

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**  
**Pursuant to P.A. 87 of 2021**  
**Section 312(2)**  
**Employee Wellness**

Sec. 312(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) By September 30, 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 department shall submit the report to the senate and house appropriations subcommittees on corrections, the senate and house committees on oversight, the senate and house fiscal agencies, the legislative corrections ombudsman, and the state budget office.

During FY22, the MDOC Wellness Unit has made great strides in program development and service delivery for the members of the MDOC community. The Unit continued to provide professional and confidential wellness services to employees, retirees, and eligible family members. In addition, the other Wellness Program initiatives including Peer Support and Employee Chaplain Programs, along with a Wellness Response Dog pilot project are now active resources in the MDOC field.

The goals of the MDOC Wellness Program continue to be to facilitate accessible, relevant, and diversified resource wellness services for the MDOC employees, family members and retirees.

The Wellness Unit is comprised of six FTE employees. Four employees are licensed mental health clinicians, with one clinician serving as the Program Manager. Three clinicians serve as Wellness Coordinators, with the third Coordinator onboarded during FY21. These Coordinators are regionally located in the Northern (Upper Peninsula), Central and Southern areas of Michigan. They oversee Wellness Services in their respective areas, including oversight and clinical consultation for the Peer Support Persons. All clinicians serve as clinical support for employees. A Departmental Specialist serves as the designated Chaplain Coordinator and is developing the Employee Chaplain Program (ECP) to provide faith-based volunteer services for departmental members. A Departmental Technician is responsible for developing and implementing evaluation, tracking and assessment methods for MDOC Wellness Programs and services.

The following are specific departmental-wide formal wellness initiatives and status for the FY22.

**Wellness Unit Services and employee participation**

The following information is related to Services provided from September 1, 2021 - August 31, 2022.

*(Direct Services are individual contacts for clinical, chaplain or consultation services. Events are group services which are facilitated by Wellness Unit staff members. Wellness Service Events are requested group presentations, trainings, critical incident Wellness Services and forums.)*

Total direct Wellness Service contacts:	5153
Number of Wellness Service Group Events:	431
Total Wellness Service Group Participants:	10,216

Total Individual contacts serviced by the Wellness Unit staff increased by 23% since FY21. The primary reason for individual contacts was job-related (34%). This increased by 8% since FY21.

Wellness Service Group Events were provided either using safe distancing onsite or by virtual means. During the FY22, the Wellness Unit completed 431 Events with 10,216 participants. This was an increase of 97% in participants and 66% events since FY21.

### **Wellness Program Survey and Follow-up Research**

The MDOC Wellness Unit has been proud to serve its MDOC community through confidential services. As we continue to develop the Wellness Program, we want to ensure we are meeting the wellness needs to the best of our ability. We are committed to continuous investment in the wellness of the MDOC. A MDOC Wellness Program Survey was emailed through a GovDelivery message on April 14, 2022, and available to receive responses until Thursday, April 28, 2022. The survey received a total of 759 responses. 50% of respondents have over sixteen years of experience with MDOC, 32% six to fifteen years of experience and 19% under five years.

The survey results received are as follows:

- 98% of respondents are aware or somewhat aware of the MDOC Wellness Unit and services offered.
- 55% of respondents have utilized or recommended one or more MDOC Wellness Program services.
- 73% of respondents are satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the MDOC Wellness Services
- 79% of respondents agree the MDOC Wellness Program has created more awareness for the importance of health and wellness in the correctional field.

Survey participation was anonymous and protected. The Survey will be offered annually and serve as a tool in future Wellness Program development and improvements to employee wellness-based programming.

To further the research and understanding of correctional wellness within the MDOC, the department has considered the practical applications of further research as a compliment to the 2019 Desert Waters study. For the upcoming FY23, the MDOC will be consulting with independent entities, including Michigan-based universities and colleges. The focus is to secure proposals for a multi-dimensional and longitudinal study(ies) to assess the prevalence of significant mental health issues, the compounded psychological and physiological impacts related to the pandemic and the outcomes of wellness-based interventions, including the MDOC Wellness Program initiatives and programming.

