



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES,

A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

To continue developing sustainable reform in Wisconsin, our agency established a Strategic Plan identifying four strategic priorities for the Department of Corrections. We gathered input from department leadership, internal and external stakeholders, and other subject matter experts to develop key areas of focus that address the unique needs of those we serve while laying the groundwork for lasting change.

I am proud to share with you the results of our efforts, which were completed through the reallocation of existing funding and resources. This report, our first one, is a celebration of the collective impact everyone across our agency has made and a look ahead at the work still to come.

I am confident our dedicated staff can be a driving force to help Wisconsin overcome the complex systemic challenges within our agency and our state. This strategic framework will help guide our state toward a better future while serving as a catalyst for action across our agency.

As Secretary, I believe the investments we make today in our staff, those in our care and our communities will lead to future successes. We must embrace the opportunity to create positive change in 2021. I encourage our employees and criminal justice partners to read this report and join us in our pursuit to keep moving Wisconsin forward.

KEVIN A. CARR

Secretary

Wisconsin Department of Corrections

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

We reviewed current practices to identify practical areas for improvement and ensure our work aligns with the mission, vision and core values of the agency. Our initiatives in this area allow us to pursue efficient and effective operational practices that drive program value and delivery while still providing excellent services to staff and those in our care. To demonstrate operational excellence, we will focus on ways to harness evidence-based practices to create opportunities for success and achieve long-term sustainable growth.

TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

We understand that strong community relationships are the building blocks of success, so we must work closely with those engaged with the DOC. Our initiatives in this area help us fulfill our mission to serve the people of Wisconsin with transparency by allowing them to be part of the decision-making process. We will focus on building trust among internal and external stakeholders to demonstrate our commitment to responsible and accountable decision-making in matters involving our staff, Persons in Our Care and Wisconsin taxpayers.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS

We recognize employees within the DOC as our most valuable resource, and we believe investing in our diverse workforce adds long-term value, leadership and expertise to the agency. Initiatives in this area support our exceptional staff by providing the resources and training necessary to excel in their positions. Additionally, we will explore innovative and creative solutions to address recruitment challenges while emphasizing our strong commitment to diversity.

CORRECTIONS REFORM

High incarceration rates come at a cost to those in our care, their loved ones and to the taxpayers of Wisconsin. Our initiatives in this area will assist in safely reducing the number of incarcerated individuals in our state, reduce the collateral consequences of conviction and address racial disparities in our system. With a focus on finding research to support all current and future work, we will seek to expand the use of evidence-based practices to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our work at every level. We will also work to improve conditions inside our institutions, increase the effectiveness of our interventions and programming for those in our care, and implement safe alternatives to incarceration whenever possible.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

These initiatives focus on finding additional ways to achieve operational effectiveness with optimal efficiency for the Persons in Our Care, staff and the agency.

- Launched an Internal Affairs Office and successfully investigated 200 cases in 2020
- Changed to suspending, rather than terminating, Medicare benefits when an individual becomes incarcerated, eliminating delayed access to medical and behavioral health care upon release
- Increased internal stakeholder engagement and communications by adding new landing pages to myDOC, including the COVID-19 Resources and National Correctional News pages
- Reported on employment post-release outcomes for the first time through partnership with the Division of Workforce Development
- Conducted implicit bias training and provided cultural competency resources to staff

TRANSPARENCY + PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

This initiative builds trust among both our internal and external stakeholders—especially Wisconsin taxpayers—and highlights our commitment to use resources responsibly.

- Reallocated staff positions to expand the Office of Public Affairs, adding three new positions in the areas of constituent services, stakeholder engagement and digital/social media, enhancing both internal and external outreach efforts
- Reorganized the open records process for the agency
- Increased engagement efforts with both staff and criminal justice advocacy groups in the community, enhancing the agency's capacity to generate and maintain support for its mission and strategic initiatives
- Made key additions to the agency's public website, including a COVID-19 page/dashboard and a Town Halls page, helping both the public and staff stay up-to-date with agency-related topics
- Utilized Zoom teleconferencing software to host three virtual town hall events with the Secretary during the last half of 2020, obtaining valuable input on DOC initiatives from various stakeholders

WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS

These initiatives explore ways to help staff grow and excel in their positions. Investing in our most valuable resource, our employees, adds long-term value, leadership and expertise to the agency.

