



STATE OF WISCONSIN

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DATE: January 28, 2022

TO: Senator Robert Cowles and
Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

FROM: Joe Chrisman
State Auditor 

SUBJECT: Proposed Audit of Community Corrections—Background Information

At your request, we have gathered some background information that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may find helpful in considering an audit of community corrections, which is administered by the Department of Corrections.

The Division of Community Corrections is responsible for supervising individuals placed by the courts on probation, or who are on parole or extended supervision in the community. The Division also operates the electronic monitoring center, a law enforcement contact line, and the sex offender registry program. The Division's approximately 1,900 employees, including 1,200 probation and parole agents who supervise individuals in the community, are organized into eight regions that are each led by a regional chief.

The Division assigns each individual placed in the community to a level of supervision that is based on the individual's risk of criminal activity and the individual's need for programming. The level of supervision helps to determine how frequently an individual is required to meet face-to-face with an agent as well as how frequently home visits are conducted. As a condition of placement in the community, an individual is also assigned rules that must be followed while under supervision.

Alleged violations of the conditions of placement are investigated and may result in progressive sanctions up to and including revocation, which involves a hearing before an administrative law judge. Statutes require the Department to create a system of short-term sanctions to address violations of placement. To determine the type of sanction to employ, the Division evaluates both the risk presented by an individual and the severity of the violation. If revoked, an individual may be returned to court for sentencing or transported to a correctional institution.

In 2019, the Department began a project to assess the approaches it uses to respond to violations and consider revocation. The project's stated goals are to reduce revocations, reduce the number of prison admissions related to revocations, reduce the total number of individuals in jail on a hold, increase community-based alternatives to revocations, and use data to drive decisions and allocate resources.

Data on the Department's website indicate that the number of weekly holds declined from 3,061 on March 2, 2020, to 1,935 on January 24, 2022; the number of weekly short-term sanctions declined from 619 on March 2, 2020, to 451 on January 24, 2022; and the number of revocations declined from 829 in March 2020 to 444 in November 2021, which was the most-recent period on the Department's website for this type of data.

Questions have been raised about community corrections, including the Department's use of holds, short-term sanctions, other responses to violations, and revocations. Therefore, an audit of community corrections could:

- analyze trends in the number of holds, short-term sanctions and other responses to violations, and revocations over time for both criminal and non-criminal activities;
- review the Department's process for assessing an individual's risk and need when determining the level of supervision in the community;
- assess the extent to which individuals in need of programming received the programming identified by the Department;
- analyze the types of violations that occurred and evaluate the Department's methodology for assessing an individual's risk and the severity of a violation when determining the response to the violation;
- review the results to date of the Department's violation response project;
- analyze any variations in short-term sanctions, other responses to violations, and revocations among regions; and
- compare Wisconsin's system of short-term sanctions, other responses to violations, and revocations to those used in other states.

I hope you find this information helpful. Please contact me with any questions.

JC/DS/ms

cc:	Senator Dale Kooyenga	Representative John Macco
	Senator Howard Marklein	Representative Mark Born
	Senator Melissa Agard	Representative Dianne Hesselbein
	Senator Tim Carpenter	Representative Francesca Hong

Kevin Carr, Secretary
Department of Corrections