

## **Budget Town Hall Meeting March 15, 2021**

**Zack Osell:** Okay. Good afternoon everyone. Uh, I want to begin by welcoming you all to today's virtual town hall where we will be explaining the sections of Governor Evers' operating budget that will both directly and indirectly impact the DOC. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Zack Osell and I'll be moderating today's event. I'm a Communications Specialist in the Office of Public Affairs and one of my key responsibilities is stakeholder engagement. Before we dive in, I have a few items to go over. You'll see there is a question and answer feature near the bottom of your screen today, that's represented by a small Q&A icon. We'll be looking at all questions submitted using this feature throughout today's webinar. We will have time near the end to open up the floor to our panelists and subject matter experts to answer some of the questions that roll in today from our audience. You do not need to resubmit any questions that you sent to either myself or in a survey prior to today's town hall.

I want to give you a quick idea of how today's event will look. After opening remarks from Secretary Carr we will have a presentation from DOC leadership on Governor Evers' 2021-2023 budget recommendations with a live Q&A session to follow. I want to encourage you all to submit your questions using the Q&A feature during this presentation. Once we get to the live Q&A portion, we will have several subject matter experts available to help answer your questions. I know some of you may have questions about COVID today. While the health and safety of our staff and all those in our care is our number one priority right now, we are here to talk about the operating budget and we hope you'll help us stay on topic because of our limited time. I also want to point out that today's webinar will be recorded and shared at a later date on our public website. We will also post a written Q&A document that has answers to the questions we receive both before and during today's event. Once again, welcome and thank you for joining us today. I am now going to hand it over to Secretary Carr for his opening remarks.

**Secretary Kevin Carr:** Thank you, Zack. Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Carr the Secretary of the Department of Corrections. Thanks for being here today to learn about some of the exciting things Governor Evers has included in his recommended budget for the Department of Corrections. For just a little bit of background about myself, I have close to 40 years of law enforcement experience holding leadership positions at the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, where I worked for 30 years, and as the US Marshall for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. And I am grateful to the Governor for giving me this opportunity to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Corrections because it affords me the opportunity to really help people change their lives for the better, and I can't think of any other way that I'd rather end my working career, umm, than, umm, being given this opportunity to serve the people of this state and the persons that we care for in our system.

Now, the Department of Corrections' focus on public safety, umm, is based on using evidence based practices as our foundation. And it helps us fulfill our mission, umm, to focus on key factors that help people succeed and become law abiding citizens, including employment, alcohol and drug treatment, housing, and positive support from families and organizations. Now today, we're here to discuss topics related to and to explain sections of Governor Evers' umm, recommended budget that will both directly and indirectly impact the Department of Corrections and help us fulfill our agency's mission of public safety. With us today is Assistant Deputy Secretary Melissa Roberts to help walk us through some of the items within the budget that could impact our agency. You will see that many of these items relate directly to our own strategic priorities and so, before we get into the details related to the budget, I wanted to give you all a little background about those priorities to help you understand the connections and how we connect the dots.

In 2019, the Department of Corrections identified four strategic priority areas that align with the overall mission of our agency. By focusing our efforts appropriately, the population we seek to serve is more equipped to be successful in the community, which ultimately leads to safer communities. That's just another way to enhance public safety. Now, our four priorities include operational excellence, which is focusing on excellence in our operations which helps us be more efficient in our work and uphold our mission, vision, and core values. We also, umm, have created an Office of Internal Affairs to ensure that we find efficient ways of conducting fair, impartial, and thorough investigations regarding misconduct in the Department of Corrections, and we also have established protocols for new administrative rules and increased access to healthcare by utilizing methods such as telehealth.

Our second priority is transparency and public accountability. It's important to serve the people of Wisconsin with transparency. Some of the ways in which our agency has made improvements in this area over the last two years

include enhancing our communications office and practices, umm, related to outreach. Hopefully you've noticed our increased presence on social media, for example, and we've also streamlined our constituent service process and created a department to oversee public record requests.

Our workforce investments are critically important to, umm, the leadership in the Department of Corrections and to all of our staff. We know our employees are our most valuable resource. The investments in training that we provide to our staff today carry over into every area of our work in the future. This priority focuses on ways to better support our staff and to recruit new team members. It's no surprise that we struggle with vacancies in the Department of Corrections, but we are committed to investing in long-term recruitment and retention efforts to take some of the workload demand off of our staff and meet the needs of our agency. We are also increasing cultural competency and diversity awareness, increasing employee wellness and engagement programs, and looking for ways to engage our staff through leadership development and additional training opportunities.

The last priority on our list is, and it's not last but it's just the last one listed of the four, is corrections reform. Our agency is actively working on solutions to improve the conditions inside of our facilities and improve the effectiveness of our interventions and programming for those in our care and implementing alternatives to incarceration whenever it's possible to do so safely. I think you'll see that there are many connections between our goals in this area and the Governor's budget, and I want to, I want to discuss our internal efforts a little further before we move on to specific budget items.

Over the past 40 years, the United States has seen a continued prison population growth and only recently have those numbers begun to stabilize. This is in part due to a decline in crime rates, but a large part of it has been accomplished through practical changes in public policy and initiatives related to criminal justice reform nationwide. Immediately upon my appointment as Secretary, I began to evaluate the areas in which our agency could make the biggest impact in our long-term efforts that align with Governor Evers' priorities for criminal justice reform. Meaningful change will take the efforts of many people, particularly our criminal justice partners and the Legislature, working together to accomplish lasting reform.

