

Zack Osell: Alright. The time is 8:30, so we're going to get started. Alright, looks like we've a decent number of people on the chat. I want to begin by welcoming you all to our first virtual town hall. We're very excited to have you with us today, and we look forward to having more of these events and conversations in the future.

My name is Zack Osell. I'll be moderating today's event. I'm a Communication Specialist in the Office of Public Affairs and one of my key responsibilities is stakeholder engagement.

Before we dive in, I just have got a few housekeeping items to go over. Somewhere, probably near the bottom of your screen, you should have a question and answer features through the Zoom software. We will be monitoring the Q&A feature through this webinar. So, feel free to submit any questions that may come up as we roll along here. And then near the end we will have a chance to open up the floor to our panelists and let them answer a few of the questions that roll in. A side note on that, if you're using a VPN and you're struggling to get the Q&A feature to work, we suggest turning it off and trying again. It seems like the Zoom software doesn't like the VPN for whatever reason and then just one reminder that today's webinar is being recorded so that we can share with you all at a later date.

So once again, we want to thank all of our valued employer and educational partners for joining us this morning. I'm going to use this slide to give a brief overview of some of the topics that we will be discussing today. We will be addressing the questions that were sent into us via the SurveyMonkey poll that was sent out as part of the invite. These questions again touch on the agency's thoughts on how to safely resume work release as well as personal protective equipment requirements and safety and preventative measures. We also touch on the available resources and current best practices during the COVID-19 pandemic along with the criteria and benchmarks that we're using to return to normal operations for work release.

Alright, before we get to meet our panelists today, I want to share a little bit more information on our attendees today. We have employer partners who are currently registered in work release programs in attendance. We tally about 69 state wide employer partners from 20 different counties. We also have partners from the Wisconsin technical colleges joining us and we also have a few members of the DOC staff with us including the superintendent, work release coordinators, and few members of our administrative team. Alright, next I'm going to take some time to introduce our panelists today. We're all very excited to have these four individuals with us. I will be providing a brief bio for each just so that you guys get a better understanding of their backgrounds and experiences.

So, I will kick it off by introducing Secretary Kevin Carr. He previously worked as U.S. Marshal in the Eastern District of Wisconsin and was appointed to that position by Barack Obama. Previously, he spent 30 years working in the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office where he held numerous positions including Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Inspector, and Inspector. As Inspector, he served as the second-in-charge of daily operations for the agency. He was instrumental in the creation of the Milwaukee County Criminal Justice Council. Secretary Carr holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Management and an associate's degree in criminal justice from Concordia University. He has received post-graduate certificates from Harvard University, the FBI National Academy, and Northwestern University.

Our next panelist today is Quala Champagne. She is the warden of the Wisconsin Correctional Center System. Ms. Champagne has a Bachelor of Science with a major in Psychology received from the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater in 1987. She received her Master's of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1990. She began her career

with the State of Wisconsin in '90 and began her Department of Corrections career in '91. She has 26 years of supervisory experience and has worked with both male and female populations throughout her career. She was first appointed Warden of Racine Correctional Institution on September 16th of 2003. She held the role of Administrator of the Division of Community Corrections for over four years and on January 31, 2010, Ms. Champagne returned to the Warden position, joining the Wisconsin Correctional Center System.

Our third panelist is Ray Woodruff. He is an Employment Program Manager here at the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Ray has over 15 years of corrections and re-entry experience, and he currently manages several local and state-wide initiatives aimed at reducing recidivism and improving employment outcomes of individuals who are returning to the community from incarceration. He has worked with various special populations and provides technical assistance and training to counties, workforce agencies, and corrections professionals on offender management and program implementation. Previously, Woodruff provided program interventions and services to incarcerated adults and juveniles in facilities in Wisconsin and Ohio. He received his MS in criminal justice and forensic psychology from Tiffin University, and his BA in psychology from the University of Cincinnati.

Our fourth panelist today is Missy Hughes. Missy Hughes is a Secretary and CEO of WEDC, Wisconsin's lead economic development organization. Before joining WEDC in October of 2019, she was general counsel and chief mission officer at Organic Valley. Her previous positions include associate attorney at the firm of Holland & Hart, where she practiced in the areas of natural resources, construction litigation and corporate business transactions. She served on the boards of the Environmental Working Group and the Organic Trade Association, where she was a three-term board president. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture appointed her to the USDA Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Biotechnology in the 21st Century. Hughes received her bachelor of arts in political science from Georgetown University and Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Wyoming College of Law.

Alright, now I'm going to take the time to turn it over to our panelists and give them an opportunity to provide some opening remarks. So, we will kick it off with Secretary Carr and move on down the list here, so Secretary Carr.

