

As I said publicly 6 days ago when the story about the story about the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility was published in Seven Days, we have a problem, and it is our responsibility - my responsibility – to fix this problem.

That means if systems need to change, then we will change them. If individuals need to be held accountable, they will be held accountable.

So in the 6 days since the story broke, what has been done?

- I have met with the Attorney General and his team along with the Vermont State Police, to ensure that I do not do anything that would interfere or hinder the ongoing criminal investigation at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. I want to express my appreciation for the support of the Attorney General in this effort.
- I have met with the U.S. Attorney's office to explore their involvement and assistance in this this investigation. I think it is important that we have an independent entity, outside of state government to conduct an investigation of the Chittenden facility, and perhaps the entire corrections system to make sure the rights of employees or inmates are not being violated.
- I am setting up new reporting mechanisms outside of the Department of Corrections and Agency of Human Services, for employees and inmates to report misconduct, retaliation, retribution, or coercion.
- In the next 24 hours, I will temporarily move the Deputy Commissioner of Corrections Judy Henkin to the Secretary's office. Her responsibilities will be to oversee the operations at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility and the Superintendent of the facility will report directly to Judy.
 - Examples of new separation: Daily operational oversight will remain the responsibility of Supt. Theresa Stone. She will report directly to DC Judy Henkin any issues or concerns related to medical, casework, security and operational needs. Any incident that may attract media attention, an incident that may have an impact on operations, safety and security at multiple facilities, an incident where a person's life may be in jeopardy; or an incident that might have an impact in the community, or with victims will also be reported directly to DC. Henkin.

Judy was selected for this assignment because she is relatively new to her position (started at the end of February), and has served mostly outside of Corrections during her career in state government. She has had a lengthy career in the state and is an attorney.

Besides the organization assignment of the Chittenden facility, Judy will also be responsible for the coordinating and implementing a new reporting mechanism outside of the Agency, as well as coordinating any complaints coming out of the facility through the current channels.

Because the Chittenden facility is part of the overall corrections system, there are some aspects of operations that cannot be separated:

- Examples of what won't be separated: The Facilities Executive will be notified for any incident that falls within the one-hour reporting timeframe outlined in directive. Those incidents include inmate assaults involving a weapon, escape or attempted escape, evacuations or facility lockdowns, inmate death or illness that is considered life threatening, activation of Special Teams, and/or use of restraint chair for more than 2 hours.

But for the short term and temporary basis, the facility will report to the Secretary's office.

- Mandatory sexual harassment training will be reintroduced system wide.
- I have conducted the first round of interviews with the Commissioner and the Superintendent of that facility. It is important to recognize that some of the allegations in the article pre-date the tenure of the Commissioner, and even before he was Deputy Commissioner, as well as the Superintendent's tenure, who started in 2018. I have focused on the allegations made during their time in leadership, but a thorough and complete review will be done on the Chittenden facility and may lead to a broader corrections review.

So what are the next steps?

- We will continue to interview corrections officials and individuals that provide information that could benefit the investigation.
- We will look across the country to make sure we find the appropriate third-party entity to complete an external, independent review. There are organizations that specialize in this work and we will coordinate to make sure we have the most qualified individuals to conduct a full review.
- We will continue to coordinate with our partners such as the Attorney General and the U.S. Attorney's office.
- As I said last week, we will continue to work expeditiously to provide the Governor with a full review with recommendations.