The reform efforts that we are making internally here at DOC seek to improve supervision outcomes using evidence based strategies that protect public safety, reduce costs, and help people succeed in the community, and keep our institutions safe. We are investing in opportunities that allow people to get their lives back on track but don't undermine safety or accountability. Some of the accomplishments of our agency in the last two years include changes to our violation response and revocation policies that seek to reduce revocations, reduce the number of prison admissions related to revocations, reduce the total number of persons in jail on a whole, and increase community-based Alternatives to Revocation. We utilize data to drive decisions and allocate resources.

Another thing that we've done that I am extremely proud of, is we've expanded the Earned Release Program by consolidating all Earned Release Program and Substance Use Disorder programs while expanding eligibility to the persons in our care at medium custody institutions. We've also changed from just allowing a person to apply for the program and enroll for one, umm, particular case. We have moved on to allowing that individual to, umm, have multiple enrollments in the Earned Release Program for the same case. So they are just not, umm, out of luck if they don't successfully, umm, complete the program the first time. Without comprehensive criminal justice reform, the Earned Release Program is one of the very few mechanisms that we have internally to reduce our prison population. So we are committed to doing what we can to safely expand this program. Several new Earned Release, umm, Program sites are up already and running and have assisted in getting more individuals through the program and releasing early. For example, just last year, in 2020, DOC, umm, released 2,122 persons who completed the Earned Release Program. This was an increase over the prior year of 213 people or an 11% increase. The Earned Release Program is a meaningful way to give persons in our care the skills necessary to be successful upon release and provide treatment for their clinical needs.

We know, in order to increase our reform efforts, we need the support of the Governor and the Legislature and we believe the Governor's recommendation within this budget will build on our efforts. In September 2020, because of uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic, DOC submitted a "cost to continue" budget to the Governor while maintaining an open line of communication with the Governor's office about what was needed in order for our agency to move forward. The Governor's budget recommendations were released in February 2021 with the Badger Bounceback agenda, and the plan includes many proposals related to DOC that support our four strategic priorities and align with the correction reform efforts prioritized by our administration. It's important to note that this is the

first step of a long process and the state Legislature must now consider Governor Evers' budget proposal. Some of the items included in the budget recommendations include funds for expansion of programming like the Earned Release Program, changes to Community Corrections, plans for transforming the juvenile justice system in this state.

Now I would like to transition a little bit to, umm, my team of experts who are going to present, umm, in more depth the work we do in our agency, and answer some of your questions. Today I am very fortunate to have, umm, four really terrific subject matter experts from our various departments and divisions. Melissa Roberts, who is my Assistant Deputy Secretary, will be presenting on the various budget items in the Governor's request. Melissa oversees various offices in the, umm, Office of the Secretary. Lance Wiersma, the Administrator of the Division of Community Corrections will answer questions related to community corrections, and Sarah Cooper, recently named the Administrator for the Division of Adult Institutions will answer questions related to adult facilities. And Steve Krallis, Director of the Bureau of Budget and, umm, Facilities Management in our Division of Management Services is here to answer questions as well, and I think we might have Sylvia as well. Umm, Sylvia Jackson is my Director of Reentry Services and she is, umm, on-board to answer some questions related to reentry today. So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to Melissa who will walk you through some of these items in more detail and I'll see you later.

**Assistant Deputy Secretary Melissa Roberts:** Great. Thank you very much, Secretary. Good afternoon everybody. It is, umm, my privilege to be the Assistant Deputy Secretary, as Secretary Carr indicated. Umm, I'd also like to thank Katie Domina from the Governor's office. She is also joining us today and will be available for any potential questions. Umm, that will be my other quick plug again to take a look at the question answer function at the bottom of your screen, so please, if you have questions as we move through the overview of the Governor's budget as it relates to Corrections items, please, uh, put your questions in the Q&A. We have our topnotch Communications team, umm, ready and, and waiting to get those assigned to our, uh, team of experts. Umm, so with that Zack, I think we can move to the next slide.

So Secretary Carr indicated that, you know, we have a, we have a long haul yet as it relates to the budget process so, umm, for our 100 plus participants today who may not be as familiar with the budget process, we just wanted to give a high level overview of the steps that continue. Obviously with the introduction of the Governor's budget, it is now in the hands of the Joint Committee on Finance to, umm, review those provisions. They will, umm, ultimately put forward a version of that bill, umm, with whatever changes come through their deliberations and then they have to vote, umm, to pass the final version of the budget bill. After that is completed through the Joint Committee on Finance, it will go to the full Legislature and that vote needs to occur both in the Senate and the Assembly. Once it passes both houses it will then return to Governor Evers' desk to be either fully or partially vetoed and then signed into law. We have gotten several questions, umm, especially from our staff, who we did three of these town halls for last week, about the effective date of these provisions. We can usually presume that the budget bill will be signed somewhere between July and October of 2021 and provisions of the bill will be affected on the date it is signed, or there may be delayed implementation for certain portions, umm, of the budget bill.

So the Secretary, umm, made mention of some of these but, umm, just, you know, another quick overview of how we got to where we are today. Umm, last year we worked on our '21-'23 biannual budget process. Umm, we did that and fortunately, I want to say thanks to Budget Director Krallis who is on the call with us today, he had a pretty barebones team at that time last year when we were putting this together. Umm, part of that consideration was the survey that went to, uh, to our staff, umm, based on our strategic priorities that Secretary Carr reviewed earlier, and then those requests were reviewed and analyzed in the spring and summer of 2020. Next slide, Zack.

