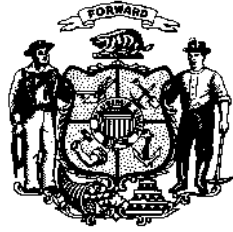


Tony Evers
Governor



State of Wisconsin

**Wisconsin Council on Offender Reentry
Meeting Minutes for the Wisconsin Council on Offender Reentry
November 19, 2025 | 1:30pm – 3:00pm
Conducted Remotely via Teams**

Council Members Present: Winn Collins, Keeley Crowley, Mark Kappes, Ray Woodruff, Andrew Murphy, Brenda Rodriguez, Mike Koenigs, Michele Carter, Emily Westover, Leah Fix, Brenda Rodriguez, Jeanne Geraci, Carl Ashley

Council Members Not Present: Paul Manriquez, Marlon Skenandore, Kari Beier, Jerome Dillard, Yulonda Anderson

Guests: None

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 1:32 PM on November 19th, 2025.

Ray introduced two new members to the Council and the Council introduced themselves to the two new members.

1. Mark Kappes, Dean of Business and Workforce Solutions, Gateway Technical College
 - a. *Wisconsin Technical College System Representative*
 - b. Mark's appointment began on September 23, 2025.
2. Brenda Rodriguez, Urban Liaison, Department of Children and Family (DCF)
 - a. *DCF Representative*
 - b. Brenda is a designee to the Council by the DCF and is not an appointed position.

Minutes from the Council's meeting on August 20, 2025 were reviewed and a motion was made by Carl Ashley to approve the minutes, and seconded by Mike Koenigs. The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Ray shared the following updates with the Council.

1. The FY25 Council on Offender Reentry Report was shared with the Council. This report can be found on the [DOC's Public Website – Reentry Annual Reports Page](#).

2. Ray noted a few DOC leadership changes effective 11/17/25.
 - a. The Deputy Secretary, Mary Kay Sergio, made the decision to step away from the department.
 - b. The Assistant Deputy Secretary, Kari Beier, was appointed to the now vacant Deputy Secretary position.
 - c. Ray Woodruff was appointed to the Assistant Deputy Secretary position left vacant by Kari Beier's appointment to the Deputy Secretary position.
3. Ray shared with the Council the [Falcon Report](#), which the DOC contracted with Falcon Correctional & Community Services, Inc. to provide a comprehensive analysis of operations focused within the Division of Adult Institutions. The analysis focused on healthcare, restrictive housing, staffing, bed management, and data collection to name a few.
 - a. This comprehensive report provided suggestions that the DOC plans to utilize to create a comprehensive plan moving forward with the Department to review and adjust current policies and potentially add new policies to assist the Department's mission.
4. The 3rd Friends and Family Forum was held in Milwaukee at the UW-Milwaukee Student Union on October 15th, 2025. Ray noted these events help the Department to hear directly from friends and family impacted in the DOC's system to assist the DOC adjust and improve practices.
 - a. The next Friends and Family is tentatively planned for in January in Madison. It is planned to be on a Saturday and Ray will share the date with the Council.
5. The DOC has annual consultations with tribal leaders to meet in a consistent structured format. The next tribal consultation is December 9th in Forest County. However, the Department has made an effort to continue to engage with the tribes outside of these annual meetings and are reviewing processes to ensure consistency for individuals returning to their communities.

II. Incarceration and Mental Health _ Research Group

- a. *Mike Koenigs*, PHD, Department of Psychiatry, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Mike Koenigs shared a few projects that the UW-Madison has been working on to Address Trauma and Mental Health in Correctional Facilities and the Community.

Mike began with noting data noted in the Falcon Report referenced above, that nearly half (46%) of the population in DAI were on the mental health caseload, highlighting the urgency of support needed for these clients while also noting the vacancy rate (20%) within Psychological Services that can hinder the ability to ensure clients are receiving treatment to address their mental health concerns.

With this background, Mike noted the importance of stakeholder engagement with DOC staff, incarcerated individuals, and formerly incarcerated individuals to identify and develop priorities and initiatives. From identifying these priorities and initiatives, the stakeholders and UW-Madison developed research studies for feasibility, effectiveness, and then considering implementation and sustainability beyond the research study. Stakeholder defined priorities were:

- WI DOC Priorities: Safety & security, Recidivism, Trauma, Intake, Re-entry, Access to services (RHU), Peer support, Security Staff training

- Incarcerated Population Priorities: Menu of treatment options; self-administered options (workbook, audio, digital)
- Formerly Incarcerated Advisors: Peer support, Menu of options, Access, Trauma, Security staff training, Intake, Re-entry

From these priorities, research projects were developed for feasibility and effectiveness. The following are notes from these projects, Mike shared with the Council.

