



Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Public Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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COVID-19 testing at START facility in Anaconda shows 45 offenders and staff positive for the virus

Forty-five staff and offenders at the Sanction, Treatment, Assessment, Revocation and Transition (START) Center in Anaconda have tested positive for COVID-19.

Of those 45 cases, 42 are offenders and three are staff members at the facility which offers an assessment/sanction center for adult males who have violated conditions of community placement including pre-release, parole, or probation. The facility is owned and operated by Community Counseling and Correctional Services, Inc. (CCCS) and is a contract facility for the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC).

After an offender at the facility demonstrated symptoms of COVID-19 last weekend and tested positive for the virus, the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Public Health Department, in cooperation with the DOC and state health officials, conducted contact tracing. Ultimately, it was decided to test all 130 offenders and 40 staff members at the facility.

No offenders or staff members have required hospitalization.

According to Mike Thatcher, chief executive officer for CCCS, most cases occurred in one pod; however, as a precaution, the entire facility has been placed on quarantine.

“For months we’ve been taking all the advised precautions at START and will continue to do so,” Thatcher said. “The staff has been doing a fabulous job handling this situation and so have the offenders. Plus, we’re receiving great support from the health department and the DOC. Now we just need get through the next few weeks.”

These additional cases brought the total active count in Anaconda Deer Lodge County to 48 cases. Anaconda Deer Lodge County Public Health Department is working closing with the State of Montana and the START facility to monitor contacts in our county. Since March of 2020, Anaconda Deer Lodge County has had a total of 82 cases, 0 hospitalizations, and 35 recoveries. Please, continue to be diligent about wearing your mask in public places, social distancing, and using hand sanitizers and/or washing hands.