



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Office of Communications
Phone: (601) 359-5655, 359-5701
E-mail: MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

MISSISSIPPI AMONG FIRST TO MASS VACCINATE PRISONERS

JACKSON, MS (FRI MAR 19) – Mississippi prisons today became among the first state prisons in the United States to begin mass vaccinations. With over 17,000 inmates, Mississippi Corrections started with the state’s most populated prison, Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Pearl. MDOC’s medical staff, through healthcare provider VitalCore, completed vaccinating nearly all 3,017 CMCF inmates by the end of the day today (Friday).

MDOC received 3,500 doses from the Mississippi Department of Health which enabled the agency to mass inoculate all of CMCF without regard to age or medical condition. Commissioner Burl Cain and VitalCore Senior VP Dr. Raman Singh are inoculating Mississippi’s three state prisons first, one prison at a time, to have a full complement of medical staff and security to vaccinate quickly on a massive scale. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines have only a two-week shelf life.

Dr. Singh said, “We are the first (state) to do this on a massive scale to offer every inmate and not to talk. There are many who are talking but we are the first one who is walking the talk.”

CMCF Superintendent Ronald King told inmates he was first in line to get vaccinated because it is safe. “We talked to the guys and ladies up front and let them know, ‘Hey, if y’all want to get back to normal and get activities going, visitations, increase our religious, academic and vocational programs, let’s do this. And we let them know we got the vaccinations ourselves and told them, ‘Hey guys we took the vaccinations ourselves and everything’s working out fine.’ We want everybody to take the vaccination.”

While other states have had as high as 40-percent of inmates refusing the vaccine, Mississippi has only experienced about one-percent refusal. After each shot, Commissioner Cain offered chocolate chip cookies to each inmate. By protecting inmates with the vaccines, he and MDOC Superintendents King, Tim Morris of Parchman and Andrew Mills of SMCI are planning to reopen family visitations as soon as the second shots are given at their respective prisons. MDOC says Mississippi State Prison at Parchman will be vaccinated next week and South Mississippi Correctional the following week.

While the vaccinations are not mandatory, the Commissioner recognizes that being vaccinated is one of the best tools to protect other inmates from an outbreak coming from outside and allow inmates to resume some sense of normalcy including having visitation with loved ones.

MDOC says if you are planning to visit someone in prison when visitation resumes, you will not be required to show proof you've been vaccinated but temperature checks will be administered for everyone's protection.

For more information, log on to MDOC.ms.gov.

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