratorium on transfers to Fort Dix. The BOP stated that there was "no evidence" the outbreak was connected to the transfer of individuals from Elkton to Fort Dix.

Members of the New Jersey congressional delegation, including Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez and eight members of Congress, repeatedly called on the BOP to provide information about its plan for addressing the outbreak at Fort Dix, including testing, treatment, and a breakdown of how the facility used funds from the CARES Act. The delegation wrote to BOP Director Carvajal in November 2020 requesting that the BOP implement regular testing and an effective plan to address the Covid-19 outbreak at Fort Dix. The number of Covid-19 cases among inmates and staff spiked to more than 300 during the month of November. On November 24, 2020, the BOP lifted the moratorium on transfers to Fort Dix. The congressional delegation wrote again in December expressing concern about these developments and asking for updated information on the facility response. The Congressional delegation also asked

whether the facility was releasing individuals to home confinement and raised concerns about the insufficient provision of medical care to individuals infected with Covid-19.

As of January 6, 2021, nearly 600 inmates out of the 2,700 at Fort Dix were listed as having active Covid-19 cases.

On January 12, 2021, the Senators from New Jersey wrote to the Warden of Fort Dix, David Ortiz, expressing ongoing concern about the use of home confinement, the provision of PPE and social distancing, and medical care for individuals with Covid-19 at the facility. On January 15, Senators Booker and Menendez and eight members of Congress from New Jersey sent a letter to the Inspector General asking that his office investigate the pandemic response at Fort Dix.

On January 14, 2021, the CIC learned that individuals incarcerated in Unit 5812 at Fort Dix had shared documents about their experience in a public Dropbox folder during early January. The information released inside of that folder included a letter summarizing the situation, a detailed timeline going back to mid-October listing Covid-related events, memos from the facility administration to inmates, administrative remedy forms, and a few legal pleadings. The CIC has not been able to determine whether any of the individuals on the unit or listed in the shared documents are DC residents.

The CIC reached out to the BOP for information regarding the current situation at Fort Dix. The BOP responded with the statement below, noting that “a review team from the BOP’s Program Review Division...recently traveled to Fort Dix to evaluate compliance with Covid-19 protocols,” and that the first dose of vaccines was delivered to Fort Dix on January 19, 2021. As of today, the BOP vaccine website lists that 174 staff members at Fort Dix have been fully inoculated, and zero inmates have been fully inoculated. The BOP website currently lists 54 active Covid-19 cases among inmates at Fort Dix, and 36 active Covid-19 cases among staff at the facility.

On February 1, 2021, Warden David Ortiz was temporarily reassigned to the BOP’s regional administrative office in Philadelphia. The CIC will continue to monitor the situation at Fort Dix. The CIC gratefully welcomes any information about the situation at Fort Dix, particularly from individuals who are in contact with family or friends currently incarcerated at that institution.

Our staff can be reached by phone at (202) 478-9211 (TTY: 711) or by email: [dccic@dc.gov](mailto:dccic@dc.gov)

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**BOP Response to CIC Inquiries Regarding Management of Covid-19 Outbreaks at FCI Fort Dix**  
Received Feb 3, 2021:

“The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is committed to ensuring the safety of all inmates in our population, our staff, and the public. Over the past year, the BOP has worked hard to prevent, contain, and mitigate the spread of the global pandemic.

The BOP has taken swift and effective action in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and has emerged as a correctional leader in the pandemic. As with any type of emergency situation, we carefully assess how to best ensure the safety of institutions. All of our facilities, including FCI Fort Dix, are required to implement the BOP's guidance on mitigating the spread of COVID-19. That guidance can be found on our website here <https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/index.jsp>.

In response to COVID-19, the BOP has instituted a comprehensive management approach that includes screening, testing, appropriate treatment, prevention, education, and infection control measures. We have continually evaluated our correctional settings and made adjustments to safety precautions and personnel as needed in order to best serve our staff, the inmate population, partner agencies, and the public.

In fulfillment of this mission, the BOP has been proactive in establishing internal review teams that have been systematically reviewing our correctional institutions nationwide to ensure compliance with our COVID-19 protocols. These audits are done without prior notification to our institutions to ensure a thorough and accurate assessment of our facilities. Toward this end, a review team from the BOP's Program Review Division - not the Office of Inspector General - recently traveled to FCI Fort Dix to evaluate compliance with COVID-19 protocols.

As of Tuesday, January 19, 2021, the first dose of vaccine had been delivered to FCI Fort Dix. More information on the BOP's COVID-19 vaccine implementation can be located here: <https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/index.jsp>."