So then ultimately in September of this year, sorry last year now, umm, we submitted our cost to continue budget, that was the direction given to all cabinet-level agencies as it related to our budget submission, and then we had an opportunity to, umm, discuss and share some, umm, strategic priorities and corrections reform ideas with the staff at the Governor's office. Umm, we are just very grateful and thrilled to be going over today the many, umm, positive reforms that have been included in Governor Evers budget.

So as most of you probably know, umm, Wisconsin has a two-year budget cycle and we use what we refer to as incremental or base budget. So what that means for state agencies is that we always begin from a base level of funding and positions and then we do some calculations to see whether we need to be funded beyond or below what

that base rate is. So basically, umm, our budget team doesn't have to start at zero which, which some states, that's how they run their budget. So we don't have to justify what we refer to, as again, sort of what we need to keep the lights on moving forward.

So as it relates to, umm, the Governor's budget for FY 21 through FY 23, you will see where we started out at our base budget which was approximately \$1.4 billion dollars and that equals, uh, 10,213 positions. You will see, umm, about a 4.5% increase for fiscal year '22 and then a little bit less, actually, for fiscal year '23. We just broke down, if you look at the bottom table, for FY 22, you can see that the vast majority of our budget is for employee salaries. So 43, a little over 43%, of our budget is for that, those salaries to keep our operations running, 20% of that is for fringe benefits, and then 36.1% is for supplies and services, the bulk of that for the persons in our care. So you will see that for FY 22 we are about a little over \$1.4 billion dollars.

So as it relates to, umm, various initiatives in the Governor's budget recommendations, approximately 50 of our long-term vacant positions will be reallocated to various initiatives and we have, umm, a bit of flexibility in where those positions will come from and our budget shop continues, umm, to analyze that, but the direction is clear that they will come from vacancies that have, umm, been long-term for our agency.

So to get into some specific program areas as it relates to reentry, we are excited to see that for Windows to Work the Governor's budget includes expansion of \$250,000 in each year of the biennium. Umm, this is a great partnership with our friends at DWD and the local workforce investment boards. This funding would allow us to expand enrolment by 90 participants a year. Another great partnership we have, umm, with our Department of Health Services friends is Opening Avenues to Reentry Success. You will see a significant increase in funding in both Fiscal Year 22 and Fiscal Year 23, umm, \$5.2 million dollars over the biennium. This expansion, I'm sorry, this funding, excuse me, will increase the program by 167 participants per year and this is for the existing 51 counties. So this is not an expansion at this point into other counties, but this will make whole the partnerships we have in the current 51 counties.

For our Division of Community Corrections initiatives, umm, we will be looking at increased, umm, FTE and approximately \$7,000,000 for GPS sex offender tracking. This is for the mandatory GPS required by statute. Umm, for Fiscal Year 22, this will be a budget for over 2,600 clients and close to 3,000 clients in Fiscal Year 23. Another Community Corrections initiative that we will, umm, hopefully see an increase and expansion is our Medication Assisted Treatment. This \$800,000 in each year of the biennium would double the funding we currently have for Medication Assisted Treatment, umm, and this would allow us to expand access across the state.

Other Community Corrections initiatives, umm, would, we are asking for, umm, I'm sorry, the budget asks us to reallocate 12 existing long-term, umm, FTEs to create 12 new Corrections Field Supervisors. So our Corrections Field Supervisors are the supervisors who oversee the unit of agents across the state. So based on a, umm, staffing assessment that we had from 2014 and 2020, it was assessed that we need to increase our Corrections Field Supervisor staff by 12. So again, we will look to reallocate those from existing positions. Umm, another initiative for Community Corrections is our Alternative to Revocation expansion. This provides over \$3,000,000 in the biennium to provide funding for 50 additional community based ATR beds.

For our Division of Adult Institution, we had a population forecast that's a natural course of action for the biannual budget. Umm, the Governor's budget estimates an average daily population for persons in our care at 21,476 for each year in the biennium, and in FY 21 we were budgeted at, umm, average daily population of over 24,000. So we continue to work on our reforms, umm, as Secretary Carr indicated, to continue to reduce that population, but because of the uncertain times and, especially with the pandemic, we will still be funded for 200 county jail beds, umm, so that if we do need that flexibility as we move folks who are sentenced to our institutions from the county jail, we have some, umm, flexibility in those beds as well. So you will see that we have quite a reduction in our county jail bed appropriation, umm, back from Fiscal Year 21, in which we were budgeted for 959.

In terms of educational initiatives, umm, Governor Evers budget proposal provides for, umm, additional teachers and funding for educational initiatives. It reallocates five existing FTE, in addition to the nine new FTE, for a total of 14 adult basic education teachers and then we also have a \$1.5 million dollar increase to maintain, umm, current and implement new career technical and education programs which again, is a great partnership that we have with both DWD and our local technical colleges across the state.

Additional Division of Adult Institutions initiative, umm, we've had a capital project out at Oakhill Correctional for an assisted needs facility. So the Governor's budget would, umm, fully staff that assisted needs facility. It would, uh, give us over 35 new positions in each year of the biennium and also we would need to reallocate 22.75 existing FTE for a total of 58.35 FTE to staff that facility. And this assisted needs facility at Oakhill would provide care for up to 65 persons in our care. Umm, for our Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility, this would provide funding and staff for a behavioral modification housing unit. For folks who might not know, umm, our Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility is focused on, umm, men in our care, age 18 to 24. Umm, so this would provide a behavioral modification housing unit, umm, for that facility and the unit would provide a more structured environment for up to 30 of our young adult males there.