DOC Secretary Kevin Carr: Thank you Zack and good morning to everyone that's participating in today's event. Thank you all for joining us today for our first ever virtual town hall. Now prior to the COVID-19 health crisis, it was a goal of mine to begin holding in-person town hall events with stakeholders throughout the state. I believe it's critical to hear from groups of individuals much like yourself about important topics related to corrections. While in-person town halls are not an option at this time, I'm excited that we've the ability to be here today virtually.

I recognize that there is significant interest in what we're doing at the Department of Corrections during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among this group, here today, I know there is particular interest in our agency's decision to suspend work release and how we plan to resume normal operations safely in the future. I hope we can answer many of those questions today.

My top priority during this healthcare crisis is the prevention of COVID-19 entering in our secure facilities and keeping the staff and the persons in our care safe while maintaining public safety. Since early March, our agency has taken a number of steps to mitigate the risk of exposure. In mid- to late-March, we activated our internal emergency operations in order to help us navigate this crisis and quickly suspended visiting and volunteer programs. Shortly after, we suspended

work release and all contracted programming. We also suspended transfers from state contracted county jail beds and most internal transfers.

Now, while these decisions were not easy to make, they were done out of an abundance of caution. We used the guidance and direction from the Department of Health Services and Center for Disease Control to guide our decision making. Our mission was to safely adapt to the new challenges brought forth by this pandemic while still maintaining essential operations.

By late March and early April, our agency began implementing medical screening protocols for employees entering facilities. Between April and May, all staff and persons in our care were provided cloth and disposable ear loop masks, and were highly encouraged to wear them in the workplace. In early May, we began the critical step to begin state wide mass testing of all persons in our care and staff. Testing everyone in our facilities has enabled us to identify asymptomatic carriers, which is crucial to reducing spread and will be a crucial step when looking to return persons in our care back to work release.

Over the course of the past four months, we have enhanced sanitation and cleaning protocols wherever we can. We have increased the availability of hand soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer to be used in common areas. We work closely with the state emergency operation center on enhanced purchasing efforts for pandemic emergency supplies and personal protective equipment. The protective measures that I just mentioned and so many others have allowed us to keep the virus under control in our facility and hopefully will allow us to safely resume and maintain normal operations much earlier than if there was a widespread communal infection within any of our institutions. Our successful mitigation of the spread of the virus in the facilities has also been directly related to our ability to isolate and quarantine the persons in our care as they require those measures.

One critical issue we're having with our work release sites is that we don't have the capacity to quarantine and isolate persons in our care engaged in work release and as a result, we must look at other factors to determine the timeline for when it's appropriate for us to return to allowing work release to resume.

These have been uncertain and unprecedented times for employers, staff, and the persons in our care. The Department of Corrections continues to balance safety with the various operational needs that exist. I want to thank each of you for your patience and commitment as we develop to plan to safely return those in our care back to work sites. Because so much of the future of this virus is still unknown, it will require all of us to remain flexible and patient in our approaches but I'm confident in our ability as an agency to do so successfully and I'm hopeful that the strong partnerships that we build with so many of you will assist us long term in finding reasonable solutions in the future.

I'm grateful to hear from all of you today and I hope I can answer many of your questions. I'm also grateful to each of you for your thoughts and hope that I can use this information to assist me as I make many important decisions about the future of work release in the coming weeks. Thank you.

Zack Osell: Thank you Secretary. We will turn over to Secretary and CEO, Missy Hughes for her opening remarks.

WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes: Hey, thank you Zack, and thank you Secretary Carr for inviting me here today for your first virtual town hall. I'm really pleased to be able to

share some information and, like Secretary Carr, to hear your comments and your questions. And I also really want to thank all of you for being partners with the Department of Corrections and the work release program. You know, before the COVID-19 crisis hit and the shortage of workforce that the state was facing, one of the things that we were looking at was how we could help and work with Department of Corrections to enable more work release programs, more opportunities for adults in incarceration to have opportunities as they moved out of their situation and got back into the workforce. Thank you all for the work that you're doing.

Um, I would just take a moment to say that prior to COVID-19, WEDC as the state's lead economic development agency was really focused on typical economic development work. You know, looking at projects that were happening all around the state, whether it's a community project or a business project, and thinking about how we could bring the state's resources to leverage that project and make it even more than anticipated. We work around the state with things like Main Street programs and helping businesses train their workforces, with attracting talent to Wisconsin and with, you know, the classic incentive that you often hear about where we attract businesses to either stay in Wisconsin and expand or come to Wisconsin and create their home bases here. Since COVID-19, we have been, you know, really, like so many of us, doing completely different work.

We've been focused on assisting businesses all around the state and accessing resources. In Wisconsin, we've about 500,000 businesses; 450,000 of them qualify as small businesses under the United States, the federal definition, from the Small Business Administration. So, we have been really involved with SBA and making sure that our businesses could access the resources of the PPP, the Payroll Protection Program, and other programs, and I'm going to pause and just say, you know the news is out, coming out from yesterday, that the Senate and hopefully the House will then decide to continue the PPP program and ask small businesses if you haven't accessed this program, I'm going to really encourage you to do that as it's, you know, a challenge to apply and to get that work done but it's worth it. It's a really amenable and acceptable program for small businesses. Wisconsin has punched above its weight in accessing those programs. We've had by last count about \$3 billion worth of federal funding come to Wisconsin through the PPP but there is another 4130 billion still available and it's really something I would encourage you to look at. It will help you with cash flow and, you know, those expenses that you're facing right now, um.

