



# Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers | Secretary Kevin A. Carr

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **April Escape Leads to Changes at Columbia Correctional Institution**

*Department of Corrections Addresses Performance, Security Concerns*

**Madison** - The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Office of Internal Affairs has completed 13 personnel investigations as part of its ongoing investigative process related to the April escape at Columbia Correctional Institution (CCI) in Portage.

The personnel investigations resulted in the following:

- 7 staff members terminated
- 1 staff member suspended for 5 days
- 1 staff member cleared
- 4 staff members resigned during the course of the investigations

Affected employees were informed of the Department's disciplinary decisions today. Six of the eight employees disciplined have the right to appeal the decision in their respective cases through the State of Wisconsin's grievance process and to the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission. Two who were terminated were still in their probationary period and are not eligible to appeal.

"These are tough decisions that bring pleasure to no one in our agency," said Department of Corrections Secretary Kevin A. Carr. "But I cannot tolerate job performance that compromises public safety. We take that responsibility very seriously."

Two inmates escaped Columbia Correctional Institution in the early-morning hours of April 16 and were captured in Rockford, Illinois the following day without incident.

"We want to once more recognize the efforts of the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, Rockford Police Department, U.S. Marshall's Office and FBI in capturing the fugitives," Carr said. "We are grateful for their hard work and cooperation."

The DOC reinstated an Office of Internal Affairs in December 2019. The office has worked quickly and thoroughly to investigate the escape, conducting 90 interviews and completing the 13 personnel investigations in just a few months. Additionally, the Division of Adult Institutions has conducted an after-action review to examine and address CCI's procedures and policy related to safety and security.

“The results of the investigations and after-action review reflect a combination of performance failures and long-standing, systemic issues related to security procedures at CCI that pre-date this administration,” Carr said.

The DOC cannot reveal details of the procedure and policy issues identified because the information could compromise safety and security at the facility. However, the agency is taking steps to correct issues uncovered at CCI and apply lessons learned to procedures and planning at its other institutions.

The DOC will not be able to immediately answer questions and satisfy records requests related to the personnel investigations. State law requires the DOC to notify investigated individuals of such requests and provide them time to challenge release of the records.