

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 119 of 2023
Section 303
Retention Strategies

Sec. 303. 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 EPIC Section, a division within the Office of Executive Affairs is 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>EPIC teams are assigned to work on several Strategic Plan objectives. EPIC teams are also assigned to evaluate other areas of the department that process improvement can be beneficial.</p> <p>The EPIC Section established a 501(c)(7) to assist with employee engagement in the Department. A new EPIC team is established annually to focus specifically on employee engagement. This team plans engagement activities throughout the year to include Employee Recreation Day events in both the lower peninsula and in the upper peninsula, various group activities, celebrations for Veteran’s Week, and recognition events for staff who work in the department.</p> <p>The EPIC Section also established a 501(c)(7) to oversee the Department’s Shooting Team. The purpose of this organization 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 when possible, the NRA National Police Shooting Championships.</p> <p>An EPIC mailbox is available for staff to submit process improvement ideas and best practices. 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>To keep all employees informed, information is shared via the Department's newsletter and through weekly updates from the Public Information Office. In addition, emails, flyers, and postings are provided to worksites to advertise engagement opportunities.</p>
<p>Employee Wellness</p>	<p>Progressive utilization of current Wellness Programs and Wellness services supports the continued development and expansion of employee centered wellness. Current Programs include Peer Support, Employee Chaplain, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Wellness Response Dog(s). The Wellness Unit is moving to train additional Peer Support and Employee Chaplain volunteers as extended resources for the department. These volunteers will also be offered the opportunity to be trained in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), CISM services are a recognized set of wellness-based interventions which are offered as support to staff following a critical incident. The specially trained Wellness staff and volunteers will be available regionally including every CFA worksite/complex.</p> <p>The Wellness Response Dog Program has two wellness dogs, Handel and Franklin. They continue to serve as a recognized resource of the Wellness Unit. Handel and Franklin, along with their handler Sandi Powell, provide animal assisted interventions to employees through the MDOC (BOA, CFA, FOA) and at times in the community (e.g., recruiting events, Special Olympics).</p> <p>A \$2.5 million one-time funding appropriation has been designated to improve staff areas in correctional facilities across the state, including break areas, outdoor areas, bathrooms, fitness rooms, and decompression rooms. Additional wellness funding has created opportunity to improve other MDOC staff workspaces across the state to include welcome changes of new break tables and chairs; new appliances including coffee makers, refrigerators, and ice makers; desk risers; outdoor pavilions and picnic tables; and more.</p> <p>An updated version of the Wellness App provides enhanced accessibility, information, and options for the MDOC community. The app is a no-cost resource available to all MDOC staff members, retirees, and their family members. The App includes a wellness toolkit addressing 60 behavioral health topics such as fatigue, suicide prevention and alcohol abuse, mental health self-assessments, videos and guides on yoga, mindfulness, nutrition, and more.</p> <p>A Wellness Unit mailbox and a 24/7 Helpline is available for all staff to access or provide feedback and suggest improvement areas for the Wellness Program. Responses are time-sensitive and Wellness Unit staff. Suggestions are vetted through the Wellness Unit and the Wellness Advisory Board.</p> <p>The MDOC has secured a contract with the Memorial University of Newfoundland to conduct a 3-year study on staff wellness and well-being of MDOC staff members. The current study will generate a comprehensive assessment of the wellness of staff working for the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC). Three objectives will guide this assessment: (1) measure the wellness and well-being of all MDOC custodial and non-custodial MDOC staff (2) identify wellness determinants; and (3) explore the contexts explaining such determinants. In terms of outcomes, Y1 will offer a baseline understanding of the state of wellness in the MDOC, while the two follow-up waves will provide an overview of how exposure to correctional work, including any wellness interventions, affects staff wellness.</p> <p>The Wellness Unit will be collaborating with Memorial University of Newfoundland ongoing during this longitudinal study project to improve wellness services and guide policy recommendations.</p>

Employee Retention

The department is dedicated to offering specialized training programs for staff geared toward employee engagement including personal and professional wellness for fiscal year 2024. We are launching our first ever Mental Health First Aid training program in 2024. This program was developed by the Council of Mental Wellbeing and is supported by our partners in the National Institute of Corrections. This 8-hour program will certify all our correctional professionals having direct contact with offenders. In 2023 all staff attended a specialized MDOC training program titled Staff Suicide Prevention in collaboration with our Training Division and our Wellness Section. The focus of this training is to provide evidence-based, easy to understand ways to identify signs of symptoms of stress and methods to find help. The program embraces actual MDOC staff who have shared their story of successfully navigating their desperate situation, sought help, and recovered from severe depression.

These programs build off our Hyper-Vigilance and Overfamiliarity training creating a space where we focus on employee's wellness, building resilience and provide practical tools for staff to better help themselves navigate stress and connect to wellness resources. These programs include the key principles of Emotional Intelligence educating staff about their capacity to be aware of, control, and express their emotions, and to better manage their interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. This effort supports employees as the department continues to work towards becoming a fully trauma informed department educating staff on the signs and symptoms of trauma and the potential pathways to recovery. Reducing triggers and re-traumatization will allow staff to better communicate and understand victims of trauma both at work and in their personal life.

The department is continuing to offer multiple leadership programs aimed at providing increased employee engagement with Wardens, Supervisors and Managers. The MDOC has launched a new program to train and mentor all new wardens in all aspects of their job duties and leadership. We continue to offer the FIT Leader programming for FY-24 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 showcasing how the department can provide a great career opportunity and benefit package.

DEI: Part of the DEI Officer's role 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 feeling 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.

The department continues to recruit and fill vacancies. In FY 23, the department recruited and hired over 400 non-custody staff who completed Non-Custody New Employee Training. The department also hired 861 new corrections officers, graduating 758 of those officers from Officer Recruit Training. This effort helped reduce departmental vacancies and improve staff morale, while working towards the reduction of 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 establish Letters of Understanding (LOU) to enhance aspects of certain positions to make them more attractive such as special pay, bonuses etc. For example, in FY 2023 the following LOU's were in place with various collective bargaining units.

MCO

MCO TA LOU Recruitment Retention Pilot

MCO TA LOU Holiday OT Pilot Extended

MCO Holiday Overtime Pilot - Extended

MCO Security Unit Recruitment and Retention Pilot

UAW

UAW RN Graduate Bonus Art 43 A4 RN Reclassification Bonus

UAW OSE MDOC LOU Article 15-B RN OT

UAW OSE LOU RN Pay Scale

UAW OSE LOU CQMHP Pay Scale

The MDOC Field Operations Administration (FOA) values our new agents and makes every effort to support their growth and development throughout their career. Starting in 2023, the FOA partnered with the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Partners to run a pilot program. This program focuses on building and supporting all aspects of coaching throughout FOA. Changing from a referee model, we instill an atmosphere of encouragement and coaching. This program is designed for both offenders and agents and will target all the key components of proactive retention of our staff. The pilot program is rolling out in region 8 and is expected to expand next year. This is an exciting opportunity to have a positive impact on our entire FOA culture. Another key step to retaining our Parole and Probation Agents is our MDOC Non-Custody New Employee Training Academy that provides 40 hours of foundational training.

The departments Military Veteran Liaison provides 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.

The department has moved forward with its strategic goal of establishing a mentoring program for all staff. A new EPIC team has begun designing a program that will provide additional guidance and support to staff in their professional development and will also provide them with mentoring opportunities for future development and growth.

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. Many times, the departure is not a result of them not liking their job but rather that they are retiring or have found a better opportunity.