We have also been involved in helping businesses manage the "Safer at Home" question about essential versus nonessential, so if you recall, the Safer at Home order allowed essential businesses to remain open and nonessential businesses needed to close their operations and, you know, it was a challenge for some businesses who had a foot in both essential and nonessential work, and our team helped the businesses understand.

One of the final things that we did that has, I think, been really helpful to businesses is create a set of guidelines to help businesses understand "okay, as I'm opening, as I'm thinking about my employees and my customers, what should I be doing, what should I be looking at, whether it's PPP or communications or how to interact in this new world that we're all living in" and those guidelines live on our website still, wedc.org. We've created a checklist for those guidelines so you can simply print out a checklist and walk around your establishment and determine "okay, what do you I need to be thinking about on". I encourage you to go back now as we've had a few weeks of opening, of course my dogs are barking (laughing), we've had you know, you've had a few weeks of operating and thinking about it. Let's go back and think about how can we do things better.

One of the critical things that we see as part of our recovery and absolutely important for recovery is continuing to stop the spread of the virus and, you know, what we see happening around the country, we don't want that to happen here in Wisconsin and so, we need to be doing those practices of social distancing and hand washing and mask wearing and especially be thinking about our employees and our customers as we're doing that.

My final piece is yesterday, we had the opportunity to submit to the legislature and the governor a report that was requested back in April about the impact of COVID-19 on our economy and thoughts about recovery and of course, you know, we're all still right in the middle of this and I think back in the middle of April, we had hoped that we would be moving through this and really be able to be thinking about recovery, so the report is very comprehensive on all of the impacts of this situation on our economy. From education and healthcare to the tribes and our minority businesses, we really try to just comprehensively look at what has happened in the state. You know, this isn't a tornado that touched down on one little town in central Wisconsin. This is something that has impacted everybody in Wisconsin and so, we address that but we also try to think about the future and try to think about what are some priorities.

We identified three priorities for working ahead and one of them is, you know, looking at the workforce situation, the unemployment situation in Wisconsin and thinking about how do we get those workers back to work, how do we provide the skills as businesses and as a state so that we can make sure that those workers get back to family sustaining jobs. We really need to address the broadband situation in Wisconsin as we see folks needing education and online remote working, we need to make sure that everybody has accessible and affordable broadband and the last thing is, you know, as crazy as it sounds in a time like this, we need to be supporting innovation. We need to be supporting entrepreneurship in the sphere of bringing solutions to the marketplace. That's what is going to propel us forward and hopefully make a faster recovery. So, those are the big themes that we identified in the latest legislative report, but at WEDC, we continue to be focused on making sure that businesses have what they need and can access resources and information, so I encourage you to visit our website at wedc.org to look for information about resources and programs. I know there is a lot coming at you as business owners and so, hopefully, that will provide some trusted resource for you and with that, I will turn it back over to Zack and we will get to the rest of the panel. Thank you.

Zack Osell: Thanks Missy. We're running a little short on time for this section. So, we're going to turn over to Quala Champagne really quickly.

Warden Quala Champagne: Good morning everyone. I want to thank Secretary Carr for inviting me to join the panel this morning and I also want to thank our employers for continuing to partner with us on work release as we work towards meeting our new goals for WCCS with the time of COVID-19. You know, our staff and the persons in our care have done a tremendous job on taking measures to prevent and reduce the transmission of COVID among staff and those in our care as well as continuing to operate our essential procedures by doing cleaning, wearing mask, and social distancing. So, I look forward to sharing more information with you about work release this morning. Thank you very much. Zack, I will turn it back to you.

Zack Osell: Thank you Warden Champagne. Let's go to Ray for his opening remarks.

Ray Woodruff: Good morning everyone. In the interest of time, I know there are lots of questions, so we'll just get to those. I do just want to say, it's already been mentioned, obviously this is our first town hall, so bear with us on any technical difficulties that we might have through the process, but I'm excited from my perspective that our first town hall is talking

to employers and education partners. I think, you know, you're work release stakeholder partners that we have, and as Ms. Champagne just mentioned, we've worked alongside many of the employers that are probably in attendance today for many years, same with education partners and we're really interested in seeing how we can get back to, as Secretary Carr mentioned, some sense of normalcy or normal operations. So, I'm excited that this is our first go at this town hall attempt and I'm excited to hopefully answer some questions today. Thanks.