### **Peer Support Program (PSP)**

An original initiative for the MDOC Wellness Program was to develop the Peer Support Program with volunteers who would be “boots on the ground” support for employees at worksites. PSP volunteers provide confidential support and assistance to employees, family members and retirees in times of stress and crisis. Services provided by the PSPs may include emotional support, encouragement, help with communication and coping skills, and referrals for professional services. The Peer Support Program has been intentionally developed to respect and embrace the diversity of roles, experiences, and backgrounds within MDOC. The PSPs will mindfully be considered to represent and respect these many diversities.

During FY22 the MDOC Wellness Unit provided Peer Support training to 73 MDOC staff. This training is required as specialized core skill development for PSP volunteers. Active members of the PSP serve as part of a wellness resource network for the MDOC. PSP services are free, voluntary, and confidential.

The Peer Support volunteers are trained to use active listening skills, help clarify issues, explore options, assist with the problem -solving process. When appropriate the PSP volunteer will refer an individual to a Wellness Unit clinician, mental health professional, treatment center, or other professional support resource.

Peer Support volunteers are available at their respective worksites for staff members who may be struggling. MDOC staff members, family and retirees also have the option to reach out to PSP volunteers for confidential support and assistance during their own time away from the worksite. The Program and its volunteers respect the diversity of

roles, experience, and backgrounds within the MDOC. Peer Support Programming continues to develop as staff provide ongoing peer referrals to the MDOC Wellness Unit.

### **MDOC Employee Chaplain Program**

The Employee Chaplain Program will consist of both qualified employees (serving in this role on a voluntary basis) and various religious leaders and clergy volunteers. Since its introduction to the MDOC field in March 2022, the Wellness Unit has been active in introducing the opportunity to serve within the various religious communities. The Program will be diverse in scope of various religious traditions and spiritual beliefs represented within the MDOC. The MDOC Employee Chaplain volunteers will be specially trained to help address the unique stressors within corrections in a natural and confidential manner.

Since the introduction in FY22 the Unit has received multiple applications and is in process of vetting and interviewing. Following document verification, background checks, and interview being completed, training for the ECP volunteers will be scheduled during FY23. ECP Chaplains will be assigned to their respective locations within regional area to provide spiritual support to MDOC employees, family members and retirees.

### **MDOC Wellness Advisory Board**

The Wellness Program Advisory Board is an active working group of the MDOC stakeholders who bring their unique knowledge, insight, and perspective to assist in guidance and recommendations for the Wellness Program. Representation for the Wellness Advisory Board will consist of a representative from each of the following stakeholders:

- MDOC Wellness Program Manager
- MDOC Human Resources
- MDOC-affiliated unions
- MDOC employees (4) selected annually
- Employee Service Program (ESP)
- MDOC DEI Officer

Representatives meet collectively monthly and in subgroups throughout each month. Focused areas include: 1) policy development and incorporating employee wellness, 2) Strategic communications for building morale, promoting engagement and delivering recognition, 3) worksite wellness and environmental enhancements, and 4) post-traumatic recovery and wellness promotion.

During FY22, the Board served an active role in developing the Worksite Wellness initiative for the MDOC. The focus of this initiative was to create a staff-centered process of improving present work environments and staff-designated areas such as breakrooms, decompression or wellness areas and bathrooms.

### **MDOC Wellness Mobile App**

During FY22, the MDOC procured the services of Lexipol/ Cordico to develop a customized mobile wellness app for the MDOC members. The initial roll out for the Wellness App was in November 2021.

This corrections-specific app is available for MDOC employees, family members and retirees to download on their personal devices. Usage of the app is confidential, for personal use and independent from MDOC software. The app includes features as a one-touch Crisis Line connectivity, specific wellness information related to mental health, exercise and nutrition, Therapist-finder, wellness tools for topics such as family support, grief, and loss. MDOC resources including the Wellness Unit, Peer Support Persons and the Employee Chaplain contact information is accessible. Also included are confidential self-assessment tools for areas such as alcohol abuse, depression, sleep, and more.

## **Pilot Project – MDOC Wellness Response Dogs**

Trained response/therapy dogs offer significant value across three areas: effecting a sense of change, promoting employee engagement, and offering more effective crisis response. These values transpire through the ability to answer questions throughout the natural course of conversations occurring during wellness rounds, critical incident responses, trainings, meetings, events, etc. (PAWS with a Cause). Research and background information is available supporting these topics.