Umm, additional initiatives for the adult institutions the Secretary mentioned the, umm, Substance Use Disorder, or SUD, and Earned Release Program expansion. Umm, we've been, umm, really creative, I think, especially under Secretary Carr's leadership, to find some internal resources to expand our Earned Release Program, but the Governor's budget goes well beyond what we've been able to do, umm, so we are very excited about this provision that would increase, umm, new FTE by 27 and provide about \$3.4 million dollars in funding for this expansion. We are to reallocate six existing FTE for a total of 33 additional staff. With this additional staffing and funding we would be able to provide Earned Release Programming for an additional 990 participants per year. So it's estimated that 50% of our participants would have an earned release eligibility.

Umm, the Secretary also mentioned that there were some initiatives that directly affected us and indirectly affected us. So we are going to talk about some of those now, but the Governor's budget provides funding to the Department of Natural Resources to contract with DOC for the persons in our care to work as LTEs in the state park system. So that would be, umm, of great help to our friends at the DNR, but also great work experience for the persons in our care at a wage that would be comparable to those earning in the community. The Governor's budget also provides \$5,000,000 in Fiscal Year 23 to the UW system to develop and offer a bachelor's degree program for persons in our care. We've had, umm, ongoing communications with the UW system about, umm, this creative idea coming out, umm, of the UW system and supported by the Governor so we will be, will be anxious to continue, umm, and explore this idea with the UW system.

As it relates to the Division of Juvenile Corrections, umm, as the Secretary indicated and I'm sure you all know, uh, youth justice reform is, umm, significantly important both to Governor Evers and our administration over at DOC. So the Governor's budget provides some realignment for the juvenile justice system as outlined below. So it would raise the age that a court exercises adult court jurisdiction on individuals from 17 years of age to 18 years of age. It would eliminate the serious juvenile offender disposition. It would also eliminate automatic original adult court jurisdiction. It would modify the conditions under which a youth under 18 may be waived into adult court. It establishes an extended juvenile jurisdiction, or EJJ procedure, where a court may exercise jurisdiction for certain serious offenses involving youth under the age of 18. Umm, we worked on, umm, this concept very closely with our partners over at over at DCF so, umm, certainly we can, uh, provide some more robust explanation of that for folks who might be interested. Umm, the Governor's budget would also transfer youth from Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake type 1 juvenile correctional facilities as soon as a replacement facility that meets the needs of each youth is available. So that modifies the date for transfers to say when the replacement facilities are available not on a specific date and time. I think we all understand that it is the ultimate goal to close Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake but we want to ensure that those youth can be safely moved, umm, to a trauma informed care treatment-based facility upon closure of Lincoln Hills. And then the last provision, umm, that we are going to just highlight today is that DOC would be able to set daily rates at our facilities, umm, and MJTC, that it would no longer have to be a statutory, umm, language change. Zack, next. Oh.

**Zack Osell:** Looks like that's it for you, Melissa.

**Melissa Roberts:** That that's it for me? I thought I had one more. Thanks.

**Zack Osell:** Alright. Thank you Melissa, and thank you Secretary Carr for presenting the information. I will now transition to the next portion of today's event. Our live Q&A session. We've been taking your questions throughout today's event and we will now take some time to answer those questions. So here is one final reminder that if you have any last minute questions, please submit them before the conclusion of today's town hall. So without further

delay, uh, I will start with our first question, and this one will be for Secretary Carr. The question asks, “How will the budget request assist in lowering the prison population to align with the Governor's goal of reducing the overall population by the end of 2023?”

**Secretary Carr:** Thank you, Zack, for that question. Umm, the Governor's budget looked at the reform efforts of our agency and added funding that would support us further to lower our prison population. You heard us mention this several times during the presentation, but one of the best ways we can reduce the population, and one of the only mechanisms within our control in our agency to reduce the prison population is through the expansion of the Earned Release Program, or ERP. The budget request of the Governor would allow us to hopefully increase the overall number of folks going through ERP, and currently we have approximately 2,200 people each year complete the program and we hope to increase that number as was stated earlier by 900 to 1,000 a year. Additionally, the budget would give our agency more flexibility to invest in community-based Alternative to Revocations, or ATRs. We believe that it's critical to provide persons on supervision with treatment and programming opportunities to help them stay on track and not return to prison, which is, umm, also, umm, going to have a tremendous impact on the size of our prison population.

**Zack Osell:** Alright. Thank you Secretary. Umm, our next question I will give to Melissa. The question read, “Does Governor Evers have an estimated timeline for when type 1 juvenile facilities will finally be eliminated? The timeline seems to keep being pushed back. But it looks like there are promising steps towards eliminating type 1 facilities in his budget recommendation.”

**Melissa Roberts:** Right. Thank you, Zack, and, and great question. So, umm, Governor Evers' budget recommendation would continue, umm, to operate the type 1 facilities up at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake until there is a suitable facility available for youth to be moved. So the Governor's budget reduce, removes, excuse me, a specific date in the statutory language and really focuses on our ability with, umm, our county partners and for ourselves in DOC to have a suitable facility in which those youth can be safely moved.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks. Okay this next question is for Sarah Cooper who, as Secretary Carr mentioned, is our Administrator for the Division of Adult Institutions. And this question reads, “With the expansion of the Earned Release Program during a time DOC is experiencing staffing shortages at many institutions, is there anything in the current budget request to assist with the hiring and retention of treatment specialists and social workers to facilitate these programs?”

