



# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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## Background on the Critical Vacancy Add-on Pilot Program

### **What is the Critical Vacancy Add-on Pilot Program?**

To address severe vacancy issues in six of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) institutions, a \$5.00/hour add-on for worked hours only is being provided to security employees in classifications identified below at Columbia Correctional Institution (CCI), Dodge Correctional Institution (DCI), Green Bay Correctional Institution (GBCI), Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools (LHS/CLS), Taycheedah Correctional Institution (TCI), and Waupun Correctional Institution (WCI). This add-on replaces any current add-ons security staff may be receiving.

Affected employees for this add-on are in the classifications of Correctional Officer, Correctional Sergeant, Youth Counselor, and Youth Counselor Advanced.

### **What are the effective dates of the Pilot Program?**

The add-on will be effective from April 28, 2019 through June 20, 2020. After that date, the add-on may be continued, extended or modified based on a review of operational needs and effectiveness.

### **Why were these specific institutions and categories of employees chosen?**

Many DOC institutions are facing challenges related to staff vacancies. Making the determination for this pilot was based on multiple factors. The DOC analyzed criteria including security needs, vacancy rates, trends on recruitment and retention, and inmate populations and environmental factors.

### **Are there additional flexibilities that are being offered as part of this decision?**

- Current employees at the identified institutions who have put in their resignation or retirement papers will be offered the opportunity to rescind if they desire provided there has been no discipline or performance issues.
- The provisions in the Filling a Vacancy Policy regarding transfer frequency and probationary period limitations will be temporarily suspended to allow employees in the named classifications at other locations the opportunity to transfer to one of the identified institutions. This flexibility will be allowed until the pay period ending July 6, 2019 at which time the policy limitations will be reinstated.
- Pre-service employees and candidates currently in the hiring process will be offered the opportunity to switch their location preference if they would like to be hired at one of the identified institutions.

## **Why are there so many vacancies at these institutions?**

- To ensure a safe facility, for the individuals we serve and DOC staff, security personnel are often the first line of DOC employees required for overtime to fill unfilled shifts. In 2018, security staff across the DOC averaged over 62,000 hours of overtime per pay period.
- Experiencing long periods of mandatory overtime, employee morale continues to be affected. A significant number of individuals have signaled to their Wardens that they soon plan to retire and/or are actively requesting transfers out of the facilities.
- Historically, the corrections industry experiences high vacancy rates across the nation when the unemployment rate is low. With low unemployment in Wisconsin, DOC institutions are not immune from this phenomenon.
- Finally, the rate of pay for starting security staff in the Wisconsin DOC significantly lags behind our neighboring states.

## **Has the DOC utilized an add-on before?**

From May 29, 2016 – January 7, 2017 a \$0.50/hour add-on was approved for use at CCI, GBCI, WCI and LHS/CLS. In 2018 a \$1.00/hour add-on was approved for use at CCI, DCI, GBCI, WCI and LHS/CLS and is currently in place. The \$1.00 add-on will be replaced by the new \$5.00 add-on and the end date has been extended to June 20, 2020 for the institutions listed in question one.

## **The DOC has seen significant increases in overtime costs over the past biennia. How is providing a wage increase a good use of taxpayer money?**

DOC employees are deeply committed to the tremendous responsibility they have for public safety and the safety of those in our care. Unfortunately, this commitment has meant working consistently long hours in an environment that can be extremely taxing. Until the vacancy rates of our institutions are decreased, overtime will continue to be the reality for many of our employees. Safety cannot be sacrificed.

After analyzing data, trends, and other criteria, the intent of this Pilot Program is to positively impact our recruitment and retention efforts at our most vulnerable institutions and reduce the overall overtime required of our dedicated staff.

## **How is the DOC funding this add-on?**

The DOC conducted an extensive analysis of the fiscal impact of this Pilot Program and therefore, intends to absorb the cost of the add-on for the length of the pilot at the adult facilities. Due to the complexity of the method in which the LHS/CLS budget is calculated, it is expected that the cost to house juveniles will increase slightly to off-set the cost of the add-on for LHS/CLS.

## **Aside from employee wages, how is the DOC attempting to address vacancy and retention issues?**

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The DOC takes the issue of staff vacancies incredibly seriously, and the Department continues to try new and innovative ways to recruit and retain employees. Over the past year alone, the DOC participated in 75 career fairs throughout the state, hosted dozens more career fairs and recruitment “blitzes” at DOC institutions, and leveraged paid and earned media to increase the visibility of corrections careers and attract talent.

Looking to the future, the Secretary’s office is working with leaders in Human Resources to develop and operationalize a three year strategic recruitment plan. The plan includes the use of social media, market research and uniformed branding to be more effective in recruiting employees. Additional details regarding the strategic recruitment plan will be communicated once it is formally approved.

**How is the Governor’s proposed budget addressing the DOC staffing issue?**

The Governor has been vocal in his support for DOC staff. His proposed compensation plan would ensure hardworking DOC men and women around the state can more comfortably support their families financially.

**I am an eligible employee. What is the next step for me to receive this add-on?**

The DOC human resources office will be sending each eligible employee a personalized memo within the upcoming week regarding the add-on. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact your local HR office.

**I am a DOC employee and am not receiving the add-on. When can I expect to see my wages increase?**

Governor Evers and DOC leaders recognize that DOC employees at all levels and classifications are often working long hours and in challenging environments. Secretary Carr and others will continue to advocate for more competitive wages for ALL DOC employees. There is hope the legislature will act upon these compensation requests in the state biennial budget that is currently being negotiated.

**If I have feedback regarding any of the abovementioned, who should I contact?**

If you have questions and/or feedback regarding the add-on and its potential impact to you, please contact your HR representative. If you have questions and/or input regarding how the DOC can further address the challenges and opportunities it faces, please contact your Division Administrator.