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Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS)

A voluntary pre- and post-release case management program for the reintegration of mentally ill offenders returning to Wisconsin's communities. The Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) Program is a joint Department of Corrections (DOC)/ Department of Health Services (DHS) Program. It is managed by DOC in the Reentry Unit and by the DHS in the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS), Office of Community Forensics Services.

Each facility will have an OARS Site Coordinator who will receive a monthly potential eligibility list from the Reentry Disabilities Coordinator. The Site Coordinator will disseminate potential participants' information within the facility and provide prioritization of referrals if necessary.

The standard OARS referral takes place 6-9 months prior to release, with enrollment occurring 6-7 months prior to release. Depending on caseload availability, fast-track referrals can occur 4-6 months prior to release and enrollments must allow 90 days prior to release.

To be eligible for the OARS Program, offenders must have:

- MH-2 classification with priority to MH-2A offenders;
- Moderate or high risk COMPAS Recommended Risk Level;
- A release location in one of the OARS-covered counties (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/cf/oarsmap.pdf>);
- A minimum of 6 months community supervision remaining after release;
- No approved Interstate Compact or active and indefinite detainers. The DHS OARS specialists can work with offenders that may have detainers lasting days or weeks.
- Willingness to volunteer;
- Motivation to participate in treatment and programming.

OARS Specialists are the point of contact for questions regarding referrals, enrollments, and the pre-release process. OARS specialists split responsibilities by region as shown on the OARS Coverage Map. One of the specialists manages the Southeastern Region, while the

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other handles the Fox Valley, Northern, Western, and Dane County Regions. The Specialists receive referrals, screen for eligibility and set up enrollment interviews. They will collaborate with facility staff and meet in person or by phone with potential participants to assess motivation and stages of change. If it is determined that the inmate is a good match for the program, the inmate will sign a voluntary consent and will be enrolled. Releases of Information (ROI's) will be obtained for both Non-Health (DOC-1163) and Protected Health Information (DOC-1163A) and will be stored at the facility accordingly.

The OARS Program currently contracts with Lutheran Social Services, Adult Care Consultants, Journey Mental Health, and Wisconsin Community Services to provide OARS Case Managers. All OARS Case Managers complete a DOC background check and are approved to enter facilities. A Case Manager is immediately assigned after enrollment and will meet with the participant, collaborate with the OARS team, compile information, and develop the prerelease assessment and ISP prior to the participant's release. The Case Manager will also arrange for an Initial Core Conference Call (Institution Social Worker/Treatment Specialist, DCC agent, OARS Case Manager and DHS OARS Specialist) and shortly before release, they will also arrange for an OARS team ISP conference call, including the participant, whom may lead the discussion.

Social Worker/Treatment Specialist Responsibilities:

Using the eligibility criteria, evaluate caseload and determine potential participants for the OARS Program. Complete OARS Referral (DOC-2774) and forward to both of the DHS OARS Specialists listed on the form. Once a participant is enrolled in the program, the Social Worker/Treatment Specialist becomes part of the OARS team and will participate in conference calls and provide ongoing information for case managers as they produce the prerelease assessment and Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

Reference/Resources:

- Monthly OARS Eligibility Spreadsheet (sent from the Reentry Unit to the OARS Site Coordinators)
- DHS OARS website (includes brochure, coverage map, procedure manual, annual reports, and a description of program development) <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/oars/index.htm>

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- DOC-2774 – OARS Participant Referral