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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As of today, 42 inmates in the Uinta Facility at the Utah State Prison are continuing to engage in a hunger strike. That count remains unchanged from Friday morning when the inmates, all documented gang members, began the disturbance.

Some of the inmates hold jobs within their housing unit, such as food handlers and tier cleaners, but have refused to fulfill their work duties since the strike began.

During an inventory conducted on Friday, Correctional Officers observed large amounts of commissary items in participating inmates' cells; since then, staff have documented several inmates consuming commissary food in their cells.

The Department continues to offer inmates who are participating in the hunger strike regularly scheduled meals and is documenting when the meals are refused. One inmate has twice accepted a breakfast tray; several others have accepted juice packets.

On Friday, about half of the inmates participating in the hunger strike allowed medical staff to record their weights but refused to allow other vital statistic measurements.

On Monday, medical staff again offered each inmate the opportunity to be weighed; all refused. Medical staff also offered each inmate the opportunity to meet with a nurse on Tuesday; one inmate accepted that offer.

In addition, mental health staff visited each inmate on Monday and will again visit on Wednesday and Friday. Two inmates with pre-existing health conditions are being closely monitored. Also under review is how refusing food might impact any medications an inmate is taking. Medical staff has provided each inmate with a fact sheet outlining the possible adverse affects of prolonged fasting.

The Department also is reviewing available legal options with its counsel from the Utah Attorney General's Office should intervention become necessary.

In recent months and again this weekend, the Department shared information with inmates participating in the hunger strike about policy changes that are currently in the process of being reviewed and revised, including the inmate classification system, programming and out-of-cell time in the maximum-security area. Those conversations continue.

The Department also met on July 21 with representatives of the ACLU of Utah and two other advocacy groups to discuss its efforts to revise aspects of its restrictive housing policy, including implementing new programming, increasing out-of-cell time, and adopting an independent review process for restrictive housing decisions. It is unfortunate the ACLU did not take advantage of this opportunity to advise us of these concerns and of a potential of a hunger strike, which it has apparently been aware of for some time, and seek to resolve them together.

The Department does not capitulate to demands, threats or intimidation from inmates. In fact, UDC policy states that inmates who engage in a "food strike" may be subject to disciplinary action, an option the Department is now reviewing.

***NOTE:** The Uinta Facility is the prison's maximum-security area and houses inmates with a Level 2 classification, which means they require close custody. Inmates may require close custody for a variety of reasons, including their behavior and personal and institutional safety concerns. The Uinta Facility currently houses 616 inmates in five units; of that total, 164 are housed in Uinta 2, where the hunger strike is taking place.*

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