

Employment Readiness in DOC FAQs

- 1. What initiatives are happening to allow those that are in work release programs during incarceration to remain in that area where they will have a job with benefits upon release? We currently work with Winnebago Correctional Center (WCC) but it is very rare that someone working through that program is from the area and then they are transferred and released back to the area that they got in trouble. Wouldn't it make more sense for a fresh start with a stable job?**

PIOC who are gainfully employed in the local areas have an opportunity through their release planning process to request a change to their county of release. PIOC's traditionally return to their county of conviction based on their release plan but exceptions can be made. There is a Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to encourage an employer to hire targeted groups of job seekers by reducing the employer's federal income tax liability.

- 2. Are there resources available for employers who wish to find out more about work release, or for those who have made the decision to get involved?**

Any community employer interested in the Wisconsin DOC's work release program can contact the facility directly. Contact information for each of our facilities can be found on our public website by navigating to the home page, clicking [adult facilities](#), and then selecting the facility you'd like to contact. A work release coordinator is assigned to every work release center and can provide answers to any questions.

- 3. Due to the workforce shortage around the county, I'm wondering if there is a waiting list for employers to partner with the DOC through work release.**

The Wisconsin DOC is aware of the workforce shortage which has resulted in a larger request for workers. As PIOC become eligible for community job assignments, they are vetted by their skill sets and if they would meet the job expectations of the community employer.

- 4. I've heard about folks getting certifications (welding, CNC, etc.) or apprenticeships while incarcerated. How do employers become connected with these folks?**

It is critical to connect individuals returning to the community to appropriate services as close to (or prior to) release as possible. DOC, along with the Wisconsin Workforce Development Boards and areas, strives to deliver wrap-around (employment-focused) programs that provide pre-release interventions with post-release services. Some of these programs include the recent expansion of DOC job centers, which includes the establishment of 10 institution-based job centers and 1 mobile job center. It is critical to begin the planning process with participants prior to their release from incarceration so that they may be connected with resources and engaged in rapid attachment to post-release services. One way for this to occur is to ensure your company has positions posted on Job Center of Wisconsin. You may also reach out to the nearest facility to discuss the process of becoming a DOC work release employer. Contact information for each of our facilities can be found on our public website ([Doc.wi.gov](#)) by navigating to the home page, clicking [adult facilities](#), and then selecting the facility you'd like to contact. A work release coordinator is assigned to every work release center and can assist in answering questions.

- 5. My organization frequently uses teaming or wrap-around services for our clients. Does DOC consider the efforts of 'Job Development Partner' involvement (co-enrollment) in the conditions for release along with other community-based resources available to stabilize re-entry?**

Subsidized employment programs for those recently released from prison, as well as wrap-around programs (pre-release interventions with post-release services), have been shown to boost employment and earnings while reducing recidivism. One way is wrap-around programs for bridging and integrating best practices from the corrections, reentry and workforce development fields. In DOC, we connect people to appropriate services based on assessed risk and needs. Not every person with a criminal record needs the same services, so matching people to services based on their assessed risk and need as well as their job readiness level begins during their time in a DOC facility. Using those identified risk and need areas, appropriate referrals to correctional programming are made. Prior to release, services delivered in the institution job centers include connecting individuals and making referrals to workforce programs in the community. While in the community, the individual participates in reentry and workforce programs based on assessed risk and needs.

- 6. Is the DOC concerned with the safety aspect of work release programs? I know work release provides a boost to employers, especially in a time of need, but what steps do you take to ensure the community is remaining safe while those in your care enter our communities?**

The DOC conducts a lengthy screening process of PIOC's eligible for community job assignments, which includes criminal history, conduct while incarcerated, available resources, and an observation period at the facility. We are serious about the work release programs and put forth every effort to ensure the employers we partner with and the PIOC's participating in the program have been vetted and are an appropriate fit. The community job site is also vetted to ensure the safety of the PIOC's. Community job sites are visited by the work release staff at least once a week. An annual site assessment is completed to ensure that the working conditions and the surrounding area of the community employer are appropriate for PIOC's. The work release staff may also conduct random inspections of the community job sites to ensure Department of Corrections' expectations are being met.

