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WI Department of Corrections Officially Opens New Drug Abuse Correctional Center

DOC Secretary and Other Officials Hold Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, Tour Facility

WINNEBAGO, Wis. - Treatment of alcohol and other drug addictions is a key part in the rehabilitation of many inmates and as of today, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) has a new tool to help in the treatment process. DOC Secretary Gary Hamblin, other DOC officials, and local politicians, officially opened the new building for the Drug Abuse Correctional Center in Winnebago.

The new facility has six 50-bed housing units on two floors and will provide 300 beds for the Earned Release Program. The program is a six-month, abstinence-based program and includes structured weekly activities focused on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) treatment.

The original Center opened in 1981 in what was then Kempster Hall on the grounds of the Winnebago Mental Health Institute. Kempster Hall was constructed in 1950. Funding for the new facility was originally approved in 2005 at a cost of \$13.9 million.

The living units in the new facility include group rooms for counseling sessions and a security post for visual observation and control of the living unit as well as space for visitation, providing a safer environment for both staff and inmates. Centralized services include a health services unit; food service area; canteen; library and multi-purpose space for religious activities, visitation, and other facility-wide events.

“The Drug Abuse Correctional Center serves as a strong example of the kinds of investments our agency has been making to give inmates the best opportunity at a successful future,” said Secretary Hamblin. “We know from research that effective treatment can help offenders succeed as productive members of the community who overcome their addiction, choose not to commit new crimes, and thus break the cycle of addiction, crime and movement through the criminal justice and corrections systems.”

The new facility will improve program operations by providing efficient space for programs and will lower capital repairs costs for the state.

The previous facility had no room for inmate population growth and when necessary maintenance and replacement costs of the heating, air conditioning, and ventilation systems were factored in, it made economic sense to build a new facility.

In addition, the new building houses the urinalysis laboratory that provides testing and analysis services to all DOC facilities and the community corrections field populations. Having the lab onsite will also help save taxpayer money by keeping services in-house instead of relying on an outside vendor.

“Offenders in our custody must want to make a change in their lives, but, when they do, we want to do everything that we can to help them succeed once they are released into their communities and back to their families,” said Hamblin. “It’s not only the right thing to do for the individual offender; it’s the smart thing to do for public safety.”

Secretary Hamblin was joined at the ribbon cutting ceremony by Division of Adult Institutions Administrator Cathy Jess, Wisconsin Correctional Center System Warden Quala Champagne and Drug Abuse Correctional Center Superintendent Patrick Melman, and elected officials.

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