

Gov. Walker: Announces Plan to Provide a Long-Term Solution for Wisconsin's Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Systems

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MADISON – Governor Scott Walker today announced a plan to provide a long-term solution for Wisconsin's juvenile corrections and treatment systems following extensive discussions with state and local officials, the judicial system, and stakeholders. The plan significantly reforms juvenile corrections by moving from a system of one facility to five smaller, regional facilities located across the state and expanding Wisconsin's internationally recognized juvenile treatment program for offenders with mental health challenges at the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) in Madison.

“By moving from one facility to several facilities across the state, and placing a focus on mental health and trauma-informed care, we believe this plan will improve long-term outcomes for both juveniles and our staff working at these facilities,” Governor Walker said. “Republicans and Democrats alike agree this is the way forward to reform juvenile corrections, and I thank state and local elected officials and interested organizations for partnering with us to develop this plan.”

Governor Walker's plan will:

- Reform Wisconsin's juvenile corrections and treatment systems to align with nationally recognized best practices. The plan transforms Wisconsin's juvenile corrections system from one facility to five smaller, regional facilities located across

the state. The plan also expands the state's internationally recognized juvenile treatment program for youth with mental health needs at the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center.

- Continue Wisconsin's focus on enhancing mental health and treatment outcomes in close collaboration with families, courts, and Wisconsin counties.

- Require the DOC to relocate juveniles at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools (LHS/CLS) to five new Type 1 juvenile correctional facilities and one new juvenile mental health facility.

- o The correctional facilities will each consist of 32 to 36 beds with staffing ratios consistent with requirements in the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and will be sited regionally based on population density.

- o At least one correctional facility will be located north of a line between Manitowoc and La Crosse.

- Transition the existing facility at LHS/CLS to a medium-security adult correctional facility with the cooperation of Lincoln County. This will maintain and potentially even expand the number of jobs in Lincoln County. The addition of this new adult facility will likely reduce DOC's utilization of contract beds to house adult male inmates. The new facility will also increase DOC's treatment capacity for inmates with assessed Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) treatment needs.

- Require DOC to make employment opportunities available for LHS/CLS staff at the new adult facility in Lincoln County or one of the new juvenile facilities.

- Require the Department of Health Services (DHS) to expand treatment services at the MJTC, serving more male juveniles as early as fall 2018, and creating a facility at MJTC to treat female juveniles with mental health needs. MJTC is internationally renowned for its treatment program, which was built from the ground up here in Wisconsin. Data shows significantly improved outcomes for juveniles who participated in treatment at MJTC.

- Require DOC and DHS to include the costs of converting and operating these new facilities in their 2019-21 agency budget requests. Funding will be provided in the Governor's 2019-21 Executive Budget to construct, purchase, and/or rehabilitate existing facilities to house juvenile inmates. Funding will also be provided to convert LHS/CLS to a medium security adult correctional facility. Construction costs for the new facilities would total roughly \$80 million, according to preliminary estimates

from the DOC.

- The state will begin working with counties and other stakeholders to immediately site the new facilities and plan any other actions needed to ensure a smooth transition. Any programming adjustments will be administratively implemented by DOC in consultation with other state agencies and relevant stakeholders.

Governor Walker's plan is receiving bipartisan support:

"We applaud Governor Walker's plan to bring together a collaborative team of Wisconsin leaders to create smaller, secure juvenile facilities strategically located in several regions and communities across the state. Under this approach, we will be able to reduce recidivism, improve public safety and better focus our resources on providing evidence-based and trauma-informed interventions for those youth with serious mental health concerns and high-risk behaviors. The Court looks forward to working with Governor Walker and providing substantial support to this effort."

- **First Judicial District Chief Judge Maxine A. White**

"Since 2011, Milwaukee County - under the leadership of County Executive Abele - has spearheaded the transformation of Milwaukee County's approach to youth justice. This work has included increased collaboration among Milwaukee County and state of Wisconsin leadership. The announcement today will help Milwaukee County accelerate the transformation of the youth justice system into one that leads to better public safety outcomes and improved opportunities for youth to lead productive and successful lives. We look forward to working with the Governor on making this transformation a reality in Milwaukee County."

- **Office of Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele**

"Governor Walker's plan supports continued job opportunities in Lincoln County. We look forward to working with the state to ensure an effective transition of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools from a juvenile facility to a medium-security adult facility."

- **Lincoln County Board of Supervisors Chair Robert Lee**

"We are pleased with Governor Walker's decision to continue to support job growth in our districts, by transitioning Lincoln Hills into a medium security adult facility. We look forward to working with him to provide a smooth and successful transition

for everyone involved.”

• **Representative Mary Felzkowski (R - Irma) and Senator Tom Tiffany (R - Hazelhurst)**

“The new policy initiatives unveiled today by the Governor demonstrate exciting progress in reforming Wisconsin’s juvenile corrections system. Today’s announcement also follows on legislation and policies I have introduced during my multiple sessions in the legislature. I am proud to have led the legislature in these efforts. I look forward to working with the Administration, the Department of Corrections, and my colleagues in the legislature on the details of the initiatives and seeing them implemented quickly and effectively. Today Wisconsin is taking its first step in meaningful corrections reform.”

• **Representative Evan Goyke (D - Milwaukee)**

“I am glad that Governor Walker is taking from best practices around the country and moving to a regional model of juvenile corrections. This regional approach has seen success in southeastern Wisconsin through the Racine County ACE program. The regional approach is only a partial solution, however. The renewed emphasis on mental health and drug treatment may be the key to addressing the problem of repeat juvenile offenders. I think that emphasis makes this approach somewhat unique and potentially highly successful.”

• **Senator Van Wanggaard (R - Racine)**

“Governor Walker and Secretary Litscher have taken the necessary time to craft a plan that is in the best interests of the students, families, communities, and the state. Evidence has shown that this model is more effective and will even be more efficient.”

• **Representative Michael Schraa (R - Oshkosh)**

“I believe this change will continue to build on the many reforms put into place by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections over the last two years. Building on our close collaboration with the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators and others, we look forward to working with counties, courts, families, and others to further our focus on providing education and treatment to youth in a safe and secure setting. Ultimately, I believe it is our responsibility to provide hope for youth

in our custody so they can return to the community and lead fulfilling, productive lives.”

- **Wisconsin Department of Corrections Secretary Jon Litscher**

“We are excited about the opportunity to expand our mental health treatment program which serves children who need our help the most. The data clearly shows that this program leads to more promising outcomes for kids and the community, and we applaud Governor Walker for making this investment in the future of our youth.”

- **Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Linda Seemeyer**

“Our interest is in keeping our children safe and reasonably close to their family support network at a reasonable cost.”

- **Wisconsin Counties Association Executive Director Mark O’Connell**