



Friends and Family Action Plan

March 2026 through December 2026

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has held quarterly forums with friends and family since April 2025. These events are an opportunity to solicit feedback from friends and family of individuals who are incarcerated or who are under supervision in the community. This Action Plan is intended to document feedback received and steps toward improved practices within the agency (where feasible). This plan is meant to be a living document, with regular updates shared throughout the year.

Friends and Family Forums have occurred on the following dates:

- 04/2025 – Fox Lake Correctional Institution
- 07/2025 – Northcentral Technical College – Wausau
- 10/2025 – UW-Milwaukee
- 03/2026 – DOC Central Office – Madison

Topic: Communication between DOC leadership, staff and friends and family

Feedback from friends & family group:

- Website is difficult to navigate and find needed information.
- Disconnect between central office and facilities.
- Rumors spread quickly and families would like to see a reliable source of information about what happens in facilities.
- Families would like an orientation guide.
- Communication about the event was spotty and not timely, with some reporting that they were given very little notice of their approval to attend.
- DOCGeneral email responses are great.

Outcome/Update:

- DOC is working with the website vendor on changes to the public website. This will include the creation of an orientation guide as well as a new, streamlined Friends and Family Guide. Additional content will be created specifically for friends and family so that the website can serve as a reliable source of information.
- DOC has adjusted its process for notifying attendees of their approval (or denial) to attend the forum.
- DOC leadership holds quarterly meetings with several advocacy groups to hear feedback and provide information about policy and/or practice adjustments.
- DOC central office leaders are expected to work multiple shifts on the frontlines in facilities and in the community. In addition to gaining a more intimate understanding of the day-to-day operations, this also has the added benefit of bridging the gap between leadership and local operations.

Next Steps:

- Continued discussion with website vendor and finalization of Friends and Family Guide.

Topic: Consistency across DAI facilities, including visits, property expectations, program opportunities, and complaint processes

Feedback from friends & family group:

- Friends and family do not have clear expectations or understanding of visitation/visitor entrance procedures (i.e., varying expectations across sites related to physical touch).
- Perception of different rules for property is also frustrating to them.
- It can be difficult for incarcerated individuals to adjust to different systems when they move institutions and would like to see more standardized rules and practices.
- Ideally each site would be able to offer all programs and the same quality of instruction and experience.
- Family members want to have a neutral third-party review of complaints and concerns and make decisions on disputes. They want a simple process with easily understood rules. There is concern with the current process in that complaints are reviewed by wardens and others who have a vested interest in the outcome. There is also a strong fear of retaliation.

Outcome/Update:

- The Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) recently hired a Program & Policy Chief. The goal of this position is to provide policy structure, oversight and review to enhance consistency across the division.
- Personal Visitors 309.06.01 policy revised in May 2026 to promote consistency across facilities.
- Incentive-based visits encouraged across the division with special events hosted at Stanley Correctional Institution, New Lisbon Correctional Institution and Columbia Correctional Institution, to name a few.
- Racine Correctional Institution (RCI) hosted Camp Reunite in July. RCI is the third facility to host this event filled with summer camp experiences, alongside Taycheedah Correctional Institution and Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution.
- The DOC's complaint process includes a step where persons in our care can appeal decisions made at the local level to a corrections complaint examiner (CCE). CCEs are neutral reviewers reporting directly to the Secretary's Office.
- The DOC has contracted with Falcon, Inc. to enhance normative correctional practices.

Next Steps:

- Continued review of policies and procedures to gain consistency where appropriate.
- Continued work with Falcon, Inc. on enhancing normative correctional practices.

Topic: Programming, Work Release, Release Planning and Community Supervision Expectations

Feedback from friends & family group:

- There is a desire to have more, varied programming options earlier during the period of incarceration.
- Families would like to be involved in release planning more than six months out.
- Family and friends want to understand the specific rules and requirements of supervision for their loved one early on – things like required programming, no contact orders, internet restrictions etc.
- Friends and Family need resources not only for practical things like treatment or employment resources but also for how to manage relationships after incarceration with spouse/partner and parent/child.
- Family and Friends want the DOC to be knowledgeable about and leverage community resources for clients.
- DOC should allow more individuals to work in the community (through work release) and should allow individuals to choose their own employment rather than be limited to only DOC partners.

Outcome/Update:

- DOC continues to explore programming options for incarcerated individuals. Recently, DOC increased ERP opportunities across facilities so that more individuals could access needed programming. Further, DOC made the “Edovo” application available on institution tablets. Edovo is a learning platform offering educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programming at no cost to clients.
- DOC recently created a subcommittee of the Reentry Executive Team (RET) which was designed to look specifically at the release planning and reentry process, including staff roles and responsibilities as well as timelines for interventions. One goal of this group is to look at feasibility and best practices for engaging friends and family in the release planning process.
- While it is not feasible to allow incarcerated individuals to choose their own work release employers, DOC is invested in meaningful work release opportunities and is open to engaging with employers throughout the state.
- A local Division of Community Corrections (DCC) office initiated monthly Family Reentry Meetings to outline supervision expectations and connect the support networks of releasing clients with community resources. The state is now reviewing this initiative for potential statewide rollout.
- The legislature approved modifications to the Standard Rules of Community Supervision, which is governed by Administrative Code DOC 328.04(3). As a result, rules #10 & #11 were rescinded and a portion of rule #3 was amended. Since rules #10 and #11 are no longer governed by Administrative Code, they will no longer be listed on the Standard Rules of Community Supervision but can be added as a Special Rule if appropriate. In addition, the complete list of Standard Rules of Community Supervision will be modified to mimic the current language enumerated in Administrative Code.

Next Steps:

- Continued prioritization (and funding) of additional ERP groups.
- Exploration of dedicated community resources to support formerly incarcerated individuals.
- RET subcommittee engaging those with lived experience and/or currently incarcerated individuals.

Topic: Wellness resources for residents, clients and staff*Feedback from friends & family group:*

- More mental health resources are needed for residents, clients and staff.
- The group would like to see the peer support program expanded to every facility.
- Regular mental health evaluations or check-ins for residents.
- Enhanced programming and environmental changes to reduce stress, including giving incarcerated individuals a choice in housing environments.
- Better quality meals and snacks for all including the ability for residents to have fresh fruit/produce in cell.

Outcome/Update:

- DOC has contracted with Falcon, Inc. for technical assistance throughout 2026 to implement recommendations related to operations, medical and mental health.
- DAI hired a Dietetic Director in the Spring of 2026 and is in the process of hiring two additional dietitians.
- DOC values the peer specialist role and utilizes peer specialists in almost every facility as well as has partnerships in the community for those on community supervision. DAI is in the process of expanding to sites not currently utilizing the program

Next Steps:

- Continued work with Falcon, Inc. related to implementing recommendations related to operations, medical and mental health.
- The Dietetic Director and dietitians will be reviewing and creating standardized menus to ensure meals which are nutritionally balanced.
- Continued utilization and expansion of the peer specialist program.