FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Orange County Jail COVID-19 numbers increase, mitigation efforts continue

SANTA ANA, Ca. (December 10, 2020): The Orange County Sheriff's Department Custody Operations Division and OC Health Care Agency's Correctional Health Services (CHS) have worked collaboratively to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within the Orange County Jail system. Yesterday, two inmates in general population began exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms and tested positive, the remaining individuals in those housing areas were tested. That resulted in 72 additional inmates in general population that tested positive for COVID-19. The total COVID-19 positive inmates today in the Orange County Jail system is 102, with 28 new booking inmates and 74 general population inmates. The vast majority of the COVID-19 positive inmates are asymptomatic.

None of the inmates who have tested positive within the last two days have required hospitalization or advanced medical treatment. All inmates exposed to COVID-19 positive inmates will be quarantined for 14 days, and tested prior to the end of their quarantine.

Following a positive COVID-19 case in general population, CHS and Custody Operations conduct contact tracing to determine exposure. All exposed inmates are quarantined and tested, and their health status is monitored including symptom screening and temperature checks, with additional assessments conducted as warranted.

These cases come after an exhaustive effort by personnel from Custody Operations and CHS to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the jails. Working collaboratively with the CHS team, the Department implemented a series of changes to practices and procedures to mitigate the spread of the virus. Beginning in April, all new bookings into the Orange County Jail are quarantined from the general population for a minimum of 14 days. To help prevent the spread of the virus from the community into our jails, all quarantined inmates, including all new bookings, are tested before being integrated into general housing. Also, any inmate exposed to a COVID-19 positive person is medically quarantined and monitored for symptoms. If any inmate exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, they are also isolated and tested.

Patient education on infection prevention strategies is done at all healthcare encounters. In addition, screening procedures including a temperature check and symptom screening for all personnel and inmates entering an Orange County Jail began in March 2020.

"Just as we have seen COVID-19 cases rise in the community, we are now seeing that impact our jail," said Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes. "As we have successfully done before, we will implement multi-layered mitigation efforts to control the further spread of COVID-19 among inmates or personnel. Throughout the

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pandemic, we have gone beyond CDC guidelines and increased testing for inmates and employees. I am confident that the practices and procedures we have implemented in previous cases will bring cases back down to zero as we have before."

To further prevent the spread of these cases, the Sheriff's Department is working collaboratively with the courts to limit the number of inmates being transported to courthouses. COVID-19 positive inmates in isolation and quarantined inmates are not transported to court.

In total, 691 inmates have tested positive for COVID-19 since the first positive inmate on March 24, 2020. Of those, only three inmates have been hospitalized for COVID-19 and none have died. 6,964 COVID-19 tests have been administered to Orange County Jail inmates since the start of the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic, the average daily jail population count declined to 2,826 on May 11, 2020 at the height of active COVID-19 cases in the jails. That is less than half of the average daily population prior to the start of the pandemic. That number has steadily increased, and today sits at 3,628. This is well below the Orange County Jails' capacity of 6,159.

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