

Tony Evers
Governor



State of Wisconsin

**Wisconsin Council on Offender Reentry
Meeting Minutes for the Wisconsin Council on Offender Reentry
February 18, 2026 | 1:30pm – 3:00pm
Conducted Remotely via Teams**

Council Members Present: Becky Heth, Justin Kaas, Jeanne Geraci, Keeley Crowley, Brenda Rodriguez, Yulonda Anderson, Michele Carter, Mark Kappes, Michael Koenigs, Ray Woodruff, Andrew Murphy, Winn Collins, Leah Fix, Carl Ashley

Council Members Not Present: Jerome Dillard, Emily Westover, Paul Manriquez, Marlon Skenandore

Guests: Anna Neal, Andrew Kennard

Minutes: Cawley Hubner, Department of Corrections

I. Chairperson's Welcome & Approval of Minutes

Ray Woodruff called to order the quarterly meeting of the Council on Offender Reentry at 1:33 PM on February 18th, 2026.

Ray introduced two new members to the Council

1. Justin Kaas, Captain and Jail Administrator, Ozaukee County
 - a. *Law Enforcement Representative*
 - b. Justin's appointment began on February 16, 2026.
2. Becky Heth, Reentry Director, Department of Corrections
 - a. Department of Corrections Designee

Ray shared that Becky Heth would take over his role as the Chair of the Council on Offender Reentry at the Council's next meeting in May, but would still serve on the Council as a member as a Department of Corrections designee moving forward.

The minutes from the Council's meeting on November 19, 2025 were reviewed and a motion was made by Mike Koenigs to approve the minutes, and seconded by Keeley Crowley. The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Ray shared the following updates with the Council.

1. Ray shared the DOC has scheduled its next [Friends & Family Forum](#). This forum will take place on Saturday, March 14th, 2026 in Madison.

2. Ray shared that as his role as the Tribal Liaison with the Department that he recently attended meeting with Tribal leaders and discussed the [Loka Initiative](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which created the documentary [Sacred Wisdom, Sacred Earth](#). As part of this meeting, the documentary was screened and followed up with tribal elders for further discussion.
 - a. What does it mean to be incarcerated as an indigenous individual? How can the department be more responsible to indigenous and individuals' unique backgrounds?
3. Ray noted notable updates for the Department of Juvenile Corrections. (DJC)
 - a. The consent decree of court-mandated oversight of the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake School (LHCLS) has been terminated. The DOC and facility have made compliance with all of the settlement's expectation and is an exciting accomplishment to reflect the cultural and institutional change in DJC.
 - b. The Type 1 Juvenile facility in Milwaukee is progressing and is projected to start housing youths this fall. This is part of a shift to eventually close LHCLS and move youth closer back to communities.
 - i. A Dane County Type 1 Juvenile facility was approved in the 2025-27 budget to support this initiative and planning/development is ongoing with anticipated completion in 2029.

II. DOC Realignment Plan

- a. Anna Neal, Legislative Director, Department of Corrections

Ray asked Anna Neal to share with the Council regarding the DOC's realignment plan. The below is a summary of Anna's presentation.

Anna noted a Realignment Plan was introduced to the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) was hoping for enumeration in the 25-27 Biennial Budget. The plan focused on: Stabilizing Wisconsin's Prison Population, Modernizing Corrections Infrastructure, and Lower Costs to Taxpayers.

The Realignment Plan grew out of continued concerns on two DOC aging facilities: Waupun Correctional Institution and Green Bay Correctional Institution. The facilities have outdated designs and layouts, which create visibility and safety concerns.

The plan also focused on plans related to the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools (LHCLS).

- The DOC received full enumeration for the project to build a Dane County Type 1 Facility which would provide 32 beds for male youth and 8 beds for female youths.
- The DOC also received planning dollars to develop plans to expand the Grow Academy.

