

Dept. of Corrections: Celebrates Reentry Week

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(MADISON, Wis.) - Recently updated [data on the Wisconsin Department of Corrections website](#) shows nearly 8,900 people returned to their communities from incarceration in 2020, on par with the agency's 10-year average for releases. That number highlights the work DOC does and must continue doing to prepare people in its care for successful reentry into society.

"In our agency, reentry efforts start the day someone walks through our doors and are integrated into our everyday interactions," said DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. "It's integrated into the way we communicate with the persons in our care, the trainings we complete to help us become better public servants, the research into the areas of programming and treatment, and the connections we make to help people find pro-social support upon return to their communities."

The week of April 26-30 is Reentry Week across the nation, a part of Second Chance Month and a time to celebrate the work done by [DOC's Reentry Unit](#) and employees at DOC as a whole.

The Reentry Unit's ultimate goal is crime reduction, fewer victims, reduced criminal justice costs and, most importantly, safer families and communities. The unit oversees evidence-based programs and treatments that help those in DOC care be successful upon return to their community.

Gov. Tony Evers is demonstrating his commitment to that work and reentry success in his 2021-23 Executive Budget, which includes:

- \$5.3 million in to expand the Opening Avenue to Reentry Success (OARS) program, a joint program with Wisconsin DHS that supports the prison-to-

community transition of inmates living with a serious and persistent mental illness

- \$500,000 to expand the Windows to Work program, which promotes self-sufficiency for individuals returning to the community through the development of constructive skills and the modification of thought processes related to criminal behavior
- \$3.4 million to further expand DOC's Earned Release Program (ERP) and substance use disorder programming. The Governor also wants to expand ERP beyond those with substance use disorders to include educational, vocational, treatment, or other qualifying training programs that are evidence-based to reduce recidivism
- \$4.2 million for educational initiatives in DOC institutions, reducing the waitlist of persons in DOC custody wanting to enroll in the Adult Basic Education program
- \$3.1 million to expand Alternatives to Revocation, adding 50 additional beds in Wisconsin communities
- \$15 million to expand the Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Program, and statutory language changes that expand eligibility and increase the types of programs

"We haven't given folks enough resources or tools to be safe and successful when they re-enter our communities," Gov. Evers said. "If we invest in people, we can lower recidivism rates and a state prison population that has put a financial strain on our state."

Statistics indicate more than 95% of people in DOC custody will someday return to their communities. However, formerly incarcerated individuals often face considerable obstacles to successfully reintegrating into society. Successful reentry efforts help individuals overcome the barriers that incarceration often creates. Wisconsin DOC uses evidence-based research to identify the key barriers related to a person's ability to be successful upon reentry, like securing employment with a living wage, finding housing, remaining sober and maintaining pro-social ties, and getting the support they need to help them overcome any difficulties they will face.

You can [go here](#) to learn more about items related to criminal justice reform in Gov. Evers' 2021-23 Executive Budget.