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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #299

Windows to Work Expansion (Corrections -- Adult Institutions)

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 136, #11]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Corrections currently operates a "Windows to Work" job services program for inmates, pre- and post-release from prison. Current funding for the program is \$1,892,200 GPR annually.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Individuals with criminal records often face challenges to obtaining employment post-incarceration. Windows to Work (WTW) is a job services pre- and post-prison release program administered in partnership with the Department of Workforce Development's Workforce Development Boards (WDB). The program is designed to address criminogenic needs of medium- to high-risk offenders that may lead to recidivism, such as employment, education, anti-social cognition, anti-social personality, and anti-social companions. The goal of WTW is to "promote self-sufficiency for individuals returning to the community through the development of constructive skills and the modification of thought processes related to criminal behavior."

2. While still incarcerated, inmates participate in programing including cognitive intervention, general work skills and expectations, financial literacy, community resources, job seeking, applications, and resumes. The institutional portion of the program begins approximately three to 12 months prior to release from incarceration (timelines may differ at jail sites). Following a participant's release from incarceration, the WTW coach will work with the participant's Division of Community Corrections agent to assist participants with job search and job retention activities. Participants may receive additional assistance, as needed, in accessing available community resources to address needs for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and other services, depending on the WDB area's funding. Post-release programing is provided for approximately 12 months after release, but

may be extended with written approval by Correction's Reentry Employment Coordinator, if a WTW coach feels that a participant needs services beyond 12 months.

3. In 2021-22, the Windows to Work program had 502 newly-enrolled participants (admitted to the program at a participating institution during their incarceration), 180 transfer participants (enrolled at participating institutions, but transferred to a new coach for the post-release portion of the program), and 359 continuing participants.

4. Workforce Development has 11 regional Workforce Development Boards responsible for labor training and development activities in specific geographical areas of the state. Corrections contracts with each of these boards to provide a pre- and post-release WTW program at adult correctional institutions or county jail facilities in the particular workforce development area.

5. Facilities where WTW programs operate and the WDB with which Corrections contracts include the following:

<u>Facility/Jail</u>	<u>Workforce Development Board Area(s)</u>
Chippewa Valley Correctional Treatment Facility	West Central
Columbia Correctional Institution	South Central
Fox Lake Correctional Institution	South Central
Green Bay Correctional Institution	Bay Area
Jackson Correctional Institution	Western
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution	Bay Area
Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility	Milwaukee
New Lisbon Correctional Institution	Western
Oakhill Correctional Institution	South Central
Oshkosh Correctional Institution	Fox Valley
Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution	Southwest
Racine Correctional Institution	Milwaukee, Southeast
Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility	Southeast
Redgranite Correctional Institution	Fox Valley
Stanley Correctional Institution	West Central
Taycheedah Correctional Institution	Bay Area
Waupun Correctional Institution	Fox Valley
Wisconsin Secure Program Facility	Southwest
Adams County Jail	North Central
Rock County Jail	Southwest
Washington County Jail	Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington
Waukesha County Huber Facility (Jail)	Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington
Wood County Jail	North Central

6. Under 2021 Act 58 (the 2021-23 biennial budget) the WTW base budget (\$1,692,200) was increased by \$200,000 GPR annually. The Department used this funding to expand the WTW program to three additional maximum-security sites (Columbia Correctional, Waupun Correctional, and the Wisconsin Secure Program Facility), in addition to expanding to every minimum- and medium-security facility in Wisconsin with a similar funding increase in the prior, 2019-21 biennial budget (2019 Act 9). Funding for the WTW program is allocated as supplies and services under the

Becky Young community corrections appropriation and supports costs such as coach positions, offender services, administrative costs, and training materials and supplies.

7. As indicated previously, WTW had 502 newly-enrolled participants in 2021-22. New enrollments in 2021-22 were higher than new enrollments in both 2020-21 and 2019-20 (339 and 433 respectively), and are on-pace with pre-pandemic enrollments. Enrollments are also increasing due to the additional sites added over the past few years.