**Sarah Cooper:** Thank you, Zack. Umm, it's an honor to be here with everybody this afternoon. This is a great question. So as the Secretary had indicated before, the Governor's budget proposal adds 27 new full-time employees to expand Earned Release Programming. This is going to be critical in assisting our agency to expand the program even further and will provide opportunities to hundreds of additional individuals releasing from our institutions. While the Governor's proposal does not specifically address the hiring and retention of treatment specialists and social workers, DOC and DAI is cognizant of the need to do exactly that. So as you heard the Secretary talk about earlier this afternoon, one of our agency's strategic priorities is workforce investments, which prioritizes our staff who we know are our most valuable resource. To that end, we regularly evaluate ways to ensure our staff know how valuable they are and we are expanding upon our efforts to ensure we have fair and equitable work places for all. We provide surveys to our staff on work place climate and we've expanded the training and development opportunities for staff throughout the division. Lastly, what I would say about this particular question is, within the Division of Adult Institutions, umm, we've developed our own recruitment and retention committee and in that group of folks are currently studying the issues surrounding recruitment and retention, specifically within the institutions. I am very much looking forward to see what kind of creative ideas they come up with which we hope will assist in this area.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks Sarah. Alright. This next questions I think both Sylvia, who is our Reentry Director, and Lance can kind of touch on this. I'll throw it to Sylvia first and we will let Lance fill in any blanks from his perspective over at DCC. The question reads, “Will there be any money set aside for more reentry programs such as rental assistance, transportation assistance, case management, secondary education, and employment search assistance?”

**Sylvia Jackson:** Thank you Zack, and good afternoon everyone. It's really a pleasure to be here. Yes, the Governor's

budget does increase funding in secondary education and for employment search. Specifically, the Governor's budget proposes an additional 14 new general purpose revenue teacher positions in the Division of Adult Institutions, to allow more persons in our care to enroll in and complete adult basic education, reducing the waiting list in this area. The budget also provides \$1.5 million in each year of the biennium to maintain current and implement new career technical education programs. Now regarding, umm, employment search assistance, the Governor's budget also expands the Windows to Work program to three maximum security prisons providing funding for at least 90 persons in our care to be enrolled in the program and, once released, receive assistance with obtaining employment. Also the Reentry Office is collaborating with the Department of Workforce Development to open more institution-based job centers inside the Division of Adult Institution prisons. This initiative is funded with existing funds in the division, in the department, and will allow hundreds of individuals in each facility to establish an account on Job Center of Wisconsin, conduct job search prior to release, set up a job interview with employers, and in many instances leave the prison with a job in hand. By December 2021, we hope to have a total of ten institution-based job centers open for assistance in this area with the collaboration that we have underway with the Department of Workforce Development. And lastly I want to mention one more innovation we have underway. We are in the process of purchasing a 53-foot mobile job center that can be moved from one institution to another, allowing persons in our care, during the reentry phase, to conduct job search in a mobile setting. Again expanding the opportunities for interviews with employers prior to release. Thank you Zack, and I'll turn it over to Lance.

**Lance Wiersma:** Thanks Sylvia. Uh, again my name is Lance Wiersma, the Administrator for the Division at Community Corrections. In our division, we currently have, uh, purchase of, uh, what we call Purchase of Offender Goods and Services, or POGS, funds available for reentry services and already provide a variety of support services for those individuals that we have on supervision, and who were recently released from prison. Umm, those programs include, but is not limited to, substance use disorder treatment, sex offender treatment, anger management and domestic violence groups, cognitive behavioral programs, vocational, employment and community services. Our POGS programs offer various housing services throughout the state to address clients' needs. During fiscal year 2019, 48.8% of our funding went towards residential services programs, 15.4% to transitional housing, and 1.8% to emergency housing. POGS housing is providing, uh, provided on a spectrum ranging from short-term housing to treatment according to needs and of the clients. The Governor's budget would increase capacity for an additional 50 beds, 50 beds that would be used for Alternative to Revocation, or ATR, residential services and programs. This would help us and help our clients in the Division of Community Corrections who are in critical need, in a critical need area, and help keep more individuals in the community instead of returning to incarceration. While the budget does not directly address some of these areas for DCC, there are other items that will support our clients such as providing additional resources for medication assisted treatment, which will provide treatment opportunities in more areas in the state.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks Lance and thanks Sylvia. Uh, Sylvia, I'm going to throw one right back to you next question here. Uh, the question asks, "What can DOC do to increase opportunities for persons in our institutions to prepare for employment?"

