



## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 2

TO: MEMBERS OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE ON REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND REMOVING IMPEDIMENTS TO EX-OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT

FROM: Lauren Weber, Legislative Intern

RE: Becky Young Community Corrections Recidivism Reduction Plan

DATE: July 6, 2016

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is responsible for offering community services intended to reduce recidivism through the Becky Young Community Corrections appropriation. This Memo is intended to help the Study Committee on Reducing Recidivism and Removing Impediments to Ex-Offender Employment carry out its directive to consider successful, evidence-based strategies for reducing recidivism and whether to expand existing strategies or implement new strategies. This Memo reviews the statutory scheme for the Becky Young programs and highlights the largest programs and those that emphasize workforce readiness. Attached to this Memo is DOC's *Becky Young Community Corrections Recidivism Reduction Fiscal Year 2015 Report*.

### **OVERVIEW OF BECKY YOUNG COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS**

The Legislature created the Becky Young Community Corrections appropriation and provided statutory guidance in the 2009-11 Biennial Budget Act, 2009 Wisconsin Act 28. [ss. 20.410 (1) (ds) and 301.068, Stats.] The Legislature enacted the Becky Young provisions based on recommendations from the Legislative Council's Justice Reinvestment Initiative Oversight (JRIO) Committee. The JRIO Committee provided recommendations after working with the Council of State Governments' Justice Center to review criminal trends in Wisconsin and develop policy options for correctional practices.

The statute requires DOC to provide services to people on probation, and people who will soon be or are currently on parole or extended supervision following a felony conviction, to reduce recidivism. Specifically, DOC is required to provide the following community services:

- Alcohol and other drug treatment, including residential treatment, outpatient treatment, and aftercare.
- Group programming focused on changing the thought patterns and attitudes that lead to committing crimes.
- Day reporting centers.
- Evidence-based treatment and services.

Additionally, DOC's community services must:

- Target offenders who are at a medium or high risk<sup>1</sup> for revocation or recidivism.
- Provide services designed to expand offenders' opportunities to complete their terms of probation, parole, or extended supervision by mitigating offender attributes and factors likely to lead to criminal behavior.
- Use a system of intermediate sanctions on offenders for violations.

DOC must also:

- Monitor offenders receiving community services to evaluate how effective the programs are at reducing arrests, convictions, and imprisonments.
- Train probation, extended supervision, and parole agents in intervention techniques to reduce offenders' risks of reoffending.

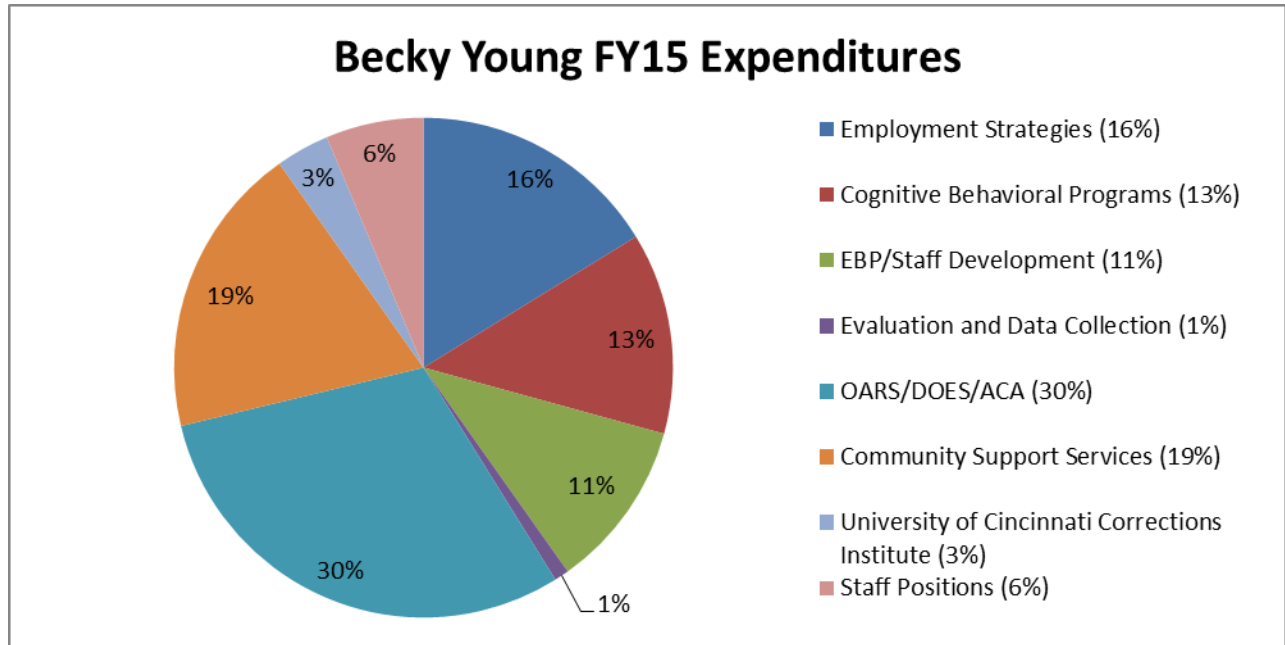
Finally, the statute requires DOC to provide an annual report on the Becky Young programs to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Director of State Courts. The report must discuss the scope of DOC's community services; provide data on arrests, convictions, and prison sentences imposed for program participants; and describe progress towards reducing recidivism. As mentioned above, DOC's *Becky Young Community Corrections Recidivism Reduction Fiscal Year 2015 Report* is attached to this Memo.

