



Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers | Secretary Jared Hoy

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Monitor finds better atmosphere at LHS/CLS, DOC 90% in compliance with consent decree

MADISON, Wis. – The 22nd report from the federal court-appointed monitor for Lincoln Hills School/Copper Lake School (LHS/CLS) was filed Friday, noting an improvement in staff and youth attitudes as well as fewer safety fears as the state continues to progress toward closing the facilities.

The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) is in substantial compliance with 45 (or 90%) of the 50 provisions identified in the consent decree, four more than the previous reporting period. The reporting period covered Oct. 2024 through Feb. 2025.

“This report showcases the hard work and commitment of our staff at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake,” Jared Hoy, DOC secretary, said. “Tremendous progress has been made over the past seven plus years and we are looking forward to realizing a new model for juvenile corrections in Wisconsin.”

The court-ordered consent decree was issued and agreed upon in response to a 2017 lawsuit over conditions at the facility under the previous administration.

The court-appointed monitor visited LHS/CLS on March 20 and conducted 65 interviews with staff and youth.

“Although the population is much higher than it has been over the last couple of years, education, staff, and programming have adjusted accordingly,” the monitor wrote in her report. “The atmosphere is very calm, staff and youth have good overall attitudes and the overall fear for safety seems to be less than last couple of periods.”



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Key findings from the report:

- During this monitoring period, the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center began accepting girls for treatment for the first time. The move allowed the population at Copper Lake School to be cut in half. Transfer times for boys moving to the treatment center were also reduced. DOC is grateful for the collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to allow youth with serious mental health needs to be placed in an appropriate treatment facility more quickly.
- The LHS/CLS Treatment Team is heavily involved in the program, assisting the youth in identifying and addressing underlying motivations for anti-social or otherwise disruptive behavior, increasing insight and self-reflection, and learning/practicing skills to better respond to challenging emotions, experiences, and situations/environments. Treatment Team vacancies also declined during this reporting period.
- Recruiting for educational staff, however, remains difficult. Ten of 22 positions were vacant at the time of the monitor's visit.
- During the site visit, youth were engaged while in classrooms in the school. Youth were also working with staff in the music lab, taking part in treatment and spending time outdoors.

A listing of all monitor reports can be found [here](#) on the department's website.

Plans call for the department to develop three smaller secure juvenile detention centers that would allow youth to stay closer to their families and communities. Currently, a new secure juvenile facility for up to 32 boys is under construction in Milwaukee and set to open in fall 2026.

Governor Evers' proposed budget calls for investing \$130.7 million to build a second secure juvenile facility. This facility would be located on state-owned land in Dane County near DOC's Oregon Correctional Center and the Grow Academy. It would house up to 32 boys and eight girls.

The budget proposal also includes planning funds for a third secure facility likely to be located somewhere in Northeastern Wisconsin.