

# Minnesota Sex Offender Program reports first COVID-19 cases among clients, announces new testing procedures

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MOOSE LAKE, MN -- New COVID-19 procedures are being put in place at Minnesota's two sex offender treatment facilities in Moose Lake and St. Peter, the state's Department of Human Services said Tuesday.

The announcement comes after the DHS reported four MSOP clients have tested positive. Another eight were awaiting results as of Tuesday. 35 staff members also tested positive, DHS said.

DHS officials said federal and state privacy law does not allow them to release site-specific data to the public,

New procedures starting next week include testing all staff and clients who are in the facilities during a specific time period will be tested.

Tests will continue once a week until the facility marks two full weeks without a positive test result.

Officials say mandatory masking has just been implemented for all clients when they are outside their rooms.

"These are the very first client cases of COVID in our facilities since the pandemic began, and we're not taking them lightly," Nancy Johnston, MSOP Executive Director said in a statement. "We have been diligent about practicing and enforcing safety measures and will continue to do so to help keep our staff and clients as safe as possible in our residential settings."

Since the start of the pandemic, DHS says the two sex offender facilities have been screening staff for fever and other COVID-19 symptoms along with requiring staff to wear masks and socially distance.

According to the DHS website, the Minnesota Sex Offender Program houses 737 clients in its two treatment facilities.

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