- Invested in long-term recruitment and retention efforts by expanding communication on social media, including LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter
- Increased cultural competency and diversity awareness in the agency through the enhancement of staff trainings and created a new Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee to guide the work in this area
- Increased advertising efforts including radio ads for employment during Safer at Home and created a Correctional Officer recruitment survey for pre- and post-hire
- Conducted a Staff Climate and Engagement Survey, receiving 6,219 total responses to gain a better understanding of employee morale, satisfaction and engagement within the agency

CORRECTIONS REFORM

These initiatives rely on research in expanding the use of evidence-based practices to improve the effectiveness of our interventions and programming for Persons in Our Care. DOC is implementing safe alternatives to incarceration whenever possible, using strategies and finding opportunities within DOC that do not rely on bi-partisan criminal justice reform.

- Continued implementing the Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake Schools consent decree, eliminating the use of pepper spray, restrictive housing and punitive confinement of youth
- Facilitated the Act 185 Grants Committee to select four counties for Secure Residential Care Center for Children & Youth (SRCCCY) grant funding in partnership with DCF
- Implemented policy changes related to the supervision of clients that are designed to increase efficiency and safely lower the number of revocations, which make up a large part of the institution population
- Expanded opportunities for treatment and early release and implemented Substance Use Disorder/Earned Release programs at Stanley Correctional Institution, Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution, Jackson Correctional Institution and New Lisbon Correctional Institution

WHERE WE ARE

Over the past year, we've been strengthening our commitment to guide the Department of Corrections and the State of Wisconsin toward a better future. Here's a closer look at our ongoing work related to key initiatives.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY AWARENESS

In 2020, DOC established an Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, which worked to develop and release an Equity and Inclusion Plan for the department. The plan helps to fulfill Governor Evers mission to ensure every state agency effectively prioritizes strategies that will build a culture committed to equity and inclusion as outlined in Executive Order #59. In 2021, the committee will continue to look for ways to increase diversity and cultural awareness, improve work environments, and coordinate and track efforts in the areas of diversity and inclusion to ensure that all employees feel welcomed, safe and have equitable access to opportunities.

EARNED RELEASE PROGRAM AND THE PRISON POPULATION

Since 1990, DOC has seen a rise in admissions to prison, ranging from 3,742 in 1990 and 9,224 in 2018. In 2019, the current administration began to explore the various ways the agency is able to safely reduce the prison population that are within the department's authority. DOC worked to expand the Earned Release Program, increasing the number of releases through the program each year from 2018-2020. ERP was created in 2003 as a result of Act 33, and Persons in Our Care are eligible for the program if they are not incarcerated for an

offense under Chapter 940 and if the sentencing judge has deemed them eligible. Upon completion of the program, the prison portion of their sentence is converted to extended supervision time. DOC expanded ERP programming to four medium-security institutions in the past year. In addition, an ERP Expansion Committee has been working to draft changes related to department policy for ERP and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) programming. The recommended changes have been approved by the Office of the Secretary and efforts in 2021 will focus on consolidating program forms, developing statewide training for institutions and expanding behavior modification systems into all DAI SUD/ERP programs. The committee hopes to finalize this work and implement the changes to ERP and SUD programming in early 2021.

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

This initiative seeks to enhance employee wellness and create a more engaged workforce. Due to high vacancy rates and increased staff turnover, the Employee Services Program Advisory Committee (ESPAC) began actively working in 2020 to make recommendations that improve conditions through a variety of initiatives, including the peer support program, employee wellness efforts and emotional survival awareness. The work surrounding this initiative will continue in 2021 with goals to better

coordinate and track the success of current efforts in place and focus on new, innovative ideas to ensure our employees are supported.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In 2020, the DOC expanded its Office of Public Affairs by reallocating staff positions within the agency to new staff positions focused on stakeholder engagement, social media, and constituent services. In 2021, the office will continue to develop opportunities for proactive engagement with DOC's internal and external stakeholders through efforts such as town hall meetings with the Department Secretary, increasing communication to the public through social media, increasing staff recognition and proactively communicating agency-wide information with staff.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The purpose of this initiative is to increase staff development throughout DOC and formalize leadership and professional development opportunities. In 2020, the Corrections Training Center began exploring the use of both voluntary and mandatory training opportunities for staff, and will continue this work into 2021. Through the investment of staff training and development, our agency will yield a more professional workforce, and reduce the number of complaints, investigations and discipline in the workplace. Expanding professional development will also help to develop a professional culture and improve overall staff performance. Opportunities for leadership and professional development will include training, collaborative peer networking, online course work and coaching coupled with clear professional standards set by the agency.

