

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 121 of 2024
Section 312
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) 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, trainings, forums, critical incident services, CISM services and consultations.

Total direct clinical, training, and consultation services October 1, 2023- September 30, 2024, include:

- Direct Wellness Service contacts: 3,611
- Wellness Service Group Events: 396
- Wellness Service Group Participants: 4,626

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 69 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 69 PSPs, 10 are veterans and 1 active duty. Two training classes are scheduled to be held in November and December. Upon completion of these classes, the number of active peer supports

will increase to 120 statewide, adding 5 more veteran military Peer Support volunteers. 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 8 active Employee Chaplain volunteers within the ECP. The volunteers provide a minimum of twelve hours each month to 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 four 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 within the MDOC offer a significant value in promoting a sense of change, encouraging employee engagement, and contributing to a more effective crisis response. Heading into its fourth year as a resource of the MDOC Wellness Unit, two dogs now serve in this capacity: **Handel** (7.5 years old) was initially trained at the Gus Harrison Correctional Facility, and **Franklin** (2.5 years old) who transitioned from the Delta Animal Shelter to the Alger Correctional Facility prior to joining the Wellness Unit. Such animal-assisted intervention is supported by research.

Throughout FY24, The Wellness Response Dog Team traveled 21,720 miles in assigned state vehicle and provided an onsite presence at 103 MDOC support events (e.g., wellness rounds, crisis response, meetings, trainings, recruiting events). The continued offering of this intervention has served as a resource focused on staff well-being by opening conversations, reducing stress, providing comfort, and increasing productivity and morale.

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 FY24, the MDOC Wellness Unit has actively worked with the Memorial University research team to construct the inventory tools, methodology and process design of the study.

The initial phase of this study will provide a baseline 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 up to ten years. This study will target all employees in both custody and non-custody environments. Initial introduction phase of the study to the MDOC field is scheduled for early 2025.

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 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 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 and connects users with the MDOC Wellness Unit, Peer Support, and Employee Chaplains. During FY24, the Wellness App had 3556 new downloads for new users. The primary utilization tabs were the MDOC support resources including the Wellness Unit, Peer Support Finder and Get Help Now.

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

Wellness Unit funding for staff operational expenses and travel	\$1,276,747
Wellness Board approved items for staff area improvement	\$522,994
Lexipol / Cordico MDOC Wellness App	\$154,681
Wellness Response Dog Project – Supplies & Materials	\$5,219
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$1,959,641