

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 166 of 2022
Section 302
Retention Strategies

Sec. 302. From the funds appropriated in part 1, the department shall submit a report by March 1 on the department's staff retention strategies. The report must include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) The department's strategies on how to improve employee engagement, how to improve employee wellness, and how to offer additional training and professional development for employees, including metrics the department is using to measure success of employee wellness programming.
- (b) Mechanisms by which the department receives employee feedback in areas under subdivision (a) and how the department considers suggestions made by employees.
- (c) Steps the department has taken, and future plans and goals the department has for retention and improving employee wellness.

	INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES
Employee Engagement	<p>The Effective Process Improvement and Communication (EPIC) Section was established to engage and empower employees at all levels of the department to drive continuous improvement of departmental processes and outcomes, to assist the department with being more efficient and effective while improving best practices throughout the department and enhancing employee engagement.</p> <p>Team composition includes employees from cross sections of the department with various levels of expertise, classifications, and knowledge. EPIC teams are tasked with identifying areas needing improvement and recommending solutions and best practices that will result in a higher quality work product, better outcomes, and greater efficiencies throughout the department.</p> <p>Many of the EPIC teams are assigned to work on Strategic Plan objectives. They work diligently throughout the year to research, formulate recommendations and implement those that are approved by MDOC Administration. Other teams are assigned to work on other issues within the department that are in need of review and process improvement.</p> <p>There is one EPIC team that is a year-round team that focuses specifically on employee engagement. The Employee Engagement EPIC Team plans engagement activities throughout the year to include Employee Recreation Day events in the lower peninsula and the upper peninsula. This team also works closely with the Office of Continuous Improvement in promoting the SOM Employee Engagement Survey.</p> <p>The EPIC Section manages a 501(c)(7) to assist with employee engagement in the Department. The Employee Engagement Organization hosts the employee recreation days along with other events designed to bring employees together. The organization also oversees a departmental on-line store from which employees can purchase clothing and other items with the MDOC logo. Funds raised from the on-line store are used to support additional engagement</p>

	<p>activities. Funds are also donated to MDOC family members who have experienced personal tragedies.</p> <p>The EPIC Section also manages a 501(c)(7) to oversee the Department's Shooting Team. The purpose is to encourage employee engagement at competitive shooting competitions throughout the year. This organization oversees worksite Shooting Team Chapters and qualifies staff to participate in the annual MSP Police Pistol Shoot and the NRA National Police Shooting Championships. Worksite chapters are encouraged to hold shooting competitions in addition to those previously mentioned.</p> <p>The EPIC Section creates an annual Dogs of the MDOC calendar which showcases many of the beautiful dogs that are participating in facility MDOC dog training programs (Animal Assisted Therapy; Assistance Dogs for Achieving Independence; Blue Star Service Dogs; Dawgz Adapt; Dog Rescue Adoption Program; The Inmate Greyhound Experience; Leader Dogs for the Blind; PAWSitive Changes; Paws with a Cause; and Refurbished Pets of Southern Michigan). These calendars are sold to MDOC employees. Each purchase helps support the Employee Engagement Fund.</p> <p>An EPIC mailbox was established for employees to submit their ideas and recommendations. Staff can also contact any member of the EPIC Section to discuss ideas and recommendations. Any idea/recommendation that is submitted to the mailbox is vetted by the appropriate administration and a response is provided to the staff member who submitted the request.</p> <p>Information on employee engagement events is shared with all employees in the Department's newsletter which is provided to every employee. In addition, flyers and postings are provided to worksites to advertise engagement opportunities, and email notifications are sent to all staff as well. EPIC liaisons have been identified at each worksite or region, and these individuals assist in the dissemination of materials and in the coordination of worksite specific events.</p>
Employee Wellness	<p>The MDOC Wellness Program modified focus areas, initiatives and service delivery means to incorporate the significant and complex stressors since the pandemic began. Throughout the pandemic, the MDOC Wellness Program continued to provide professional and confidential wellness services to employees, retirees, and eligible family members.</p> <p>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. A 24/7 helpline through the Wellness Unit is available for employees who may require immediate assistance. Services provided by the Wellness Unit or Wellness Program volunteers (i.e., Peer Support, Employee Chaplains) are confidential. Wellness services include direct services of individual contacts for clinical, Peer Support, Employee Chaplain support, and mental health consultation services. Other group Wellness services may be requested for wellness-based trainings, presentations or forums, grief support sessions or critical incident debriefings (TISM - Traumatic Incident Stress Management) following critical incidents.</p> <p>The Wellness Unit is currently comprised of seven FTE employees. Five employees are licensed mental health</p>

clinicians, with one clinician serving as the Program Manager. Four clinicians serve as Wellness Coordinators. These Coordinators are regionally located throughout Michigan. They oversee Wellness Services in their respective areas, including oversight and clinical consultation for the Peer Support Persons. The 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 responsible for developing and implementing evaluation, tracking and assessment methods for MDOC Wellness Programs and services.

