



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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New Entrance Procedures at DOC's Secure Facilities

Madison, Wis. - The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) has seen positive results from measures implemented late last year in response to an increase in dangerous, illegal drugs entering its facilities. Now, the agency is taking added steps to reduce introduction of contraband in its correctional institutions and centers.

DOC is planning to launch an updated screening process for anyone entering its adult correctional facilities, including visitors, volunteers and all classes of staff. Everyone entering an adult DOC facility will be required to pass through a metal detector. In addition, staff will have to use clear bags to carry the approved items they bring into the institution daily.

“This will be an adjustment for our staff, certainly,” said Division of Adult Institutions Administrator Sarah Cooper. “But we also feel most will be understanding about the reason we are doing this.”

Contraband is a concern in all correctional facilities and Wisconsin DOC is no exception. While staff are not responsible for most contraband entering facilities, in some cases staff have admitted to bringing unapproved items into facilities, both knowingly or unknowingly.

“We know our staff take the safety and security of their facilities seriously and that a vast majority do not bring in contraband,” said Administrator Cooper. “However, the potential devastating impact of having even one instance of someone bringing in contraband has led us to take these measures.”

To address expected concerns from staff, DOC is making a one-time purchase to provide staff at its correctional institutions and centers with two clear, plastic bags that meet agency requirements. One will be a backpack-style clear bag, the other will be a lunch-sized clear bag so staff can use ice packs to keep their food safe for consumption. In addition, the facilities are reviewing the availability of refrigerators in work areas, since staff will no longer be able to bring in typical, insulated lunch bags.

DOC addressed one form of contraband late last year after noting an increase in illegal drugs, especially K2 and other synthetic cannabinoids, entering its facilities. Through investigation of individual cases, the agency learned drugs were being delivered through mail. Papers and envelopes were being sprayed with or soaked in the drugs, then being consumed or sold by people in the facilities.

Like many other states who have experienced similar problems, DOC switched to photo-copying mail. Since early December, all personal mail sent to people in DOC care has gone through a third-party vendor that makes and delivers photocopies of the originals. As a result, DOC saw a 60% decrease in total drug incidents at adult

facilities between November, 2021 and February, 2022. The agency also saw a decrease in overdoses requiring transport to a medical facility.

“We know the transition to have a third party receive and photocopy mail has been challenging at times. It is a completely new process, and DOC is continuing to work with the vendor to address concerns from those in our care and their loved ones,” said DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. “But the change has drastically reduced instances of these drugs entering our institutions, and creating dangerous situations for our staff and those in our care.”

DOC’s new screening process for people entering its institutions is set to begin August 1.