REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 22 of 2025
Section 311
Employee Wellness

Sec. 311. (1) Funds appropriated in part 1 for employee wellness programming shall be used for post-traumatic stress outreach, treating mental health issues, peer support programs, and providing mental health programming for all department staff, including former employees.
(2) Not later than December 15, the department shall submit a report on programs the department has established, the level of employee involvement, and expenditures made by the department for employee wellness programming.

The Michigan Department of Corrections is committed to the wellbeing and success of all its staff. Regardless of whether a team-member works behind the gate, in the community, or at central offices, staff wellness is foundational to a safe, secure, and healthy workplace.

The MDOC Wellness Unit is a designated team of MDOC employees who provide professional clinical and wellness services to staff, retirees and eligible family members. The Wellness Unit includes Licensed Mental Health Clinicians and Chaplains to provide guidance, assistance, and support.

Wellness Unit services include critical incident response services, 24/7 helpline, brief consultation and counseling, and training support. Wellness Unit Staff ensure MDOC staff, family, and retirees have 24/7 access to professional mental health and support services.

Wellness Unit Services Employee, Events, and Group Participation

Direct Services are individual contacts for clinical, chaplain or consultation services. Contacts may be initial or follow-up basis. Events are any group services which are facilitated by Wellness Unit staff members. Events will include presentations, training, forums, critical incident services, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefing/defusing, and consultations.

Total direct clinical, training, and consultation services October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025, include:

- Direct Wellness Service contacts: 1,986
- Wellness Service Group Events: 458
- Wellness Service Group Participants: 7,130

Peer Support Program

Peer Supports Persons (PSP) are a network of volunteers at MDOC worksites statewide, who provide confidential support and assistance to employees, family members and retirees such as emotional support, encouragement, help with communication and coping skills, and referrals for professional services. Currently there are 100 trained PSPs statewide, with continued efforts to add additional PSPs to the network to ensure each facility and field office has adequate support resources. Of the 100 PSPs, 9 are veterans and 1 active duty. Additional efforts have been initiated to bring support and resources to those serving in a supervisory role with the addition of a Leadership Peer Support Program. These efforts have been initiated and are ongoing at this time. Contact and regional information for each current PSP volunteer is located on the MDOC Wellness App, and is accessible to MDOC staff, retirees, and families' members.

MDOC Employee Chaplain Program

The MDOC Employee Chaplain Program (ECP) provides spiritual support for MDOC employees, family members and retirees. Chaplains will represent the diverse religious/spiritual traditions within the MDOC. Currently there are 6 active Employee Chaplain volunteers within the ECP, and 7 applications are currently under consideration. The volunteers provide a minimum of twelve hours each month for MDOC worksites and staff. The ECP is led by an Employee Chaplain Specialist who coordinates training and organizes support. Since the introduction the Wellness Unit has been promoting the ECP within the MDOC and to the various religious communities around the State. Currently, four MDOC employees and two community volunteer chaplains from outside the MDOC. The ECP will continue to promote this volunteer opportunity to various religious communities.

Wellness Response Dogs of the MDOC: Handel and Franklin

The use of trained response/therapy dogs offers significant value in various areas of interaction between the MDOC Wellness Unit and staff. Moving into its fifth year as a resource of the Wellness Unit the Response Dog Program utilizes two trained dogs with one primary handler. Handel (8.5 years old) was intensively trained at the Gus Harrison Correctional Facility and Franklin (3.5 years old) was trained at the Alger Correctional Facility. Such animal-assisted services are supported by research.

FY25 year expenses were $6,740.61 covering food/maintenance, health insurance, veterinarian care (e.g., medication, exams), professional grooming, county dog tags/licenses, and other miscellaneous supplies. During FY25, The Response Dog Team traveled 23,971 miles in assigned state vehicle and provided an onsite supportive presence during 138 MDOC events (e.g., wellness rounds, crisis response, meetings, trainings, recruiting events). The continued offering of animal assisted services focused on staff health and well-being by more naturally opening conversations, providing comfort, reducing stress, and increasing morale and productivity.

Employee Wellness Research Project- (REACH)

The Michigan Department of Corrections secured a contract in FY23 with the Memorial University of Newfoundland to conduct a study focusing on measuring the Wellness and well-being of MDOC staff. This is a longitudinal study and will incorporate a multi-dimensional approach. During FY25, the MDOC Wellness Unit actively worked with the Memorial University research team to complete construction the inventory tools, methodology and process design of the study.

The initial phase of the study was launched in September of 2025 and will continue through December of 2025. This initial phase will provide a baseline understanding of staff wellness while also considering self-reports of the impacts of working in a correctional field. Subsequent phases of the research study will be conducted over the course of three base contract years with the potential to expand to ten years. This study will target all employees in both custody and non-custody environments.

These efforts will consider organizational structure, shared vocabulary, and cultural context. This research will seek to shift the focus away from identifying problems to evaluating wellness initiatives and data supported best practices.

MDOC Wellness App

The Wellness App is a no-cost resource available to all MDOC staff members, retirees, and their family members. The Wellness App includes a wellness toolkit addressing 70 behavioral health topics such as fatigue, suicide prevention and alcohol abuse, mental health self-assessments, videos and guides on yoga, mindfulness, nutrition, and more. In addition, the app provides contact information for local therapists who specialize in and have experience working with first responders. The app provides users with direct connections to the MDOC Wellness Unit, Peer Support, and Employee Chaplains along with 24/7 helplines.

During FY25, the Wellness App had 510 new downloads for new users. The features most utilized include sleep hygiene information, trauma resources, the mental wellness video library, and PTSD tools.

Employee Wellness Program expenditures including development of, and improvements to, staff-designated worksite areas.

Wellness Unit funding for staff operational expenses and travel	$1,373,880
Wellness items for staff area improvement	$66,628
Lexipol / Cordico MDOC Wellness App	$154,681
Wellness Response Dog Project – Supplies & Materials	$6,741
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$1,601,930**