For both fiscal year (FY) 2015-16 and 2016-17, the Legislature appropriated \$10,138,400 of general purpose revenue to Becky Young community services. In FY15, DOC spent \$10,012,206.31 on Becky Young programming. The figure below<sup>2</sup> provides a detailed breakdown of DOC's Becky Young expenditures for the past fiscal year.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 301.068 (3) (a), Stats., requires DOC to measure risk-level using "valid, reliable, and objective risk assessment instruments." DOC uses COMPAS software for assessing risk. COMPAS provides risk scores for general and violent recidivism, criminogenic need profiles that pinpoint factors contributing to criminal behavior, and a case management module.

<sup>2</sup> DOC provided the detailed breakdown of expenditures for this Memo.



Category	Amount	Percent of Total Expenditures
Employment Strategies	\$ 1,624,374.70	16%
Cognitive Behavioral Programs	\$ 1,306,161.64	13%
EBP/Staff Development	\$ 1,092,769.32	11%
Evaluation and Data Collection	\$ 94,855.00	1%
OARS/DOES/ACA	\$ 3,015,269.39	30%
Community Support Services	\$ 1,897,104.71	19%
University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute	\$ 347,000.00	3%
Staff Positions	\$ 634,671.55	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 10,012,206.31</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **BECKY YOUNG PROGRAMS**

DOC operates a wide variety of programs with Becky Young funds, with the overarching goal of reducing recidivism. A summary of the largest programs and those that emphasize workforce readiness is included below.

#### **Windows to Work (W2W)**

W2W helps returning individuals become self-sufficient and obtain full-time employment by developing constructive skills and modifying thought processes connected to criminal behavior. Between three and nine months before they are released from incarceration, participating inmates receive individual release and case planning, along with classroom training in core curriculum areas, including:

- Applications and resumes.
- Cognitive intervention.
- Financial literacy.
- General work skills and expectations.

For about a year after participants are released, W2W continues helping them find and retain jobs. Programming varies by region, but might include: (a) help accessing community resources; (b) help overcoming barriers to employment, such as lack of transportation; or (c) training on employability skills, such as interview techniques. According to DOC, during fiscal year 2015, 471 participants obtained 661 episodes of employment,<sup>3</sup> with participants earning an average of \$10.11/hour at their hire date. Nearly 70% of the employment episodes were for full-time work.<sup>4</sup>

### **Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Training**

CNC Training prepares returning individuals for work in the CNC machining and operating fields. The program is offered at the following locations through Department of Workforce Development Fast Forward grants:

- Gateway Technical College (GTC). GTC offers an accelerated 13-credit CNC technical education certificate in a mobile lab.
- Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC). MATC offers a 14-credit CNC technical education certificate for inmates at certain facilities or offenders under supervision in Milwaukee.

### **Cognitive Behavioral Programs (CBP)**

CBP teaches offenders (both offenders in an institution and offenders under community supervision) to use specific strategies to change the thought patterns and beliefs that lead to criminal behavior, and also teaches reasoning, problem solving, and social skills. According to DOC, of 2,203 CBP participants in FY15, 85.7% of institutionalized participants completed the program, while 55.6% of participants under supervision either completed the program or continued CBP services in FY16.

### **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**

Eligibility requirements for BadgerCare Plus changed after the ACA went into effect, giving many releasing offenders access to health coverage. DOC and the Department of Health

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<sup>3</sup> DOC defines “episodes of employment” as any instances of employment, including seasonal employment and temporary placements.

<sup>4</sup> DOC defines full-time work as 35+ hours per week.

Services (DHS) developed a pre-release process for inmates to apply for BadgerCare Plus, which includes benefits specialists to advocate for offenders with:

- Developmental disabilities.
- Mental illnesses.
- Reading difficulties.
- Limited English proficiency.

During FY15, 1,500 offenders applied for BadgerCare Plus before release, according to DOC. Benefits specialists achieved a 97% success rate on applications.

### **Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS)**

OARS provides services to the most seriously mentally ill inmates releasing to 36 Wisconsin counties. DOC works with DHS to provide services starting six months before participants are released, and continuing for up to two years after release. Services include:

- Access to community resources for transportation, budgeting, and finances.
- Access to quality psychiatric care and medication.
- Access to structured employment and education activities.

According to DOC, the three-year recidivism rate for the first eligible group of participants was 27.08%, while the three-year rate for the similar group of non-participants was over 50%.

### **Disabled Offender Economic Security (DOES)**

DOC contracts with Legal Action of Wisconsin to provide attorney benefits specialists who represent disabled offenders seeking public benefits. Attorneys start working with inmates six months before their release dates, preparing applications for public benefits and submitting them on an offender's behalf. Representation continues until offenders attain benefits or exhaust appeals. DOC reported that DOES attorneys achieved a 64.2% success rate in applying for Social Security benefits.

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Attachment