

Dept. of Corrections: Closing a cell hall at Waupun Correctional Institution

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(Madison, WI) - The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) has started the process of closing a cell hall at Waupun Correction Institution (WCI), which is expected to decrease the institution's population approximately 20%.

A majority of the roughly 220 individuals being moved from WCI, a maximum-security institution, are classified as medium-security and will be moved to various medium-security DOC institutions across Wisconsin over the next few months.

"We have been working for more than a year on various ways to better align our institution populations, moving more persons in our care to sites consistent with their security classification. We want more individuals classified as medium security living in medium-security institutions and more individuals classified as minimum security moved into minimum-security institutions." said DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. "Our adult population is at the lowest point it has been in two decades, which gives us the available space to make these moves."

The move also helps alleviate long-standing staff vacancy issues at WCI, the oldest correctional facility in the state with parts of the building dating back to the 1850s. The proposed decrease in WCI's population will lower the number of direct staffed posts by eight per day, and eliminate daily relief positions needed for the cell hall to further reduce staffing needs.

“Because there are several other DOC institutions in Dodge County and the surrounding area, it has been more difficult to find and recruit new, potential employees in that geographic region,” said DOC Division of Adult Institutions Administrator Makda Fessahaye. “We’ve taken many steps to try and address vacancy rates at Waupun. We think closing the cell hall will help address staffing while meeting the alignment goals of our agency.”

“The vacancy issues at WCI are not tied to any one, particular factor and did not happen overnight, so we cannot expect to take one step and fix them all at once,” Sec. Carr added. “But we think it is a step in the right direction.”

Transfers of the 220 people at WCI are already underway and are expected to continue through the end of February, though COVID-19 outbreaks could lead to delays. As they are transferred to medium-security institutions, there will be corresponding transfers of minimum-classified individuals to minimum-security facilities.