

Gov. Evers: Treatment Court Professionals, Local Leaders Highlight Need for Treatment Alternatives and Diversion Program Funding in Budget Proposal

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LA CROSSE — Gov. Tony Evers was joined today by La Crosse County Justice Support Services Manager Mandy Bisek, La Crosse County Diversion Coordinator Kim Joki, State Sen. Brad Pfaff (D-La Crosse), and State Rep. Jill Billings (D-La Crosse) at a press conference in La Crosse today to highlight the investments in the governor's Badger Bounceback 2021-23 biennial budget proposal aimed at expanding treatment alternatives and diversion (TAD) programming in the state.

The governor's Badger Bounceback proposal more than doubles the TAD funding level over the biennium by providing an additional \$15 million to greatly expand the program. This builds on his previous 2019-21 state budget, which provided the highest ever funding level for TAD. TAD programming helps reduce recidivism and costs by providing supportive, encouraging resources and treatment designed to accommodate specific needs and sidestep the traditional criminal justice system.

"Our justice system has put a strain on our state—both in terms of costs for corrections and lack of investment in rehabilitation, treatment, and alternatives to incarceration. This is about investing in evidence-based solutions and investing in empathy by providing help to the folks who need it," said Gov. Evers. "In order for our state to bounce back and better, we can't keep throwing taxpayer dollars into a

system that doesn't help our state or our people thrive. We need to start investing in our people—not prisons.”

In addition to more than doubling the state's investment in TAD, Gov. Evers is recommending making statutory language changes related to the TAD program to improve administration, encourage the adoption of programs, expand eligibility, and increase the types of programs. The governor is proposing to reduce the match requirement from 25 percent to 10 percent and specifying that a program funded by a TAD grant does not need to focus solely on alcohol and other drug treatment, but must employ evidence-based practices targeted to the population served by the program. This will enable programs such as veterans courts, mental health courts, and other diversion programs to access TAD funding.

The TAD program currently funds a total of 57 treatment courts and 29 diversion programs in 53 counties and three tribal nations. By analyzing a period from 2014-2018, a [Wisconsin DOJ Bureau of Justice Information and Analysis report](#) estimates that for every dollar in state TAD funding spent on treatment courts the Wisconsin criminal justice system saves \$4.17, and \$8.68 for every dollar in state TAD funding spent on diversion programs.