Peer Support Program

An original initiative for the MDOC Wellness Program was to develop “boots on the ground” support for employees at worksites. Peer Support Persons (PSPs) provide confidential support and assistance to employees 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. By end of FY22 66 Peer Support volunteers are serving as additional employee wellness resources. The Program has been intentionally developed to respect and embrace the diversity of roles, experiences, and backgrounds within MDOC. Peer Supporters have already made a significant impact in the Wellness Unit’s efforts through timely response to staff after a variety of incidents.

Chaplain Program

The purpose of the Employee Chaplain Program (ECP) to serve employees with appropriate emotional and spiritual support. The (ECP) is available to all eligible MDOC employees, retirees, and family members when personal or professional stressors negatively impact their lives. Prior to launching the ECP, a Religious Survey was sent to the field beginning October 25, 2021 to help assure a diverse Chaplain Corp by providing insight into the religious traditions represented within the MDOC. The Wellness Unit introduced the ECP to the field March 2022. By end of year 2022 we had 10 – 12 candidates in the application process.

MDOC Wellness Mobile App

The MDOC has a customized mobile wellness app for MDOC members utilizing the services of Lexipol/Cordico. This corrections-specific app is available for MDOC employees, family members and retirees to download on their personal devices. Usage of the app will be confidential, for personal use and independent from MDOC software. The app will include such 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 will be accessible. Also included will be confidential self-assessment tools for areas such as alcohol abuse, depression, and sleep.

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 initiatives, budget, and policy areas. 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
- MDOC Veteran Liaison

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. The Wellness Unit assist worksites with identifying ways to improve environmental work areas for staff members. Engagement with staff members to help improve work environments is a key factor to this initiative.

MDOC Wellness Dog Program

Handel, the MDOC Wellness Response Dog was introduced to the field. Handel was very well received in the field and highly requested by facilities and field offices across the State. Purposeful Placement training on “Key Performance Indicators” was obtained through Paws with a Cause (PAWS) for HANDEL and his handler. Throughout the initial Pilot Project, employee interest was explored, and feedback gathered to evaluate efficacy of the program. The Wellness Response Dog Team provided 112 onsite support events (e.g., Wellness Rounds, Crisis Response, Meetings, Recruiting Events).

Traumatic Incident Stress Management (TISM/CISM)

TISM/CISM – With the pandemic moving toward recovery, the Wellness Unit began the work of building it’s dedicated Traumatic Incident Stress Management/Critical Incident Stress Management Team. These members receive the ICISF CISM Training through our ESP Statewide TISM Coordinator. TISM services are available after potentially traumatic events at facilities and field offices. By year end 2022, the MDOC Wellness Unit has trained and/or offered refresher to 56 MDOC TISM/CISM members.

Population-Specific Wellness Initiatives

In efforts to reduce suicide among Correction Officers, Agents, and Staff with military background, the MDOC connected with the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency (MVAA) and the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF). The focused efforts in reduction of suicide among SMVF include increased access to support, enhancing SMVF peer-to-peer practices, and implementing best practices such as: Asking the Question – "Have you or a member of your household ever served in the military?"; making connections for SMVF through their places of employment, and providing lethal means safety. MDOC has participated in this effort.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

The role of the department's DEI Officer's is to review and establish policies, develop training, promote activities within the department that help create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environment for all employees. This leads to employees feeling comfortable enough, both physically and mentally, to bring their whole authentic selves to work each day. Having a truly inclusive work environment creates a sense of belonging in the organization and leads to employees feeling loyalty to the organization. They also feel valued, respected, and part of the organization; which ultimately leads to employee retention. The MDOC is developing a DEI Strategic Plan that will include an objective regarding employee retention.

Military Veteran Liaison

The department has hired a Military Veteran Liaison to support to our military and veteran employees by connecting them to resources and implementing new veteran-focused initiatives to include specialized orientation training for all new employees who have served in the Armed Forces. The department has expanded its portfolio with the US Army's Partnership for Your Success (PaYS) program to include seven new positions located within all CFA facilities on the Army's website that guarantees job interviews for military personnel that meet the minimum requirements for each respective position. In FY22 the Military Advisory Committee (MAC) was created and is composed of veterans and reserve members from across all sectors within the department. The MAC works to give the Department advice on policy and topics related to the support of military and veteran employees, spouses, and families.

