

# **Wisconsin Department of Corrections: Second group of participants complete innovative opioid addiction treatment pilot program in Northeast Wisconsin**

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APPLETON – Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Jon Litscher joined Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, family and friends, community treatment providers, and other invited guests to recognize the second group of participants to complete DOC's Opioid Addiction Treatment pilot program. The program is part of Governor Scott Walker's push to combat opioid abuse in Wisconsin. In total, 24 participants have completed the program, including 17 participants whose completion is being celebrated today.

Governor Walker convened a Task Force on Opioid Abuse co-chaired by Lt. Governor Kleefisch and Representative Nygren in late 2016 to coordinate efforts to fight the opioid crisis facing Wisconsin. Secretary Litscher also served as a member of the Task Force. The Task Force issued a report in early 2017 outlining current programs and recommending additional actions to further the state's work in

preventing opioid abuse.

Governor Walker's 2015-17 Executive Budget included \$1.6 million in funding over the biennium for DOC to operate an opioid addiction treatment pilot program. The program currently operates in Brown, Calumet, Door, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Outagamie, Waupaca, and Winnebago counties. DOC is partnering with ThedaCare, Acadia Healthcare, Options Treatment Programs, and Holy Family Memorial Medical Center to provide various services as part of the program. As proposed, the 2017 - 2019 Executive Budget will extend the program for another two years.

Offenders releasing from DOC facilities to community supervision or already on community supervision in the counties above receive monthly injections of Vivitrol and intensive AODA treatment during the pilot program. Other states, including Colorado, Missouri, and Florida, are exploring similar programs. Participation in the program is voluntary.

Vivitrol is an opioid antagonist that binds to opioid receptors, preventing opioids from attaching and blocking the effects of opioids. Using Vivitrol can help to decrease the likelihood of relapse while an individual is completing AODA treatment.

Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch said: "Once on community supervision, offenders face a multitude of choices around work, housing, and personal activities. Every day they confront the temptation to return to their prior habits and associations. This innovative treatment program provides more than a prescription for offenders to combat opioid addiction; it creates accountability and ultimately hope for a drug-free life of prosperity and responsibility."

Secretary Litscher said: "I believe strongly that our focus must be on creating opportunities for offenders on community supervision to be successful. This pilot program is one example of how our innovative efforts equip offenders with critical skills to help them to find a job and move beyond their addiction. I will continue to look for opportunities to expand treatment and education efforts to enable offenders to take advantage of the many great opportunities available in Wisconsin."

"Addiction is a health problem and not a moral failing," said Craig Hendel, MD, family physician for ThedaCare Physicians in Appleton and the leader of the program for Outagamie County. "ThedaCare's mission is to improve the health of

the communities we serve and providing medication-assisted treatment to help people suffering from addiction is one way. This program has given us an option to help patients – and their families – who have been struggling with addiction.”