



Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2024

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Classes resume at Waupun Correctional Institution education building as DOC graduates largest class to date

*WCI continues steps toward resuming standard operations, implementing
new programming*

WAUPUN, Wis. – In-person classes resumed this week in the education building at Waupun Correctional Institution (WCI) – one of several steps WCI has taken recently toward ending modified movement.

Currently, classes focus on preparing persons in our care for General Educational Development (GED) or High School Equivalency Degree (HSED) testing. Four levels of math and language arts classes are offered as well as courses in science, social studies and civics. WCI hopes to add career and technical education courses accredited through Moraine Park Technical College soon.

High school equivalency degree testing, lessons at the cell front, and virtual educational programming was offered throughout modified movement. Now in-person classes have resumed at WCI.

Higher Education in Prison students, who are pursuing associate degrees using Pell grants for distance learning with partner colleges, have been continuing their studies and 34 prospective students recently attended orientation sessions at WCI.

The move comes as the Department of Corrections on Wednesday graduated its largest class of correctional officers and sergeants. Class 401 has 218 members surpassing the previous record class of 214, which graduated in February. Ten of these new graduates will be going to work at WCI.

The department has seen the number of candidates applying and attending the training academy for security staff skyrocket in recent months after Gov. Evers announced pay raises. In November, the Governor announced base pay for correctional officers would start at \$33 an hour and could be as high as \$41 an hour.



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Systemwide, the vacancy rate for correctional officers and sergeants has declined by 10 percentage points since November 2023.

"The staff at WCI have used these past months to ensure security practices are followed and verified, both for the safety of our employees and the persons in our care," said Department of Corrections (DOC) Deputy Secretary Jared Hoy. "Governor Evers' pay initiative is helping the department fill critical positions and helping Waupun Correctional create a new normal that balances safety and opportunity for the men who live there."

Waupun Correctional entered modified movement in March 2023 but WCI staff have been consistently working to restore movement and resume standard operations safely while expanding new opportunities at the institution to support the well-being of the persons in our care and employees. Modified movement is a status that falls between a lockdown and normal operations and often involves a suspension of some administrative rules relating to prison operations. Only two administrative rules remain suspended at WCI. The first relates to in-person visitation, which has not restarted there, and the second rule relates to the amount of recreation time outside the cell.

By the end of February, all eligible persons in our care at WCI were moved into single cells, meeting the Evers Administration's March 1 goal. At WCI, persons in our care are leaving their cells and moving throughout the facility to access health care, mental health services, attend religious services, perform job assignments, take part in two periods of recreation per week and more.

Governor Tony Evers visited WCI in late March to see two recent changes. On a previous visit in November, Evers had directed DOC to reduce WCI's population to allow eligible persons in our care to be housed in their own cells by March 1. By late February, the population had been reduced from more than 900 to 739 and all eligible individuals were in their own cells. A few members of the population do remain in double cells, however, to address their individual needs.

WCI also recently expanded new programming at WCI to enable people in our care to have more contact with friends and family.

In addition to the use of single cells, persons in our care at Waupun were issued new electronic tablets in March. The tablets, which are being rolled out to all DOC facilities, are provided at no cost to the persons in our care. In the first week of the new tablets at Waupun, the number of minutes persons in our care spent talking on the phone grew by nearly 67%.



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Rather than waiting for a telephone to be passed around the housing unit, individuals can now make phone calls and send text or email messages from their own tablets. A main goal of the program, Hoy said, was to ensure that persons in our care are able to maintain close positive relationships with family and other supports that will help in their rehabilitation and eventual reentry to the community. The tablets also offer educational and entertainment content such as books, music and videos.