New Women in Corrections

Volunteer forums for new corrections officer recruits are offered during the four academy schools. The forum included virtual and in-person attendance. The forum was a guided discussion amongst current academy staff and the new female recruits to offer the opportunity to address specialized considerations women in Corrections may face. A Wellness Unit clinician facilitated each Forum offering experienced clinical emotional support and guidance. Conversations provide opportunity from recruits to ask questions regarding the challenges of being a woman in a CFA profession. The program will be expanded to FOA and non-custody new employee schools.

Employee Retention

ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYEES:

The MDOC continues to introduce training related to trauma and an overall change in their cognitive approach when

dealing with high stress situations involving offenders or staff. The de-escalation training raised the awareness of staff responders to critical incidents and assist during crisis interventions to de-escalate using verbal techniques in lieu of force whenever possible. The Leading with Awareness training is designed to target the mindset of the responder to inject de-escalation techniques in every aspect of the intervention or response. The Emotional Intelligence program educates staff about their capacity to be aware of, control, and express their emotions, and to better manage their interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. staff will gain a better understanding of the signs and symptoms of trauma and the potential pathways to recovery. It will help reduce triggers and re-traumatization and will allow staff to better communicate and understand victims of trauma both at work and in their personal life.

Motivational Interviewing communications training program is being delivered to all staff to help staff better communicate with offenders and each other.

The department also offers other specialized field specific training to our staff. Employees participate in conferences and trainings in their specialized areas. The department has memberships with organizations (healthcare and field operations) that provide specialized online training programs and may also provide continuing professional education credits for their licenses. Healthcare sends staff to a specialized nursing training program where they get hands on experience. In other areas special guests are invited to speak at conferences and meetings.

The department is continuing to offer multiple leadership programs aimed at providing increased employee engagement with Supervisors and Managers. Communication is a key component to building trust and improving the overall environment for all stakeholders. FIT Leader programming will continue throughout the year for FY-23 and New Sergeant, Supervisor and Manager training will continue to be presented statewide. These programs are aimed at providing leadership skills, communication training, and an environment that fosters positive relationships and a positive environment for staff. The combination of these training efforts provide staff with common sense, easy to learn tools to help them stay balanced in their life and career.

RETENTION:

The department values our employees and works hard to retain our staff. In the current economy it has become very challenging to recruit, train, and retain staff. The department continues to educate people on what it is like to work in corrections, removing the stigma that is associated with prison and how the department can provide a great career opportunity and benefit package.

The department continues to recruit and fill vacancies. In FY 22, the department recruited and hired 457 non-custody staff who completed Non-Custody New Employee Training and 100 new FOA agents. The department also hired 859 new corrections officers, graduating 732 of those officers from Officer Recruit Training. This effort helped reduce departmental vacancies and improve staff morale, while reducing mandatory overtime. The department is using information collected from program surveys in Non-Custody New Employee Training and Officer Recruit Training participants to measure the effectiveness of each program as it pertains to job performance and to improve these programs in areas identified by the survey results.

The department has worked with the Office of State Employer and collective bargaining units to look at ways and put in place Letters of Understanding (LOU) to increase the various aspects of the certain positions to make them more attractive such as special pay, bonuses etc. For example, in FY 2022 the following LOU's were in place with various collective bargaining units.

The department college credit waiver program allows new Corrections Officers the ability to be hired without meeting the college credit requirements at the time of hire. Military basic training now meets the requirement of a vocational training certificate satisfying the educational requirement. The Labor and Economic Opportunity budget received \$5M to establish the Corrections Officer Grant Program. The program is administered by Michigan Community College Association and provides financial support to Corrections Officers employed by the Michigan Department of Corrections who are participating in the 24 month College Credit Waiver program to obtain the required 15 credit hour education requirement.

The MDOC's wellness efforts show their overall commitment to employee wellbeing. Members of the Wellness Unit, along with Peer Support volunteers, participate in MDOC regional and facility recruitment events to create awareness of correctional wellness information and available resources for potential candidates and family members.

The department is using an electronic exit interview process in addition to receiving a monthly departure report to track departures and the reason for the staff leaving to get a better understanding of why people leave the department. On a monthly basis departing employees that consent to being contacted receive a call from the department leadership to glean additional information about their experiences with the department and to identify and correct any areas in need of improvement. The department also reviews the comments and results from the SOM Employee Engagement Survey to identify areas in need of improvement.

The department's new Strategic Plan will implement focus groups at work sites across the state with a cross-section of all levels of employees to hear feedback and discuss issues. The department will also establish a formalized staff mentoring program. Mentoring is a great tool for fostering overall career development for both the employee and the mentor that can last a professional lifetime.