Zack Osell: Alright, thanks Ray. Alright, thank you panelists for those remarks. Right now, we're going to move on to the next portion of our webinar where our panelists will be answering the questions that were submitted to us through the SurveyMonkey poll. Each of these questions are assigned to a panelist but of course, any of our panelists can jump in if they've anything to add. I also want to encourage panelists to keep their responses brief when possible so that we can get through as many questions as possible. So our first question here is directed towards Secretary Carr and I will read it out before allowing him to answer.

The question states "What criteria are you using to determine when the suspension of work release will end, and will you consider a phased approach? Does a vaccine needs to be readily available before resuming normal operations?"

DOC Secretary Kevin Carr: Thanks, Zack. The Department of Corrections has applied this state government Badger Bounce Back plan framework to our own internal plan to slowly and safely return our staff to normal operations in those three phases. All along, we've been working very closely with the Department of Health Services and local public health officials on the criteria to use when making policy decisions related to the current health crisis. We're currently continually evaluating environmental factors to guide our decision making and we will continue to rely on those factors while applying our return to work plan as guided by the state government Badger Bounce Back plan.

Now, while these details are still being worked out, we do know that the Department of Corrections will use phased approaches to help guide our decisions on those returning to work release. They've recommended, you know the sources that we rely on for advice and input, that social distance requirements continue to be strictly enforced during this time, and in phase three of the Badger Bounce Back plan, the state workforce return to normal and as a result, work release should resume to normal at that time but with the caveat that everything is solely dependent on the data that we receive and the trajectory that we're on regarding the virus. The virus virtually is going to tell us when it's safe for us to resume work release operations and we look to be as flexible as possible and try to get those operations back up and running. So, to answer the other portion of the question, we're not at this time using the availability of a vaccine to guide any of our decision. It's, you know, I think widely known and publicize that there is approximately 140 different entities working on a vaccine around the world but there is no guarantee that a vaccine is going to be forthcoming in the very near future and so, part of our strategy is to analyze the data and advice that we get and look for a stabilization of the data as it relates to the number of positive tests and the percentage of positive tests in that group in order to help us decide when it's safe to resume normal operation.

Zack Osell: Thanks Secretary. Just a reminder that we do have our Q&A feature at the bottom, so feel free to send in questions as we're going through this portion. Alright, moving on to next question here. Bear with me while we move to next slide. It's for Warden Champagne. The question reads "Do you have a date set for when persons in your care will be allowed to return to job sites?"

Warden Quala Champagne: As of today, there is not a date in place to resume work release. Um, we will use a phased approach as the Secretary mentioned, and our decisions to determine when those who will return to work release for those in our care. Many of the measures that we put in place for preventative measures in phase 1 will continue and, although phase 2 is scheduled to begin on July 13th for our staff, many of those measures will discontinue and then phase 3 as the Secretary talked about is the target for when our workforce returns to normal as well as when work release would resume. What I will say is that we may look at resuming some work release on a smaller scale using those benchmarks that the Secretary mentioned previously. What we are doing currently is working on creating a policy to safely resume work release and more details will be provided when those decisions are made.

At this time, we're focusing on mass testing at all of our centers to assess the current status of the virus among the persons in our care and the testing has enabled us to really get and identify asymptomatic carriers which is really crucial to reducing the spread of the virus. We're also working to ensure we have proper areas to isolate and quarantine. You heard the Secretary mention before that due to the facility structure of many of our centers, we really do not have the ability to do isolation and quarantine and so, we have worked with our partner larger institutions to facilitate the transfer of those individuals so that we can continue to safeguard our population from those that are positive with COVID-19. That concludes my response to this question. Thank you Zack.

Zack Osell: Thank you Warden Champagne. Alright, moving on to question #3. It's also for Warden Champagne. "When persons in your care return to work release sites, what conditions will be required? Will DOC provide them Personal Protective Equipment, or will the work sites be required to supply necessary PPE?"

Warden Quala Champagne: Our centers have already begun to reach out to work sites to gather information. That was part of our phase 1 plan and we appreciate the feedback that we did receive from employers in regards to the ability to safely return the people in our care to work release. Employers that have preventative measures in place may be considered more suitable for resuming work release than employers without such preventative measures in place. Examples that I can share of preventative measures we're hoping to see include but, you know, this is a limited list, so there may be other things but medical screenings, policies that direct staff who are sick to stay home, PPE that's going to be provided to employees such as your face mask or face shield, what are employers' policies that encourage frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing and is that readily available to staff and then what is the employer's policy to notify us.

In the past, we've had great communication with our employers on notifications we need regarding the men and people in our care but in this case with COVID, what is the policy the employer is going to have to notify our Department of Corrections when there is a positive staff case at the work site. So those are some of the measures, preventative measures, that employers can certainly begin to think about or gather as they prepare for us to return to work release.