After two years of research in collaboration with PAWS to determine the scope of a program incorporating response/therapy dogs, in Winter 2021 the MDOC Wellness Unit proposed development of an MDOC Wellness Response Dog program to serve as an animal-assisted intervention and additional resource of the Wellness Unit and as part of the Peer Support Program (as supported by PAWS). The foundational principle is that Wellness Response Dogs will help to promote the wellness and well-being of MDOC employees through the natural connection to trained response/therapy dogs.

As the initial pilot project comes to a close, the MDOC Wellness Unit will determine the need for any further feedback and begin compilation of data (qualitative and quantitative). After initial findings are compiled and reported, the Wellness Unit will explore options for continuation of the pilot project and work with PAWS to explore and determine ways to achieve overall support for expansion of the MDOC Wellness Response Dog program including incorporating additional dogs and primary/secondary handlers.

## **Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and Families (SMVF)**

To continue efforts to reduce suicide among Correction Officers, Field Agents, and Staff with military background, the MDOC remains connected with the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency (MVAA) and the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF). Focused efforts toward reduction of suicide among SMVF include increasing access to support, enhancing SMVF peer-to-peer practices, and implementing best practices. Best practices have incorporated methods such as: Asking the Question – “Have you or a member of your household ever served in the military?”; making connections for SMVF through places of employment and respective communities; and providing avenues for lethal means safety. With the Governor’s Challenge now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, the MDOC has participated in and remains committed to this effort through the work of various staff members, such as those of the MDOC Wellness Unit.

Throughout the year the MDOC Wellness Unit remained involved in continuing efforts to offer supportive services to SMVF, including participation in the EPIC team created by the MDOC to address wellness among SMVF. As part of this focused MDOC effort, the group provided several recommendations. The following were among these recommendations: creating a Veterans program for women who have served in the military; re-establishing the annual Veteran’s Award; establishing a Veteran Spotlight in the Corrections Connection; establishing a Military Advisory Committee (MAC) to carry on the work focused on recognizing and supporting SMVF and working collaboratively with the MDOC Wellness Unit to provide effective support for SMVF. The MDOC has recently hired a Veteran Liaison Specialist to help military staff link to additional support services.

The MAC continues to establish itself within the MDOC and connect with the MDOC Wellness Unit. As part of the continuing process, Wellness Unit Clinical Coordinators and members of the Peer Support Program are building awareness and focusing on efforts to incorporate the best practices: asking the question “Have you served?”; making connections with SMVF resources; and recognizing needs for lethal means safety. Additional efforts focus on creating a Peer Support sub-group with SMVF experience as a means for supporting their military and veteran peers.

## **New Women in Corrections Workshops**

In March 2021 a proposal was submitted and approved for a New Women in Corrections 2-hour workshop specifically for female recruits to attend on a volunteer basis. The objective was to provide a workshop for females within the Academy at the time to discuss their personal challenges, provide them with healthy coping skills and encourage support among female recruits. For FY/2021, the MDOC Academy held 3 successful New Women in corrections workshops with a Wellness Unit Coordinators facilitating with approximately 78 female recruits and Academy staff voluntarily attending. This included the MDOC non-custody Academy new female employees which was reinstated September of 2021. Many of these non-custody staff have worksites within a correctional facility or perhaps FOA (Field Operations Administration).

The workshops provide opportunity for open discussion to talk about special considerations unique to women in the Corrections culture. Wellness Unit Coordinators and Academy staff are present to offer professional insights and experiences, providing new employees insight to recognize and address challenges at the Academy level and upon entering their assigned facilities. Bringing these women together enhanced understanding, relationship, and support for one another contributing to sustainability. Post-workshop surveys completed by attendees show 94% stated that the workshop was not only helpful, but that if offered the opportunity, they would attend another one, reflecting the time provided them with personal empowerment towards a healthier mindset in Corrections. Many have asked to return to the workshop noting the positive outcomes and importance of investing in women within the MDOC.

Future enhancements of the workshop will include the MDOC Academy hosting future New Women in Corrections workshops at new CFA Academy in Whitmore Lake and developing a New Women in Corrections workshop for the Upper Peninsula unique to their Academy.