



# NEWS RELEASE

## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### Commissioner Terra Taylor

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Presented by Jason Miller, Office of the Commissioner, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

245 McKee Road | Dover, DE 19904 | Office: 302.857.5232 | [Jason.Miller@delaware.gov](mailto:Jason.Miller@delaware.gov)

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## Department of Correction marks historic deployment of communication and programming tablets to incarcerated individuals

**Dover, DE** -- Department of Correction leaders today announced that the Department has deployed handheld tablets to every incarcerated person, completing a months-long initiative with a dual purpose - to improve communication with family and community supports and to expand opportunities to deliver new programming, treatment, and reentry resources to all incarcerated Delawareans. This tablet deployment project was delivered at no cost to Delaware taxpayers.

Inmate tablets were introduced in Delaware prisons in 2019 on a pilot basis through a partnership with ViaPath Technologies, the nation's leading provider of tablet and phone services to correctional systems. Tablets initially served primarily to expand communication with loved ones as the devices function, in part, as a phone and feature a messaging app that is used to exchange written communications and receive photos electronically from family and friends. Initial tablet deployment to prison facilities took on new urgency early in the COVID pandemic and was completed in 2020 to help overcome the disruption to in-person visitation. Tablets were further introduced to Delaware community corrections facilities in 2023. Wall-mounted tablets in facility housing areas are used for video visitation with friends and families, which can be scheduled in advance through a tablet-based app.

For five years, the number of available tablets was limited and tablets were shared among users, with an average of one for every six inmates. Demand continued to grow and the limited tablet time available to users each day restricted their ability to use the devices for tablet-based rehabilitative programming and educational training. Department of Correction leaders listened to inmates' needs and requests, and this year DOC collaborated with ViaPath to provide tablets to all inmates. Throughout the summer, technicians strengthened the tablet infrastructure in correctional facilities, increasing bandwidth, installing new networking equipment and calibrating hardware to improve speed and reliability and overcome the challenge of wireless connectivity in correctional facilities that are designed with thick concrete walls and steel doors. More than 4,000

new tablets and tablet chargers have now been delivered to all incarcerated individuals to meet the one-to-one tablet to inmate ratio.

DOC's tablet system has been carefully designed with two goals in mind: 1.) accessibility and affordability for incarcerated individuals and their families, while 2.) not imposing costs on Delaware taxpayers. DOC's tablet vendor, is responsible for building and operating the system at its own expense and at no cost to the DOC, including providing and servicing tablet devices, network wiring, networking equipment and hardware, and providing maintenance services. Incarcerated individuals do not pay to purchase tablets and are not charged a monthly subscription fee for access. Many tablet features are free; other tablet features, including phone, messaging and entertainment services, are paid by users as a fee-for-service.

"Putting tablets in the hands of every incarcerated person will help us to not only meet the strong interest in phone, video, and electronic communication with friends and families, but will help transform our ability to connect large numbers of incarcerated individuals to on-demand learning opportunities, treatment and wellness resources, and reentry supports," **Commissioner Terra Taylor said.** "Access to tablets is helping individuals in our custody feel more connected to the community, broaden their knowledge and skills, and take personal initiative to use their time to explore their interests. That's having a positive effect on their sense of wellbeing and it decreases tension and conflict which improves safety and security in our facilities."

**With one-to-one tablet distribution complete, the Department of Correction now turns to expanding free virtual educational content, career and life skills courses, and treatment programming on the devices.** Free resources already represent 50% of all tablet activity, and users spent 4.3 million minutes on these free features in October 2024, the first month after one-to-one distribution. The most popular tablet activity, by far over the past 12 months was the free Library app, with more than 22 million minutes of use, followed by paid entertainment apps, video visitation, education, law library, phone, and instructional and self-help programming apps.

### **TABLET FEATURES (some features may vary by facility)**

- Education and reference apps (*free access*)
- Job and life skills (*free access*). Features content through a Career One Stop app to help prepare for work and relationships after release and to navigate interpersonal dynamics while incarcerated.
- Law Library (*free access*). On-demand access to legal research material and case law, including Lexis-Nexis.
- Faith-based Resources (*free access*)
- Library (ebooks, audio books, and periodicals) (*free and paid access*). Thousands of eBooks with titles covering fiction, religion, addiction, recovery, and more
- Facility contacts, documents, facility messages, forms (such as grievances) (*free access*)
- Accessibility (*free access*). Include captioning on movies and other media, variable font sizing, and translation of prompts and other materials into multiple languages. The Tablet operating system and content offerings are compliant with FCC Telecommunications Relay Service requirements, Federal Section 508 standards, and the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- Personal communication (*paid access*). Phone calls, messaging, photos and ecards through personal tablets, and video visits through wall-mounted tablets located in housing areas
- Sports, podcasts, news (*paid access*)

- Entertainment (*paid access*): Games, music streaming, and movies with content that is continuously refreshed.

### **TABLET COMMUNICATION HIGHLIGHTS**

Over the 12 months through October 2024, **incarcerated individuals used handheld and wall-mounted tablets to make more than 12 million connections with family and friends**, including:

- **8.1 million** electronic messages, photos and ecards sent or received (photos and ecards are receive only)
- **3.9 million** phone calls
- **324,000** video visits

Tablet services are provided on a secure wireless encrypted network. Tablets do not provide access to the internet and tablet communications are subject to monitoring to support safety and security.



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