

Milwaukee's High-Rise Jail/Prison Hybrid

A 1997 RULING OF THE Wisconsin Supreme Court found that, because of crowded conditions in the Milwaukee County Jail, the Sheriff of Milwaukee County was no longer required to hold state prisoners who were in violation of their community supervision. Milwaukee County had sought that ruling through litigation because of severe crowding caused largely by the state's policy of placing probation and parole violators in the county jail. The decision left the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) with a dilemma, however. The only leverage it had over offenders in the community was the threat of reincarceration, but the jail was no longer available to hold these offenders.

DOC staff know that public safety is best served when a non-compliant offender can be held in secure detention for a period of time. During that time, the alleged violation can be investigated, and the offender can be placed into programming, including treatment. Following their placement in secure detention, some probation or parole violators may return to the community, while others may be revoked and sent to the Wisconsin prison system.

In May 1997, the Governor's capitol budget recommendations were presented to the state legislature. They included a \$137,000,000 request to construct 1,600 additional beds. Among the approved facilities was a medium security facility for probation and parole in southeastern Wisconsin, which would include a 210-bed alcohol or drug abuse (AODA) program.

The new community corrections holding facility will be the first of its kind in Wisconsin. Neither a prison nor a jail, the new facility is a hybrid with a mixed population. It will be located in downtown Milwaukee and have a design capacity of 1,048 beds, including:

- 750 beds for a general population of felony probation and parole offenders who have violated their conditions of supervision. A typical housing unit will resemble a standard podular design and contain a maximum of 100 offenders.
- 38 beds for offender transportation. The DOC has agreed that all offenders sentenced by Milwaukee county courts to the state prison system will initially be housed at

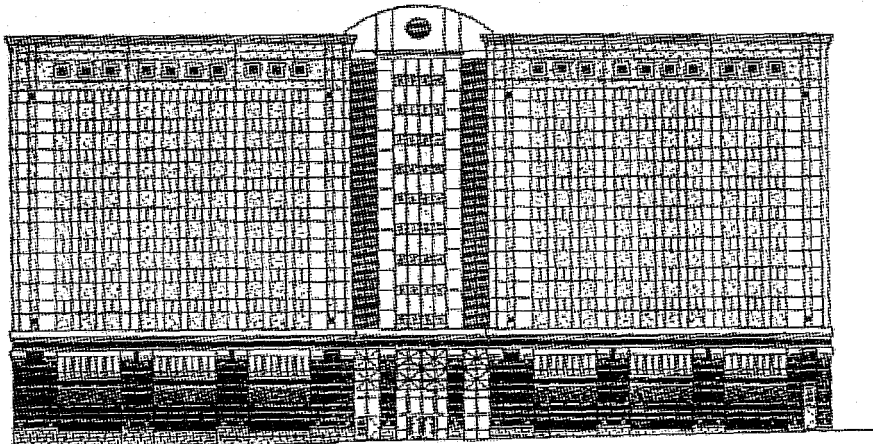
the facility. The DOC will provide transportation from the facility to the Reception Center at Dodge Correctional Institution. The transportation and holding area will also be the entry point into the building for probation and parole officers who bring in offenders.

- 210 AODA beds. Judges can sentence directly into this program or can order participation as a condition of probation. The treatment unit will include four dorms with approximately 24 to 28 beds. Each housing unit will contain centralized shower and toilet areas and program space to conduct AODA treatment.
- 50 beds for a segregation unit. The secure holding cells will be designed as maximum security, and each will be occupied by only one offender.

In addition to AODA offenders, the facility will house offenders who need to be detained because they have violated conditions of their supervision and offenders who are awaiting transport to begin a sentenced prison term. The population will include—but not be limited to—offenders with mental health problems and those with a history of absconding and/or violent or assaultive behaviors.

The assumption is that most of the population will come from the southeastern part of the state, especially Milwaukee, and will either return

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Milwaukee Community Corrections Detention Facility

to their home community on release or be transferred to another facility. Average length of stay in the secure detention area of the facility will be approximately 30 days, but individual stays may be much shorter or longer, depending on the reason for the stay and the investigative process. Offenders awaiting transportation to a state facility will average stays of 2 or 3 days. Those in the AODA program will have lengths of stay from 16 weeks up to 9 months.

THE FACILITY WILL BE administered by the Division of Community Corrections (DCC). It is the first secure institution to be operated by DCC and, conceptually, is a combination of an 800-bed county jail and a 210-bed medium security institution for alcohol and drug abuse programming. The operational philosophy of the facility will be to have offenders stay on their assigned floors and to bring services to the housing units on each floor. Each floor, for example, will include interview

rooms for agents, tele-visiting booths, and health care offices. The facility has been designed to meet the specific needs of a holding facility for probation and parole and will include additional hearing rooms and interview rooms.

All programming will be internal to the facility. The facility will function as a medium security prison with no off-site programming, such as work release, community crews, or off-site treatment programming. The plans for the facility include contracting for medical care, laundry, and food service through the state bidding process.

THE MISSION OF THE Wisconsin DOC is to ensure the safety and protection of the public through the safe, secure, and humane treatment of offenders entrusted to the department's custody and supervision. It is also the DOC's mission to provide programs and services to offenders that will enable them to acquire life-coping skills and posi-

tive attitudes and values, so that they can manage their freedom without reverting to criminal behavior.

In support of this mission, the Division of Community Corrections protects the public through community-based supervision of offenders. The DOC provides offenders opportunities to live, work, and receive treatment and training in the community and correctional centers, thus helping them to become productive citizens, gain self-esteem, strengthen their family units, and reduce their likelihood of further criminal behavior. This facility will ensure these missions are met, that offenders on probation and parole in Milwaukee will be held accountable for their behavior, and that revocation hearings will be conducted in a victim-sensitive manner. ■

For more information

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