**Sylvia Jackson:** Oh Zack, that's a great question, and we know employment is one key factor in reducing recidivism. So to that end, the Reentry Office is contracting with the 11 workforce development boards to deliver our Windows to Work job readiness program that begins pre-release and continues into the community until persons are employed. That program now operates in 15 prisons and six county jails. Participants in the program receive services in how to obtain and maintain employment. They learn about financial literacy. They develop their resumes. They conduct job seeking skills and learn about general work expectations. We've also been successful in implementing the program now in every medium security prison and plan to begin a pilot at Green Bay Correctional Institution, which is our first maximum security prison to have the program. In the Governor's budget there is a proposal to increase the Windows to Work funding by another \$250,000 each year of the biennium. This will allow us to expand the program to three more maximum security prisons, including Columbia Correctional Institution, Waupun Correctional Institution, and Wisconsin Secure Program Facility. These three facilities, umm, combined release about 590 men annually and many of these men are high risk and need job readiness programming. Additionally the Reentry Office is also increasing employment for persons in our care in our work release centers by offering short-term academies in high demand fields where employers are seeking skilled labor, and lastly we are expanding vocational training capacity in our medium security prisons through the use of five mobile training labs. Persons in our care are learning skills in welding, computer numerical control operation, industrial maintenance mechanics, and advanced manufacturing. These are just some examples of how DOC is preparing persons in our

care for employment in careers that pay a living wage and will be able to support themselves and their families when they return to the community. Thank you Zack.

**Zack Osell:** Thank you. Okay and this next question is for Steve. Steve is the Director of the Bureau of Budget and Facilities Management in our Division of Management Services, and this question reads, “Who will ultimately be paying for the new SRCCCY facilities, the county or the state, or will it be a combination of both?” and for those of who do not know, a SRCCCY facility is a Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth?

**Steve Krallis:** Okay. Well thanks Zack. Uh, the, the SRCCCYs will ultimately, uh, the construction of the SRCCCYs will be accomplished via grant program, the state grant program, uh, that was set forth in Wisconsin Act 185, 2017 Wisconsin Act 185. The grants pay the majority of the construction cost, approximately 95%. Uh, once the SRCCCYs are constructed, the counties are largely responsible for the operating cost of facilities, but there are programs available to offset those costs such as Youth Aids. Uh, Youth Aids are state and federal funds provided by the Department of Children and Families to counties. Uh, they are used to pay for juvenile correction and delinquency related services. In addition to the existing Youth Aids program, the Governor's budget has requested an increase of approximately \$18.9 million dollars to this program and it will assist the counties, uh, with costs associated with running those SRCCCYs. Uh, Act 185 also adds SRCCCYs to the eligible uses for state tuition payment appropriation, which reimburses school districts in which the SRCCCYs are located for educational services provided to youth in those facilities.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks Steve. Alright this next question is for the Secretary. Uh, the question reads, “I am a woman who has been directly impacted by DOC, releasing from incarceration homeless. I know that I am not the only one experiencing these issues and I would like to hear how we can redistribute money into reentry services, housing, and resources in our communities instead of re-incarcerating and warehousing human beings? We, as a state, morally and financially, cannot continue as we are.”

**Secretary Carr:** Well thank you Zack. Before I answer that question, I just want to remind everyone who is asking a question that, and just because you don't hear your question answered, umm, today live, we will provide every single person that asked a question with an answer. But, umm, thanks for that question. In 2019, the Division of Community Corrections spent 66% of its purchase of service funding on housing services for persons on DCC supervision. So over two-thirds of its \$30,000,000 budget was spent on that. Specifically in 2019, DCC spent \$14, about just under \$15,000,000 or so on residential services programs, \$5,000,000 or so on transitional housing, and then another \$562,000 on emergency housing. Now, umm, this sounds like a substantial investment in housing and we recognize it doesn't meet the entire need and we could always use more. But DCC also takes steps beyond the funds that it invests with agents working with local shelters in the community and, and, and other resources to help our clients that face homelessness. Umm, we also know that it's not simply a housing issue for those releasing, umm, incarceration which is why it's so important to invest in programming such as vocational training and educational programs before release as well as after release. So, we recognize that housing is a critical issue to the success of, umm, the folks that we work with in the community. We also recognize that mental health can play a role in housing security for some individuals. Our current, our agency currently supports programs such as Windows to Work and OARS and I, you know, I just have to say the OARS program has been extremely effective and we are grateful for the additional support from the Governor on how we can include more people in the existing programs that we have, and we look forward to, umm, expansion of the OARS program in the future. Umm, thank you.

**Zack Osell:** Thanks Secretary. Uh, so this next question came in live today and I'll give it to Melissa. Umm, the question asks, “How does DOC educate legislators on ways to effectively reduce prison population?”

**Melissa Roberts:** Great. Thanks Zack. Uh, great question. Umm, so we have various meetings scheduled. Um, Secretary Carr's calendar is very much focused on outreach to legislators. So we, umm, schedule meetings with leadership on both sides of the aisle and obviously focus quite a bit on the members of the Joint Committee on Finance, umm, and that sole purpose of those meetings is to promote the Governor's budget and let them, let folks know the benefits of the provisions included in that budget with, umm, obviously a focus on, umm, the Earned Release Program or anything that we can provide for the persons in our care and clients on supervision to help them reduce their chances of re-offending and, uh, remaining in the system so. Thanks.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks. Uh, this next question will, I'll go back to the Secretary. Umm, the question asks, “What



can we do to take a closer look at serving DOC's mental health population as they transition back to the community?"