- 7. Does the Dept of Corrections have team members who are dedicated to connecting job seekers to employment? If yes, are these individuals' part of the area's Integrated Business Services Team in their respective workforce areas?**

The Community Corrections Employment Program (CCEP) has 1 Regional Employment Program Coordinator (EPC) assigned to each of our 8 regions. Each coordinator works closely with employers and other community agencies. They connect clients with employment opportunities and offer resources and preparation such as assistance with resumes, job searches, applications, certifications, trainings and connections for additional employment experience. For clients releasing from the institutions, the coordinators connect with them prior to their release to initiate preparations and connections in the community. They also assess participants to ensure they are provided the assistance needed based on their level of skill and work readiness.

- 8. Are employers able to get into contact with CCEP coordinators to let them know they're in search of employees? What is the process for this?**

Potential Employers are encouraged to contact the Employment Program Coordinator assigned to their region or county to coordinate potential services and employment opportunities for our clients. Please use the chart below for Employment Program Coordinators contact information.

Region	Name	Counties Served	Contact Information
Region 1	Carly Huag	Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Rock	Carly.Haug@wisconsin.gov
Region 2	Richard Durgom	Kenosha, Racine, Walworth	Richard.Durgom@wisconsin.gov
Region 3	Jessica Goodwin	Milwaukee	JessiaM.Goodwin@wisconsin.gov
Region 4	Rodney Owens	Brown, Calumet, Door, Kewaunee, Outagamie, Winnebago	Rodney.Owens@wisconsin.gov
Region 5	Andrew Nicolet	Barron, Burnett, Buffalo, Chippewa Falls, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Washburn	Andrew.Nicolet@wisconsin.gov
Region 6	Jon Hanson	Ashland, Bayfield, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Oneida, Price, Shawano, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas	Jon.Hanson@wisconsin.gov
Region 7	John Schild	Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Washington, Waukesha	JohnB.Schild@wisconsin.gov
Region 8	Sara Hohenstein	Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Green Lake, Juneau, La Crosse, Marquette, Monroe, Portage, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Waushara, Wood	Sara.Hohenstein@wisconsin.gov

9. What percentage of those in your care are working while incarcerated? Assuming it is not 100%, what can be done to raise the number?

The percentages vary by facility and population, as not all PIOC's at minimum custody facilities are in the appropriate security classification to work in the community; or they may have pending programming needs. The most frequent challenge reported from work release site coordinators are the ability to have qualified and licensed PIOC drivers to transport PIOC workers from the facility to their community job sites. This is one area we've identified that needs additional resources to get more folks working.

10. The work release program has helped our company in a big way during the workforce shortage. Once a PIOC is released, how would we go about making our work release employees full-time employees?

Persons released from confinement in a Wisconsin DOC facility have the option to apply to any employer. Only PIOC's housed within Wisconsin DOC facilities are subjected to institutional policies and procedures. The work release program terminates when PIOC's release. Community employers wanting to retain PIOC workers upon their release should communicate with the PIOC their intentions.

11. What kind of work is being done internally to expand work/job opportunities for those in your care?

DAI is currently planning an Integrated Education and Training Program that will be piloted at RYOFC and RCI. The program will be for students who need to earn their HSED. This is different from the rest of our HSED programs because students will also earn a Basic Carpentry Skills Training Certificate and Pre-Apprenticeship status. The program will allow students to complete their high school education while also providing jobs skills to participants. If the program produces positive results, we plan to expand this philosophy of integrated education to other sites in the future.

12. Are employment and training opportunities available to all PIOC regardless of conviction? Do you consider any convictions a "barrier to employment" and assist people with those convictions to navigate employment in the community?

Employment and training are two different categories. Only PIOC in minimum community status are eligible for work release. Training opportunities will depend on where the location of the training occurs. If it's at the institution, PIOC's will be reviewed for appropriateness due to space availability and program need. If it's off-site at another location, PIOC's will have to be in minimum community status to participate.

13. Are business partners able to hire work release participants from more than one institution to gain access to additional workforce and expand talent pipelines?

There are multiple work release sites throughout the state. Centers have a specific area of employers they work with within a 50-minute drive. There are also specific centers that partner to service a single job site: <https://doc.wi.gov/Pages/OffenderInformation/AdultInstitutions/AdultFacilities.aspx>
Persons in our care work in different buildings to maintain separation.

14. Can't we, the employer, provide transportation or assist with transportation for PIOC's?

That can be an option. I encourage you to reach out to the local work release center to ensure expectations are met on both sides. See the DOC public website for your local correctional center: <https://doc.wi.gov/Pages/OffenderInformation/AdultInstitutions/AdultFacilities.aspx>