The plan focused on the following institutions and adjustments in summary, which were not approved in the 25-27 Biennial Budget:

- Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools (LHCLS) – Close LHCLS and convert to a 500-bed adult medium male facility called Lincoln Correctional Institution
- Decommission and close Green Bay Correctional Institution
- Convert Waupun Correctional Institution into a designated vocational programming location and remodeling cell halls Vocational Village

- Convert Stanley Correctional Institution to a maximum-security institution.
- Expand Sanger B. Powers Correctional Center by 200 minimum custody beds.
- Convert John Burk Correctional Center from an adult male facility back to an adult female facility, transferring 300 beds to the women's system.

The above summarized plan was not approved in the 25-27 Budget, but \$15 million was allocated for preliminary planning and design related to realigning the state's prison system. The funding was released by the State Building Commission in late 2025 and allows Department of Administration (DOA) and DOC to complete early planning, design, and studies as part of the larger realignment vision.

Following the 25-27 Biennial Budget session and productive bipartisan meetings from this session, the DOC has had regular small group discussions with the Executive Branch, Republican and Democrats in the Legislative Branch, and the Department of Administration. The process continues to try to find consensus and middle ground and Anna notes the points of consensus exceed points of disagreements and remaining differences are limited to a few key areas.

Anna noted the DOC will continue group discussions to try to find a common path forward and will gather data, prepare materials to help gain support from the Legislature, while Legislature leaders involved in these discussions will work to build caucus support and assess political feasibility. DOA will prepare pre-liminary plans and Design Report to authorize bidding on the construction.

After Anna's presentations, the Council asked a few questions regarding the Realignment Plan.

Justin Kaas asked: Would the DOC no longer to board individuals at county jails?

- *The DOC does not anticipate things changing in that space. The County Jail contracts provide an effective lever for managing the DOC's populations and don't foresee changes.*

Jeanne Geraci asked: Focusing on the women's system, if this plan doesn't work out, are there other plans for overcrowding within the women's system and specifically at Taycheedah Correctional Institution?

- *Women's needs have been a big part of the conversation in this plan in the Department and with the Legislature. Both know that the women's system needs support like the men's system and that something needs to be done regardless if this overall plan is approved or not.*

Mike Koenigs asked: The Vocational Village at WCI seems like quite a large investment. Based on my research the recidivism results are mixed and a lot has to be thought of in terms of supportive staff, what is the reasoning behind this push?

- *The Vocational Village concept has seen great success in Michigan in recidivism rates in that area. Additionally, the DOC has close relationships with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and Workforce Development Boards (WDB) that have proven to be show solid success relates in our Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. A foundation is in place to expand this partnership and CTE is not meant to be a replacement to foundational criminogenic education. Those expectations will continue, but as individuals move towards reentry and engage in educational programming to address different needs and employment obtainment. Also, I would challenge people to think*

beyond recidivism and consider success measures to assist reentry success like time to employment, length in employment, and desistance in addition to recidivism.

Justin: Has there been research into mental health care and corrections?

- *Mental health needs and resources, and how we can best address those needs have been part of the discussion. There is a growing mental health needs and geriatric needs and trying to navigate if that is part of this plan or moves to long-term plan and adjustments.*

Jeanne – Have focus groups for people reentering the community based on what work in design in the institution/community?

- *Interesting concept to include justice involved population in consideration of realignment plans and ensuring appropriate reentry resources are in place when considering the design of institutions. Interesting concept and plan to approach DOA to add voices to the discussion.*

Ray noted that the DOC will share the presentation with Council Members.

III. Department and/or Agency Representative Report Outs

Carl Ashley noted a group of individuals that were interested in a pilot project for potentially lessening time on extending supervision, however without specific measures or action it is hard to encourage individuals to participate. The DOC has no authority to change extended supervision limits under the law, but people are committed to show and earn their full reentry back into the community. There have been some discussions regarding extended supervision, but decisions have to come from the legislature.

IV. Next Council Meeting – May 19, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 2:31 PM.