**Secretary Carr:** Thanks Zack. Umm, we are committed to serving persons in our care with serious mental health needs. Specifically, we have pre- and post-release wrap-around program, umm you know, which we talked about earlier called the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success Program that serves individuals releasing from prison who are seriously mentally ill and moderate to high risk of committing new crimes. This program, in partnership with DHS, provides intensive case management, housing, medication management, psychiatric treatment, and other individualized services. Housing, as was discussed previously, is often the most expensive service for OARS participants who may need placement in adult family homes or community-based residential facilities. Now the OARS program begins approximately six months prior to release with case managers developing individual case plans in the institution and continues into the community for up to two years. Research has shown that this program is highly effective in reducing recidivism, which is what we all want. We have data that documents significantly lower recidivism rates at year 1, year 2, and year 3 in the follow-up periods for those individuals receiving the program compared to similar individuals who didn't receive the program. This year, the program is funded at the level of \$4.1 million dollars, with an average daily population of 255 individuals across 51 counties. The Governor's budget makes a substantial investment in OARS and would increase the funding by \$2.2 million dollars in FY 22 and another \$3 million in FY 23 allowing an additional number of 167 folks that can be served by this program. This would be a tremendous expansion of the OARS program, which is greatly needed to serve this very specialized, high-risk population which is most in need of services. So, umm, we are extremely grateful for that recommendation in the Governor's budget and we are extremely proud of the OARS program and the impact that it has on changing the lives of those that we care for with mental illness.

**Zack Osell:** Alright. Thanks. Okay this next question is for Lance. Umm, it says, "Looking at the proposed budget this is noted, the Governor recommends allowing a sentencing court to reduce the term of a person's extended supervision if certain conditions apply. Will this also include those who have been on parole for a very long time, who had no violations, and are very stable in their lives? For example, if we look at individuals who were sentenced between 1996 and 1998, the prison sentences were lengthy, which gave them long terms of parole and the sentences one would receive now are much shorter."

**Lance Wiersma:** Thanks Zack. Persons on parole currently have the ability to receive an early discharge if they meet certain criteria, which would include being in the community for at least two years after their release, meeting all their court ordered conditions, paying all the costs that they might owe, and not engaging in any violations, and have had a positive adjustment while on supervision. We are encouraged by the Governor's budget because persons who are on extended supervision have not previously had the opportunity to earn an early discharge if they have had positive adjustment while in the community.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks Lance. Okay this next question I will ask of Sylvia. Umm, this question specifically relates to Milwaukee County and the issue of reentry. Umm, the question asks, "Will there be resources allocated to helping reentry service providers connect with individuals prior to their release?"

**Sylvia Jackson:** That's a really important question too, Zack. Thank you. So you just heard from Secretary Carr, umm, describe our Opening Avenues to Reentry Success Program. This is probably one very good example of how there will be additional reentry services coming to the Milwaukee area because, as the Secretary mentioned, umm, the Governor has proposed an increase in expansion of, uh, about a 167 average daily population persons that would be able to enter the program. The largest population is coming from Milwaukee County and therefore would be returning to Milwaukee County. So in this particular area, umm, there will be a direct impact on providers. As the Secretary mentioned, we contract with the Department of Health Services so they'll be letting the contracts in the Milwaukee area, but specifically I can tell you that, umm, for Opening Avenues to Reentry Success there will be more case managers that'll be hired, umm, to service this population in the 51 counties where we operate the program, and certainly in Milwaukee, and then the biggest cost in the program is housing. So there will be a greater need for adult family home beds and community based residential facility placements.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thank you for that answer Sylvia. Alright. This next question will be for Secretary Carr. Umm, and the question asks you to "please provide more details on how Governor Evers' budget request will promote the DOC goals of reducing recidivism and increasing primary program completions."

**Secretary Carr:** Well there are a number of variants within this budget request that will assist us in, umm, supporting our Department and our strategic priorities. Umm, an example includes the support for the additional 27 new treatment specialists to help us increase our capacity in the Earned Release Program, umm, and the Substance Use Disorder Program. Umm, based on our rough estimates, uh, each position should be able to serve an additional 990 individuals in those programs. Not only do these programs address substance use disorders, they also address cognitive, behavioral, umm, anger management, and domestic violence treatment needs. Just that recommendation alone in the budget, umm, we hope is going to, umm, continue all of our efforts to reduce the prison population and help us, um, accomplish our program goals as it relates to treatment and, umm, and educational needs.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks. Okay. This next question is for Melissa. Umm, the question asks, "In the budget request, DOC must submit a report on DOC's evidence based risk assessment tool. Will this report be made available to the public when it is completed?"

**Melissa Roberts:** Thanks Zack. Yes. Absolutely it will be. Umm, the Secretary talked earlier about our strategic priorities, and transparency is very important within our agency. Uh, we already complete several reports mandated by state statute and when submitting any final reports to the legislature, we always ensure that we are sharing that information with our stakeholders through target outreach. Umm, in addition, all these reports are published on our public website at *doc.wi.gov* so, umm, if you are interested in previous reports that we published, please take a look there. Umm, if the Governor's budget request is approved and DOC is mandated to submit a report on evidence based risk assessment tools, we will be providing that same level of transparency as we do with all of our other reports. Thanks for the question.

**Zack Osell:** Thank you. Okay this next question I will give to Sarah. Umm, the question reads, "Will there be any money to create more primary and secondary education opportunities for people in our care within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections beyond just technical programs and, if so, what secondary education programs will be available to the people in our care?"