1. Group Prison Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Treatment in Prison
 - a. Mike shared that in comparison to the general population, almost 100% of the prison population has had trauma exposure in comparison to 70% of the general population. This trauma exposure impacts how individuals see and react to the world in potentially maladaptive thoughts and behaviors. Additionally, 14-20% of the prison population has as PTSD diagnosis in comparison to 3-7% of the general population.
 - b. With this background and the priorities discussed previously, a 12-session therapy initiative utilizing Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) was developed for individuals with PTSD in an attempt to identify and challenge maladaptive thoughts & behaviors, which includes addressing “stuck points”¹ that are common in the prison population.
 - c. The project is ongoing, but 59 individuals have been enrolled into the group with 43 completing treatment (72.9%). The PCL-5, which is a self-report questionnaire used to screen for PTSD symptoms was tested prior, during, and after the group treatment. On average, individuals PCL-5 score decreased by 25 points from pre-treatment to 3 months post-treatment. A decrease of 10 points is considered significant.

2. Group CPT for formerly incarcerated people
 - a. This project was co-facilitated by a licensed clinician and by two formerly incarcerated Certified Peer Specialists (CPS) with trauma history.
 - b. 6 groups have initiated treatment for a total of 42 individuals. 26 (62%) completed treatment. This group was tested in the community, which makes attendance much more difficult than in a prison setting. Participants appreciated working with a CPS to connect with and assisting them to open up in group. On average the individuals PCL-5 score decreased by 25 points from pre-treatment to 6-months post-release treatment showing a significant reduction in PTSD symptoms.

3. Re-entry peer support group
 - a. This project was for a curriculum based “closed” peer support group originated by experienced re-entry peer support specialists.
 - b. This closed session included numerous topics including: Orientation, History of carceral system, Beliefs, values, and identity, Mental wellness, Relationships, Economic development, and Spiritual beliefs and values.
 - c. Participants appreciated the group and noted a need for support to take specific steps and a resource packet that is useable, maintained, and current. Koenigs Lab developed a resource packet for the Dane County area from this feedback.

4. Intake Peer Support Group Project

¹ Negative beliefs, often arising from trauma, that interfere with emotional recovery by creating unhelpful emotions and behaviors. E.g., “The abuse happened because I was weak” or “You either hurt or get hurt.”

- a. This pilot test is set to begin at Dodge Correctional Institution (Men's Intake Facility in the DOC) in January.
 - b. Each group will include up to 15 participants and 2 CPSs for individuals with a DOC Mental Health Code of 0 or 1 with adjustment issues.
 - c. This project will have 12 sessions and focus on providing support at intake to assist the transition from the community to an incarcerated setting.
5. CPS Program Evaluation
- a. In partnership with the WI DOC Research and Policy Unit, there was an analysis of over 4,000 CPS clients across 16 facilities to measure recidivism. Those that were a CPS client saw a reduction in recidivism vs non-CPS clients and there was also a reduction in major conduct reports. Mike noted this could be a "chicken and egg" situation where individuals who engage with CPS may be more motivated and ready to address maladaptive thoughts and behaviors.
6. Self-Help Workbook
- a. Koenig's Lab developed a Self-Help Workbook based on the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), to develop psychological flexibility to stop struggling through painful emotions (acceptance) and start practicing behaviors based on identified values and goals (commitment).
 - b. This is a self-administered workbook to address barriers related to privacy/confidentiality/trust, as well as access (potentially provide in RHU). The workbook was adapted with formerly incarcerated CPS to increase relevance, ease of understanding, and adding a peer connection.
7. Security Staff Training - Trauma Workshop
- a. This training for security staff was developed in connection to the CPT project (Project #1) at a men's facility. These trainings provided a background on trauma and PTSD and included vignettes with discussion for security staff to understand potential trauma responses by individuals.
 - i. Example Vignette: "You are doing routine checks with the people on your unit. One person appears agitated and frustrated every time a door slams. He flinches when his cellmate slams the door and starts yelling at him. He makes no threats but appears increasingly agitated."
 - b. The trainings were expanded to include PSU staff and formerly incarcerated individuals were brought in as a panel to discuss and evaluate responses.
 - c. Koenig's Lab is planning on a "Train-the-Trainer model to prepare security staff to train other security staff. Similarly, to CPS working with the justice-involved population, an individual with lived experience that is shared with the audience allows for deeper connection and buy-in.

After Mike's presentation concluded, the Council asked a few questions regarding the projects.

Ray asked is the Reentry Support Group in prerelease or post release?

Answer: In the community. Optimal version would be to begin in prerelease and continue in postrelease.

Keeley Crowley asked if Mike would be willing to provide presentation to other groups? This could be effective for the Office of Crime Victims at the Department of Justice for a wider perspective.

Answer: Yes, Mike is willing to share.

Jeanne Geraci asked to what extent is the curricula gender specific (relational theory)?

Answer: The CPT does have separate curriculum for men and women and indicated a potential review for adaptations for women and men.

III. Department and/or Agency Representative Report Outs

There were no individual department and/or agency report outs.

IV. Public Comment

Ray opened up the meeting for Public Comment. No Public Comments were made.

V. Next Council Meeting – February 18, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM