



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

### MEDIA RELEASE

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**From:** Michael Terry  
Deputy PIO, 352-238-4801

**Re:** Update -- Sheriff Announces Screening Tool for Coronavirus at Hernando County Detention Center

**Date:** March 11, 2020

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#### Update

Less than two weeks after the Hernando County Detention Center implemented a screening tool to help staff identify possible cases of Coronavirus, the American Jail Association is now sharing the screening tool with other agencies across the country via its website.

The staff at the Hernando County Detention Center devised the tool – or form – in response to the ever-increasing number of Coronavirus cases being diagnosed throughout the country. The form has been adjusted based on the evolving nature and locations of the virus.

Currently every inmate gets screened by answering a list of questions designed to determine if they've possibly been exposed to the Coronavirus prior to being introduced into the jail population.

The form has also been requested and shared with the Florida Sheriffs Association.

If an inmate answers "YES" to certain questions on the list, staff will immediately place a mask on the inmate and escort them to a reverse isolation cell in the medical unit. The nurse will be notified to complete a "symptoms checklist" to help further determine if the inmate is infected with the Coronavirus.

#### Original information

Sheriff Al Nienhuis is pleased to announce a screening tool for the Coronavirus has been developed and implemented at the Hernando County Detention Center.

While there are no known cases of Coronavirus in Florida, the screening tool was implemented in an abundance of caution to keep both the inmate population and the detention center staff as healthy as possible.

If an inmate presents with symptoms of the Coronavirus and/or the screening tool indicates the inmate may have been exposed to the virus, isolation protocols are immediately enacted so other persons are not potentially exposed.

Any inmate showing signs, symptoms or a screening tool indication of the Coronavirus will be placed in one (of the two) reverse-isolation cells in the medical wing at the detention center. As with all inmates suffering from any medical condition, nurses and a physician oversee the care of each inmate. If the medical needs of the inmate require care that cannot be provided at the detention center, the inmate is transferred to a hospital (along with 24-hour law enforcement supervision).

It should be noted that the medical staff at the Hernando County Detention Center consistently monitors “outbreaks” and pandemics and prepares for same in a manner very similar to this.

#### **The Office of Sheriff:**

**The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.**

**Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and remains accountable to them.**