What you can expect to see is more information from us from this event, follow up on prior communications you have had with work sites, we'll be gathering more up-to-date information. I think that information we gathered was a couple of months ago so that that can assist us in our decision making process as we move forward. So expect to see a survey coming in the future days and once we evaluate those protocols and safety measures in place by employers, we will begin to make decisions on when persons in our care can safely resume with work release and

what PPE and/or additional safety precautions DOC will need to have in place to supplement what employers are looking at or policies they have. Thank you Zack.

Zack Osell: Thank you. Moving on, the next question is for Ray and the question reads “How do the decisions related to work release impact work study programs at the local technical colleges?”

Ray Woodruff: Similar to the responses from Secretary Carr and Warden Champagne, I think many of the same benchmarks will likely be utilized for determining when we're going to go back to study release. As has been said, you know, we, we obviously have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of those in our care, staff, and, so you know, part of our decision making I think is balancing that with also ensuring that the people in our care have opportunities to meaningfully engage in educational opportunities and meaningfully engage in work opportunities to prepare them for their ultimate release. So I think part of our decision-making process is really balancing those things.

You know I don't know if folks have seen, but there are some states of the country who have experienced large number of infections within their correction systems. I think we've put a lot of protective measures in place and, I think Warden Champagne mentioned, you know the people in our care, our staff are doing a tremendous job of trying to contain the virus and ensure that people are protected, so our goal is really to continue that. Right, we don't want to see and operate in one of our facilities. As Warden Champagne mentioned, we're going to continue to do the mass testing at our sites to ensure that we're identifying those folks who may be asymptomatic. So that all that said, we're also going to use some of the benchmarks in determining when people are going back to study release and I know there was a question about, you know, potentially a county that only has a few cases, I think the question was related to only three cases in a particular county. I think that's a great point because some of what Warden Champagne was mentioning is we're going to really look at all of those factor in making a determination so if move into, as we move into phase two, if we identify some locations throughout the state that the environmental factors around the work site, around our institution, are such that in combination with the protocols that the employer has in place, if we determine that we can go back to work release at that site, then we can move into that and we need to gather all the information from all the employers and the technical college partners that are on this call.

With regard to study release, specifically, I think while we will use a lot of the same factors that we talked about work release, often times in education setting, we can isolate our population a little bit more from the general public. Like maybe in a single classroom with exposure of maybe one instructor. We need some of that same information from technical colleges to know how they plan to bring back our students on campus so those are some of the things we're going to look at. We're going to look at, you know, is there availability of hand sanitizing stations and hand washing stations, PPE provided by the college and effective communication plan between the college and DOC to communicate any positive case of a staff member potentially at the college so that we can then make decisions based on that. So really quite honestly, we're going to really look at a phased approach as far as thinking about a case-by-case basis and looking at each individual college and each individual location to make a determination. So to the extent that every college has that information available, that will really help us in making a determination. And I do just want to say as we move in to phase two, I think what, what may help us go back to the study release would be if these colleges have the ability to do some sort of blended or virtual instruction and when I say that, but at the same time, DOC also has to have the capability in the area that your college is located. So to the extent that we can, we want to

be creative, we want to be able to provide opportunities to our population but we also need to be cognizant of the resource limitations that sometimes are present not only with colleges, but with DOC as well.

So I hope that answers some of it. I'm certainly willing to answer more questions later but I really think the takeaway is that we're going to use a lot of those benchmarks that were mentioned as well as looking at other environmental factors that surround the local work site or the local technical college.

Zack Osell: Thanks Ray. Alright, we're going to circle back to Secretary Carr for the next question here. The question reads "As DOC transitions back to normal operations, how will you ensure the safety of persons in your care moving between work sites and the institutions? Can they be quarantined from the rest of the incarcerated population?"

DOC Secretary Carr: Okay. Thank you for that question, Zack. The Department of Correction's number one goal during this unprecedented health crisis has been the health and safety of our staff, the persons in our care, and the public. We've had to recognize the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 virus. Now, information around this outbreak changes frequently and rapidly. Our agency's taking this situation very seriously and we continue to seek appropriate and timely actions to mitigate the potential exposure to others in order to keep those in our care safe. Now, some of the safety measures to mitigate the risk that we've undertaken are we've enhanced all of our sanitation and cleaning protocols as previously described, including transportation vehicles, and providing disinfectant and cleaning supplies for use by staff and the persons in our care, and increase the availability of hand soap for use by persons in our care and we provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers for our institutions to be used in common areas, enhance purchasing efforts for PPE and those are things I've previously mentioned, so I won't elaborate on those mitigation strategy.

Now, we continue many of these safety strategies are in place for the long term until the threat of the virus is gone and as we transition persons in our care back to work release, we also recognize each work site and county is different and thus, the risk is different. This is not a one size fits all model; however, our agency must still operate out of an abundance of caution to ensure safety remains our number one priority. Using a phased approach that I previously discussed, our state and our agency will be relying on environmental benchmarks to return to normal operations and ultimately return those in our care back to work release.