LINCOLN HILLS / COPPER LAKE CONSENT DECREE

Lincoln Hills School/Copper Lake School (LHS/CLS) made a number of positive changes to its operations throughout 2019 and 2020 in response to the consent decree stemming from a 2017 lawsuit. The facility terminated the use of OC spray, instituted a plan to keep youth out of their rooms between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., terminated the practice of punitive confinement and took steps to begin introducing Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), an evidence-based treatment that promotes self-regulation and pro-social interpersonal skills as a way to help youth understand the cues that trigger their emotions. The court-appointed monitor's most recent report found DOC in partial or substantial compliance with every aspect of the consent decree and noted the progress made by the CARE Team, which strives to prevent, de-escalate, and resolve youth incidents. In 2021, DOC will continue to embrace its work with the Monitor as an opportunity to move forward at LHS/CLS and build upon the work that has been done so far.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

DOC has already taken steps to address a high level of employee turnover and a stagnant number of hires, bringing a vacancy rate that was more than 17% when this administration began down to 12.99%. However, high vacancy rates continue, and at times have caused current employees to become strained from forced overtime, hindering morale and the organizational climate. In 2020, DOC created and distributed a Staff Climate and Engagement survey to gain a better understanding of employee morale, satisfaction and engagement. Survey results will be used in 2021 to assist leadership in better understanding the needs and desires of staff, and keeping this initiative moving forward to increase employee longevity and

recruit new hires. While this initiative focuses on all classifications, it places an emphasis on security staff due to the high turnover in these positions and their critical relationship to DOC's mission, including ensuring the safety and security of those in our care.

REENTRY PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

In 2020, the DOC began to streamline processes that allowed the various divisions within our agency to more easily work in collaboration on a number of reentry programs and initiatives, such as our career technical education programs throughout DAI. DOC will continue this work in 2021, seeking to have the various divisions work in partnership to more easily leverage resources and ensure those we serve have the resources needed to successfully transition from incarceration back into the community.

RESTRICTIVE HOUSING

In 2020, discussions continued among DAI leadership on evidenced-based strategies to safely reduce the use of, and make improvements to the operation of, restrictive housing. Suggested changes include providing additional training for staff in de-escalation techniques, increasing the use of alternative sanctions, reviewing resources for facility capital improvements and the evaluation of the programmatic needs of the Persons in Our Care. In 2021, the department will build upon those discussions and work to finalize policy revisions.

VIOLATION RESPONSE AND REVOCATION PROCESS

In 2020, the Division of Community Corrections provided leadership with recommendations for policy modifications related to violation response and revocations. The recommendations came from the work of a committee that was formed with the intent to create a more effective and efficient process, while ultimately reducing revocations, enhancing success for those on community supervision and maintaining community safety. After completing a significant mapping exercise, five focus areas were identified to address system changes:

1. Rules of Supervision and After-Hours Holds
2. Evidence-Based Response to Violations (EBRV)
3. Short-Term Sanctions
4. Alternative to Revocation (ATR), Programming and Specialty Courts
5. Revocation Process, Sentencing after Revocation and Reincarceration, Good Time Forfeiture Recommendations

The policy proposals were shared with DCC staff and the public through a series of virtual town hall meetings that provided valuable feedback. In early January, DOC implemented the approved policy changes.

THE PATH FORWARD

This is an evaluation of the work we've been pursuing all year—and a look ahead at our work still to come. We will move forward diligently and transparently, focused on impacting and inspiring those we serve with vision and purpose.

While we are proud of our efforts put forth in 2020 and the steps taken towards implementation of these strategic priorities, we know much work remains. This year, the agency will focus on ways to improve services for those in our care, increase efficiency through the use of technology in areas like telehealth, continue to emphasize evidence-based treatment and programming across our facilities, and bolster staff through innovative solutions in recruitment and retention.

Some 2021 agency improvements are already underway, including plans at Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution that will meet a need to increase minimum security bed space and lead to the eventual increase of work release opportunities for Persons in Our Care. We will continue the process of aligning and moving those in our care to institutions with the appropriate security classification. Additionally, we are working to update and modernize DOC's classification assessment as part of our commitment to using evidence-based practices and state-of-the-art tools to assess classification risk. This allows us to accurately deliver security and programming resources to Persons in Our Care.

The DOC will also keep moving towards its long-term goals of safely reducing the population in DOC institutions, and meeting the spirit and intention of Act 185 to transform juvenile justice in the state of Wisconsin. These steps are easier when taken in partnership with criminal justice partners and state legislators, and we will continue to engage these and other stakeholder groups in taking the necessary next steps towards reforming the state's criminal justice system. The agency will also look at areas where it can move unilaterally to meet its priorities and fulfill its vision: achieving excellence in correctional practices while fostering safety for victims and communities.

Like much of the world, our work was significantly impacted in 2020 by a global pandemic. It has tested resolve and stressed resources. Nevertheless, the Department of Corrections continues to be a driving force to build lasting change in Wisconsin. Through these initiatives, we embrace the opportunity to move our state forward and be a national leader in correctional practices.