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**Department of Health
and Social Services**

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sixteen cases of COVID-19 identified at the McLaughlin Youth Center

August 27, 2020 ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has confirmed 16 positive COVID-19 cases at the McLaughlin Youth Center (MYC), including 12 youth in a treatment unit and four staff members who work on the unit. Upon being notified about the cases, the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) leadership immediately began working with DHSS Division of Public Health, Section of Epidemiology and the Anchorage Health Department to respond to the cases, identify any other cases and take additional steps to prevent further spread of COVID-19 at MYC.

The initial case was identified in a staff member who was tested after displaying symptoms. After the positive result came back, the unit the staff member worked on was placed in quarantine status and all youth residing and close contact staff working on the unit were tested. Twelve of the 16 youth had positive tests for the virus, so the entire unit's status was changed to medical isolation. All 16 identified cases are from the same treatment unit. The cases are currently still under investigation.

Previously, MYC has had one staff member in April and one youth in June test positive for the virus. An additional youth tested positive during their admission process in August, and was asymptomatic.

To protect all the youth and staff at MYC, the following steps are being taken:

- The four youth in the unit that tested negative have been moved to a separate cottage.
- The four MYC staff who tested positive are self-isolating at home.
- Staff have been provided personal protective equipment to help mitigate further spread, which includes isolation gowns, medical masks, eye protection and gloves.
- The treatment unit with the cases has undergone a thorough sanitization of resident rooms and common areas including doorknobs, handrails, and tables.
- MYC is in the process of serial testing all youth and staff at the facility until the entire facility has two weeks of negative tests.
- MYC has been on a temporary suspension of visitation since Aug. 5, 2020 due to high rates of community transmission in the Anchorage area.
- Anchorage School District teaching staff will continue to provide education services through an online platform.

All of DJJ's facilities have been continually educating staff about infection control procedures; conducting health screenings of any personnel entering the building; immediately sending home any staff who have symptoms; screening residents daily for symptoms; and masks are worn throughout DJJ facilities by staff and youth. Since April 28, 2020, DJJ has been testing all newly admitted youth to their

facilities and requiring them to quarantine for 14 days after admission. These actions were taken based on the Section of Epidemiology's testing guidelines for asymptomatic residents admitted to congregate living facilities. DJJ is committed to keeping staff and residents safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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