You know, I have some notes on how I was going to respond to somebody's questions. Now, I'm going to go off my notes for just a second. Yesterday, you know, as Ray was previously alluding to, we had over 600 positive cases in the state of Wisconsin and over the past few days, those numbers have I think routinely exceeded 400. We, the trajectory that we're on right now is not very encouraging or promising. But that just shows you the dynamic nature of what we're dealing with. Earlier in June, the cases were running into 200 and I felt that we were really moving in the right direction and then, there would be a lot more opportunities for us to start resuming normal direction. If I solely made the decision then based on what was happening then, we might have resumed something like work release only to discontinue it a couple of weeks later. So, you know, I'm trying to emphasize the point that we need to be responsive to the data. We need to analyze all of the data that we can get our hands on in order to make well-informed decisions that are going to promote the safety of persons in our care and the 10,000 employees that work at DOC. I guess that I'm done answering that question.

Zack Osell: Thank you Secretary. Moving on here, I want to turn to Secretary and CEO Hughes and the question reads “What are the current practices amongst employers related to providing and requiring personal protective equipment for staff?”

WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes: Thank you Zack, and thank you for the question. So as we've entered into this whole process of having to think about COVID-19 in the workplace, I've seen many businesses take up really extensive protocols to assure the safety of their employees and I'm sure many of you have done that. We translated those practices into the guidelines that I mentioned before that are available on the WEDC website, so it's really important to understand that the guidelines that we've produced first came from industry because what we see and, you know, what I know coming from the business side of things is that businesses take safety very, very seriously and whether it's, you know, on a manufacturing floor and making sure that folks have the right protective gear to a construction work site and making sure that there is, you know, safety protocol there.

So, safety is in the workplace's DNA and as we've seen COVID-19 come forward, you know, the practices that I've watched to be developed as it has travelled across the globe with some of our big employers that had operations in China and then, you know, in Italy and France, as this marched across towards Wisconsin, we were able to take advantage of that experience and translate that onto the manufacturing floor where we looked at staggered shifts and making sure that, you know, we were reviewing what was happening on the floor and making sure there was social distancing, to thinking about testing, to thinking about, you know, if someone is not feeling well, if somebody has got a family member who's at home and is, you know, potentially compromised, how do we work with that employee. So these are all the different practices that we've seen adopted by businesses and employees.

You know, right now, employers are still trying to determine this question of PPE and what I'm really seeing is the challenge of, you know, wearing a mask that might then hurt your eyesight, you know, hurt your ability to see things and assure your safety that way. So employers are working within those dynamics to determine the best safety measurements for their employees but, you know, I will tell across the board nobody wants to have an outbreak at their site because that's resulting in shutdowns and having to come in and, you know, your employees get concerns about the conflicts of their safety and so where employers are acting above and beyond and doing the best they can to assure that the employees are social distancing, to require masks, we're seeing much more success in businesses being able to keep their doors open without interruption. So, I would refer people to our guidelines. The other key piece of that is we work with DHS very closely in developing those, so we made sure those practices came in from industry, took them to DHS to assure that they were in compliance with what DHS is thinking with the current best practices and we're updating those as, you know, as we get more information about how the virus spreads and what we can do, so I would keep checking back on that and again, those are at our website, *wedc.org*.

Zack Osell: Alright, thanks, Missy. So we've about 15 minutes left. We're going to transition to a few live questions here. I'm going to send them over to Ray right now. Let's see here and the question reads “During the DOC quarantine, are there any additional work readiness activities occurring or skills training for inmates?”

Ray Woodruff: Yeah, so as was mentioned at the beginning, we obviously stopped a lot of the program, well, we stopped a lot of the external programming at the, you know, early March, mid-March. We are still operating some of our programming throughout facilities with appropriate social distancing and where possible. One of the things that I always talk about with regard to

work readiness is the ability of our persons in our care to actually work in institution-based jobs in various setting, both in the center system and in our regular institutions. There's lots of employers who I'm sure could attest. There's lots of concrete skills building just by being on a job, right, and just by taking feedbacks from supervisors and going through the application process and going through the interview process and learning those skills to work alongside other individuals that you may not, you may or may not get along with. So those types of things are still occurring.

Ah, one of the other thing that as an agency that we constantly do for our population is to try to prepare them for their eventual release to the community, and whether that's in the workplace or not, it's just building daily skills like building daily cognitive skill sets so that they can better interact with the people that they are around on a daily basis; that they can take feedback, that they can take criticism, that they can, you know, appropriately wait in line for the telephone as an example, right. Just some of these basic skills that we're constantly reinforcing through our agency at all levels, our security staff, our social work staff, everybody is always reinforcing these because we know that our population is eventually going to release back to the community. So those are some of the work readiness things I think that we're continuing to do. Ah, there are some limited educational options still, vocational options still happening in some of our institutions, some of our facilities, so we're continuing to the best of our ability, where appropriate and where we can have social distancing, to continue to provide those programming opportunities.