**Sarah Cooper:** Good question. Thank you. Uh, so, umm, a lot of this has been covered earlier so I will just go through it relatively quickly but as, I believe, it was Deputy Secretary Roberts had indicated earlier, umm, there are several items included in the Governor's budget recommendations, including 14 additional teachers for adult basic education within the institution system. The budget also asks for additional funding of \$1.5 million dollars each fiscal year of the next biennium to help the institutions replace outdated and non-functioning career technical education equipment. Now this funding can also be used to purchase equipment to start a whole new program which would allow us the flexibility to look at what programs do we currently have operating and use the labor market data to guide us in our decisions on what programs to invest in next. And then lastly the University at Madison submitted a proposal that would provide \$5,000,000 in Fiscal Year 23 to help begin a bachelor program for persons in our care within the institutions. Our agency is actively engaged in discussions with the UW system regarding this concept and of course we always embrace the opportunity to further collaborate with our educational partners. Thanks Zack.

**Zack Osell:** Alright. Thank you. Okay we have time for a few more that we can squeeze in here. Umm, this question I will throw over to Lance. Umm, the question reads, "Who would be eligible for the earned compliance credit mentioned in the Governor's budget?"

**Lance Wiersma:** Thanks Zack. The Governor's budget recommendation includes the creation of an earned compliance credit for certain eligible persons in our department's care. We don't have all the details at this time and we do not know that, but we do know that any individual currently on supervision for a non-violent crime would be eligible for the Earned Compliance Credit. Essentially the Earned Compliance Credit would equal the amount of time served on extended supervision or parole without violating any conditions of supervision. So basically it's good time credit or earned credit in the community for persons who are on extended supervision or parole. The credit is a reward for those persons who comply with their rules set forth by, by us and mandated by statute. If this budget item is approved, we will learn more details related to eligibility and we will share those both internally and externally.

**Zack Osell:** Alright. Thanks Lance. Okay. This next question is for the Secretary and the question asks, "If the Joint Finance Committee interferes, will DOC still be able to get as many persons in our care through the ERP program?"

And is there a projection for ERP with added money in the budget?"

**Secretary Carr:** Umm, thanks Zack. This is, umm, the third or fourth, maybe even more, question about the ERP program and I'm just happy that there is this level of interest in that expansion. The good news is that the Earned Release Program, or ERP, has historically had bipartisan support. However, we know there's always a chance that this initiative will not be supported by, umm, the Legislature when they consider the Governor's recommendation. While a lack of support would slow our expansion efforts down, it wouldn't stop our efforts completely. Umm, our agency is already committed to expanding the program and will continue those efforts wherever we are able to do so. Umm, our agency actually already expanded the program without any budgetary assistance in 2020 and, umm, we expanded the program to several additional facilities, including medium security facilities who historically have not had the opportunity to participate in that program, despite the majority of our, you know, population releasing from minimum security, a medium security facility. So, umm, the Governor's proposal, umm, will allow us to take our expansion efforts further and make them more effective and efficient, and increasing the overall number of, umm, persons in our care going through the program by, as was stated earlier, almost a 1,000 folks a year. Umm, you know, obviously if, umm, we don't get the support that the Governor, umm, is recommending to the Legislature we will do the best we can with the resources that we have and we, umm, will still try to expand the program as much as we can.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Okay. We have time for one more. Uh, this one this last question will be for Melissa, and I think you kind of touched on this before during your presentation so I think you can answer this pretty quickly. Umm, the question asks, "If a new youth facility is built, will the Copper Lake/Lincoln Hills facility be closed, and will it be turned into an adult facility?"

**Melissa Roberts:** Thanks Zack. Umm, yes I did indicate earlier that, umm, the budget is requesting sort of benchmark situation versus a standing date for Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake to be closed, and that is obviously once, umm, we have appropriate housing in new facilities, umm, for the youth across the state. Once the facility is closed, umm, per 2017 Wisconsin Act 185, it is expected that Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake would be converted to a minimum adult facility with a population capacity of approximately 400 individuals. We do not however expect that that transition would take place during the '21-'23 biennium.

**Zack Osell:** Great. Thanks. Alright. So before we end today I want to point out that you can find information about upcoming town halls on the DOC's town hall webpage which is, which can be found at [doc.wi.gov/townhalls](http://doc.wi.gov/townhalls). We also ask that you watch your inbox for a survey that'll help us provide, or provide us with feedback on today's event. Then I have one final reminder that we will have access to recordings, transcripts, FAQs, and more on our public website. So I'll now turn it over to Secretary Carr for his closing remarks.

**Secretary Carr:** Thank you Zack. First of all, I want to thank all of you for attending this event today. I hope this information was useful to you. I am excited about the work we are doing here at the Department of Corrections to make our community safer and improve the lives of those we serve. I am also hopeful about future possibilities if the Governor's budget is approved. I hope you all can continue supporting us and the Governor in our efforts. I was pleased by the thoughtful questions and comments today and I value all the feedback we receive. It's made me realize that although we may be looking through slightly different lenses our work is very much connected and the efforts of our agency continue to affect the larger community. I hope that we can continue an open dialogue that will allow us to continue working together to promote public safety, restore justice, promote healing for victims, and provide the resources needed to care for those in our, to care for those in our, umm, system so that they can end the cycle of incarceration and live crime-free lives. I also want to thank all of our panelists and subject matter experts for being here today. Their extensive experience and knowledge is evident and assists me in doing, umm, my work as well as I can. They did an excellent job today walking us through some of the more important, umm, budget recommendations that may affect our agency and answering questions. While I provide leadership to this agency, I know it's the efforts, expertise and dedication of my staff that's responsible for actually getting the work done. I want to, umm, really compliment my Communications shop on putting together this event. They of course have done a tremendous job, as they usually do, and, umm, their hard work has not gone unnoticed. I want to thank you for being here today and I wish you all good health and God's blessings. Thank you.