8. In addition, in 2021-22, the Department's Reentry Unit made administrative and curriculum program improvements, including: (a) allowing transfers between WDB areas to increase enrollments and better serve individuals releasing to the community; (b) implementing a continuous quality improvement plan, which involves observing staff, providing feedback, and developing relevant skills; (c) providing for WTW staff to conduct training to current Division of Community Corrections staff and new agents during Agent Basic Training to raise program awareness; and (d) collecting more detailed outcome data on WTW participants.

9. During the 2021-22 fiscal year, 66.2% of participants obtained an episode of employment at an average starting hourly rate of \$16.74 per hour. An episode of employment includes temporary placements, on-site job training, work experience, seasonal employment, and full- and part-time employment. The top occupation fields for those employed included production, construction, and food preparation and serving. The Department does not currently collect comparison data for non-WTW participants from the same time period (2021-22), but did collect comparison data on employment rates over a three-year period from 2016-17 through 2019-20 (the most recent data available):

<u>One-Year Employment Rates</u>		<u>Two-Year Employment Rates</u>		<u>Three-Year Employment Rates</u>	
<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>
83.0%	65.3%	87.9%	76.0%	93.2%	81.5%

10. In addition to employment data, tracking by Corrections over the same three-year time period of the re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration rates of WTW participants compared to a control group of non-WTW participants with similar characteristics resulted in the following findings:

<u>One-Year Re-Arrest</u>		<u>Two-Year Re-Arrest</u>		<u>Three-Year Re-Arrest</u>	
<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>
29.3%	27.0%	46.1%	41.8%	55.5%	44.9%

<u>One-Year Re-Conviction</u>		<u>Two-Year Re-Conviction</u>		<u>Three-Year Re-Conviction</u>	
<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>
16.9%	15.8%	26.0%	22.8%	34.1%	27.2%

<u>One-Year Re-Incarceration</u>		<u>Two-Year Re-Incarceration</u>		<u>Three-Year Re-Incarceration</u>	
<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>	<u>WTW</u>	<u>Control Group</u>
12.3%	18.3%	24.9%	28.5%	33.5%	33.7%

11. The departmental data suggests that while WTW participants had a significantly higher rate of employment compared to the control group in all three time periods, WTW participants generally had a higher re-arrest and re-conviction rate (although a slightly lower re-incarceration rate) than the control group. However, it should be noted that WTW participants are those who have been assessed as medium- to high-risk on a validated risk and needs assessment, and therefore may be inherently more likely to recidivate than the control group.

12. Further, while WTW is primarily a job services program, an additional goal is to reduce criminogenic needs that lead to recidivism. According to the Department, the cognitive intervention portion of the WTW curriculum (which helps participants recognize their risky thinking and feelings while building problem-solving and coping skills) was part of the 2021-22 continuous quality improvement plan, discussed previously; the Department is continuing to evaluate program structure to improve participant outcomes.

13. While WTW does not maintain a waiting list, approximately 1,852 individuals were identified as program-eligible between June, 2022, and August, 2022. An individual is eligible if he or she is: (a) currently incarcerated at a participating institution or county jail; (b) has an established probation and parole agent in one of the contracted WDB areas; (c) is releasing from incarceration between 90 days and 12 months; (d) has at least one year remaining on community supervision after release and maintains a residence in Wisconsin; (e) has no medical issues that would prevent the individual from working; (f) has no detainers that would prevent participation post-release; and (g) has a medium- to high-risk on a validated risk assessment. In addition to these criteria, individuals are further screened prior to enrollment as coaches and institutional staff look to identify the appropriateness of placement in the program (for example, if a WTW-eligible individual has other programming needs that take priority), mental health status of the individual, history of Social Security and Disability Insurance benefits to determine if the individual is able to work, and motivation level of the individual to participate (given that the program is voluntary). While 1,852 individuals are program-eligible, some may choose not to participate, or be screened out for other reasons.