Warden Quala Champagne: And I can speak to what we're doing in WCCS. We are continuing to review the persons in our care for their eligibility for off-sites and work release and we also have continued, with social distancing as Mr. Woodruff talked about, our cognitive-based intervention employment program which is our prerequisite programming before they would go to work release. So we're really trying to continue those efforts to make sure that they are ready when we resume, thank you.

Zack Osell: Okay, thanks Warden Champagne. We've another live question come in and I will direct this one to the Secretary. The question was "Are early release candidates being considered at this time?"

DOC Secretary Carr: Well, the short answer to that question is no, for people that are just specifically work release candidate. I don't know whether the audience is you know really aware of the fact that the Department of Corrections has very few mechanisms that we can utilize to provide those in our care with early release. Most of the avenues for early release to occur ultimately are, first of all, created by the legislature that involves a judge making a decision to modify a persons' sentence so that they can be released early. I have maybe two mechanisms, one called Certain Earned Release where an individual who has been convicted of certain nonviolent offenses and has less than one year on his sentence to serve, I can, you know, release that person to community supervision. And then we also have something called the Earned Release Program that also is legislated, and the way that, that works is a person in court and at the time of sentencing, the judge determines whether that person is going to be eligible for the Earned Release Program. They determine the eligibility and then once the person arrives at DOC, we determine their suitability for the program and, if they are chosen to participate in that program and they successfully complete it, we return that person to the court, and that's why I'm saying even though we've these programs, we return that person to the court and then the court has to sign off on the individual being released from custody and so, ultimately the decision is not the Department's to make. We just make the referral. That's also the case for people that have extraordinary health conditions and there is another thing for

geriatric petitions where folks who are 60-65 or above years old, they can petition to court for a sentence modification as well. But again remember, I keep mentioning the word “court”. There are very few opportunities for DOC to make an independent decision to release people from custody, whether they're on work release or not.

Zack Osell: Thank you Secretary. We have another question that came in asking about any available grants or funding for technical colleges. Maybe we can have a few panelists touch on this. Ray, if you could touch on grant and funding and then maybe Secretary Hughes could talk about other resources that are available for employers?

Ray Woodruff: Sure, so right at this moment, I couldn't say what sort of grants or funding is available to technical colleges during the pandemic. What I could say is obviously, the Wisconsin technical college system is always looking at opportunities to support, especially, training of folks that are incarcerated. Department of Workforce Development often times has resources to support training of individuals who are incarcerated. So, you know, and these are cyclical things obviously and the same with the federal government obviously. We kind of just went out of grant season but that will be coming back up in the springtime, early spring typically. But I think what I would say is there is a lot of focus right now on providing funding to train individuals who are incarcerated to re-enter the work force and as an agency, we are constantly looking at opportunities to access those funds but we are always looking at ways to partner with local technical colleges or other educational partners to ensure that Wisconsin sees those types of funding opportunities.

WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes: And I would add that the I believe the technical college system has been the recipient of some of the CARES Act funding and has been able to receive some support that way, but what I really appreciate about the question is looking at an innovative way that we can shift training right now during this time period so that we can avoid losing ground and, as I mentioned in the report that we just provided to the legislature, we are emphasizing the need to think about getting the skills to the Wisconsin employees so that they can enter the workplace whether you're coming from a position of being, you know, a service worker in a restaurant or you are incarcerated and you're pending release, you know, what can we do to get everyone in Wisconsin into the workforce and so, you know, I will take that back to my team and we will continue talking with the Department of Corrections about how there are ways that WEDC and DWD and the Department of Corrections can work together.

Zack Osell: Thank you Missy. We've time for one more final question here, when I turn to Ray real quickly once I get the slide up. Bear with us here. This is a reminder that we will be answering all of these question at a later date. We will be posting them on our public website. We couldn't get to all of them today but we will post them for everyone to see. So for Ray we have, “What do you see as the long-term effects of suspending work release and programming and how will DOC address those concerns?”

Ray Woodruff: Yeah, that's a good question. I think as has been mentioned several times already you know, our number one priority certainly has been to, you know, protect the health and safety of those in our care as well as staff and as well as the public. And in doing so obviously, we have acted out of abundance of caution right, we've put several measures in place that some may see as restrictive but the whole goal has been to keep people safe and to keep people healthy. Now in doing that, I think we recognize the impact that has had on employers that we, we have partnered with for many years. I think, you know, we recognize that employers are operating sometimes without a full workforce and that certainly impacts productivity and so our goal, my goal certainly as the Employment Program Manager, is to do

everything that we can as an agency to ensure that as we move back into normal operations that we are providing opportunities for our population to build their skill set and then transition to meaningful employment and whether that's pre-release or post release. We still have a lot of opportunities, I think, at our disposal to ensure that we're providing education, training, funding so that we're getting people into the right opportunities and I think that's going to directly benefit employers in the long run.

