

Scott Walker
Governor

Gary H. Hamblin
Secretary



Mailing Address

3099 E. Washington Ave.
Post Office Box 7925
Madison, WI 53707-7925
Telephone (608) 240-5000
Fax (608) 240-3300

State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections

March 1, 2011

For Immediate Release

Contact: Linda Eggert or Tim Le Monds
WI DOC Public Information Office
Media Line: (608) 240-3737

WI Department Of Corrections To Consolidate Juvenile Institutions Plan Addresses Falling Juvenile Population and \$21 Million Deficit

MADISON—Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Gary Hamblin today announced a plan to save tens of millions of dollars annually in state juvenile institution operating costs and permanently eliminate a \$21.6 million budget deficit in the Division of Juvenile Corrections within ten years.

Over the last several years, the populations at state juvenile institutions have been falling while the deficit in the juvenile corrections budget has been climbing. The DOC plan addresses both issues by closing two of the state's three secure juvenile institutions and consolidating operations at Lincoln Hills School (LHS) in Lincoln County.

After intense study and debate, including a vote last year by a state juvenile corrections task force to close Ethan Allen School (EAS) in Wales, Secretary Hamblin has recommended to Governor Walker that the consolidation moves forward. The Governor supports it and has included it in his proposed 2011-13 Budget.

The consolidation plan calls for the July 1st closure of Southern Oaks Girls School (SOGS) in Racine County and Ethan Allen School (EAS) in Waukesha County and the transfer of all students to the grounds of LHS in Irma, Wisconsin.

The 800-acre site at LHS will house all state male juvenile offenders and include a "bifurcated" or separate facility for female juveniles newly named Copper Lake School (CLS).

Secretary Hamblin, Deputy Secretary Charles Cole and Executive Assistant Dennis Schuh met with employees at each institution school Tuesday to explain the plan and the need to streamline operations.

Within the next two weeks, 292 current employees at EAS and SOGS will be notified that they are "at risk" for layoff. Vacancies at DOC or other state agencies or transfers may minimize the job loss. The consolidation at LHS means 114 additional full time workers are needed to expand operations. If all EAS and SOGS employees transferred, the number of layoffs would drop to 177.

"There is no doubt that this consolidation is needed and that it's right thing to do for our youth and state taxpayers," said Secretary Hamblin, "but we also realize that this will be a very

difficult and challenging time for our dedicated youth counselors and other juvenile workers.” Secretary Hamblin said the Department will work closely with affected employees to try to make their job searches and transfers as smooth and as easy as possible.

Implementing the closures and consolidation will save more than \$23 million a year in institution operating costs over the next biennium and allow DOC to erase its Division of Juvenile Corrections budget deficit by 2021.

That deficit has grown over a number of years as juvenile institution populations dwindled. Since fiscal year (FY) 2005, the number of boys and girls at the state three secure juvenile institutions has dropped by about 40 to 55 percent. The institutions are currently operating at 20 percent to 30 percent of their capacities.

The juvenile institutions operate on program revenue raised through a daily reimbursement rate paid almost entirely by the counties. DOC has determined that if the consolidation doesn't occur, the Juvenile Corrections Institution (JCI) daily reimbursement rate would need to increase from \$275 in this fiscal year to \$471 next fiscal year. That is a more than 40 percent increase and one that cash-strapped counties likely cannot afford.

In addition to supervising juveniles in communities statewide, DOC Division of Juvenile Corrections operates Type 1 secured juvenile correctional facilities. These facilities are primarily for youth committed to the Department by a Wisconsin county juvenile court following delinquency adjudication.