14. Under current program operations, funding is provided to local WDBs by contract to support released participants in the area and inmate participants in areas with prison facilities. It is up to WDBs to determine how the funding they receive should be allocated. Many WDBs supplement the program utilizing additional federal and/or state funding (the exact amounts are not tracked by Corrections and may vary from year to year).

15. Corrections negotiates contracts with each of the WDBs to determine the exact allocation of funds provided under the bill. According to the Department, increased funding is intended to expand the pre-release portion of the program to increase capacity at eight medium- and minimum-security institutions (Fox Lake Correctional, Jackson Correctional, Milwaukee Secure

Detention Facility, New Lisbon Correctional, Oregon Correctional, Oshkosh Correctional, Racine Correctional, and the Racine Youthful Offender Facility) to allow an additional 12 cohorts of WTW programming, with an approximate increase of 96 participants being served per year (eight individuals per cohort). In a 2022 survey, these institutions were identified by the Department's Reentry Unit as having the need and ability to expand access to WTW services.

16. The bill does not specify how the funding would be allocated between WDBs. Rather, as under the current program, Corrections would negotiate contracts with the WDBs to provide the services Corrections determines may be appropriate for WTW participants in a particular WDB area. This process requires the WDBs to outline the dollar amount and funding allocations necessary for its anticipated participant population. These assessments are sent to the Reentry WTW Coordinator, and are used by Corrections to determine the final allocation of funds. While the proposal would only expand the institutional, pre-release portion of the WTW program, funding still goes through the WDBs that have the institutions in their jurisdiction, as opposed to going directly to the institutions. The WDBs contractually oversee all components of the WTW program, and often supervise the same individuals pre-release and post-release, so it is beneficial for WDB staff to build rapport and begin working with inmates during the pre-release programming phase.

17. Given the program's successful post-release job placements, the Committee may wish to provide \$250,000 GPR annually to expand the program to allow for an additional 96 participants per year. Under this alternative, WTW would expand existing pre-release programming at eight institutions. The Department, through contracts with the WDBs serving the geographic areas in which the institutions are located, would have discretion to allocate funding based on estimated offender need in the WDB area served. [Alternative 1]

18. While the Department indicates that WTW participation is increasing, as of May, 2023, institutional populations remain lower than the average daily population in every fiscal year since 2001-02 (with the exception of 2020-21 and 2021-22, when the public health emergency impacted populations). As a result, the Committee could instead provide \$200,000 GPR annually to expand the program on a smaller scale. This is the same amount provided in the 2021-23 biennial budget. Under this alternative, the Department would have to negotiate contract agreements and expand the program with a smaller budget available for distribution. [Alternative 2]

19. On the other hand, the Department projects enrollments for 2023-24 and 2024-25 to surpass pre-public health emergency fiscal years with additional funding for expansion, as program eligibility currently exceeds availability. If an additional \$300,000 GPR annually was provided, the Department could allocate increased monies to WDBs to assist with increased populations and expand programming, and/or use additional funding to hire additional personnel, pay for travel costs, or provide client service funds to address barriers to employment (such as the purchase of work supplies, clothing, bus passes, state identification cards, driver's license cards, tuition, rent subsidies, or on-the-job training). [Alternative 3]

20. The Department currently has approximately \$1.9 million GPR in base resources budgeted for WTW, after receiving WTW funding increases in each of the past three biennial budgets. If the Committee does not take any action, base resources would be available to continue the existing program. [Alternative 4]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$250,000 GPR annually to expand the Department's Windows to Work program to include an additional 96 participants per year.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$500,000

2. Provide \$200,000 GPR annually to expand the Department's Windows to Work program.

ALT 2	Change to Base
GPR	\$400,000

3. Provide \$300,000 GPR annually to expand the Department's Windows to Work program.

ALT 3	Change to Base
GPR	\$600,000

4. Take no action.

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