You know our short-term goals again are to keep people safe and to ensure that we don't see outbreaks with our system. Our long-term goals are obviously to ensure that the, you know, the thousands and thousands of individuals that release from incarceration every year have meaningful opportunities in the community. So you know, I think we recognize that some of the measures are having an adverse impact on employers. Are still having probably an adverse impact on employers and I can just say our goal is to try to get focus back to work through work release as soon as possible within the safety sort of restrictions that we put in place. You know we want to ensure that we aren't, as Secretary Carr mentioned, you know positive cases are going up in the state rather than in the opposite direction, so we want to make sure that we're not introducing our population back into the public where they could contract this virus. So again I just would say we recognize the impact this is having on employers and I can say that I want to do everything in my power to continue to work with employers to meaningfully get people back to work.

Zack Osell: Alright, thank you Ray. I'm going to share my screen here and we're going to wrap up with some general information about next steps and then Secretary Hughes and Secretary Carr will be giving some closing remarks. So on the slide here, we have a link to our public website. This link is for our town hall page that will be information about upcoming town halls which we hope to have in the future. I would also like to mention our public DOC website which is *doc.wi.gov*. There is a lot of good information there, especially about COVID. We've our own COVID banner on home page that you should check out. And then we also encourage everyone to watch their inbox for a survey to assist with feedback for our very first town hall. We appreciate you bearing with us as we try out this new feature. And then one final reminder that we will have access to with recording of today's webinar along with transcripts and then all the answers to your questions posted on that town hall page. The link at the top there that will be coming shortly. So I think without further ado, I will turn it over to Secretary Carr for his closing remarks.

DOC Secretary Kevin Carr: No, I would yield to Secretary Hughes first.

WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes: Well, in the interest of everybody's time, I just want to thank you again for allowing me to join you and particularly to the businesses, you know, this has been a very difficult time and I just appreciate everything that you're doing and, you know, we've heard it again and again today but I'm going to say it one more time, which is we can all get through this faster if we make sure that we're taking the steps that we need to prevent the spread of the virus and that's just got to be our number one goal right now as we see things, being challenged, we got to work forward and work together. Thank you again Secretary Carr for having me.

DOC Secretary Kevin Carr: You're welcome and thank you for joining us and I'm just so happy that you could be with us today. Um, I want to thank you all for attending this event. I'm so impressed by the turnout and the thoughtful questions and discussion that took place this morning. Um, you've left us with a lot to consider and discuss and I truly value your feedback.

As I stated earlier, the situation is fluid and decisions to resume work release will be based on real-time data and other circumstances related to the virus. Providing a specific target date to resume work release is difficult to do. There are a number of virus-related factors beyond our control, such as public willingness to engage in measures to effectively mitigate the virus as well as other factors. It will not be in anyone's best interest to prematurely re-engage work release just to discontinue it in the near future.

I value the relationship and connections we've made with each of you and I hope that we can continue to work together. Each of you provide a valuable service to the persons in our care re-entering from incarceration to our communities, and I recognize that many of you will have to make very difficult decisions after today's call regarding your businesses, and I hope that we can continue an open dialogue that will allow us to work together once again in the future.

Now those were my prepared remarks. I'm going to just take a couple of more seconds with something that's unprepared. I just want to speak from the heart and let you know that there is nothing more important to myself personally, as the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Governor Ever's and our administration, as the ability to help people change their lives for the better. That's one of the reasons that I took this job. And part of that is work release and giving people those opportunities to build a skill set that they can take with them into their communities and provide for themselves and their families and become contributing members to society.

Every one of you that we partner with plays a critical role in making that happen and I appreciate it from the bottom of my heart, as well as the folks that participate in those work release activities. I'm certain from all of the events, and I've met many of you at some of our events around the state, you know, the value that you bring to helping people change their lives is incalculable. So, there is nothing that I would rather see happen that our folks are able to get back into those work sites and provide you with value and for them to gain value themselves. But we have to do in a smart, thoughtful, careful, deliberate way because if one asymptomatic person goes into one of our facilities that has anywhere from 75 to 200 folks in it and they spread that virus in that facility because we can't quarantine and isolate, that's going to be a huge problem and that's what we've been trying to avoid and so far, we've been successful avoiding that. And we've been successful in avoiding that with your help and cooperation and understanding. So I hope that continues as we move forward into the future. I hope that we can, you know, talk together and be flexible and try to meet each other's needs as much as we can under these circumstances and I thank you for everything that you've done for us in the past and hope you will do for us in the future and I wish you all good health and a good day, thank you.

Zack Osell: Thank you Secretary. Just want to echo that and say thank you to all the panelists for being with us today and a big thank you to all our attendees who stuck with us through our very first virtual town hall. I hope you all have a very safe Fourth of July weekend. Thanks everyone.