

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
WORK ETHIC CAMP
LEGISLATIVE REPORT
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STEVE FANNON
WARDEN
2309 NORTH HIGHWAY 83
MCCOOK, NE 69001
308-345-8405

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PURPOSE

The Work Ethic Camp (WEC) was authorized by LB882 in 1997 and WEC opened in April 2001. Neb. Rev. Stat. §83-4,147 requires that the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) provide an annual progress report to the Nebraska Legislature.

The type of population WEC houses has changed since its creation. Historically, WEC housed both males and females. In April 2012, it was determined that female inmates would no longer be transferred to WEC and would receive program offerings through other NDCS avenues. The last female housed at WEC was discharged in April 2013. WEC also historically housed both minimum security offenders in NDCS custody and those referred to WEC for a period of intensive supervision probation. However, the last probationer at WEC completed the program in July 2015. In 2019, LB340 aligned NDCS practices with state statute by removing statutory language about the use of WEC for female offenders and for those with a sentence of intensive supervision probation. Currently, WEC houses only males sentenced to NDCS custody at the discretion of the NDCS Director.

INTRODUCTION

The Work Ethic Camp was designed to reduce prison overcrowding and make prison bed space available for violent offenders. Originally designated as an incarceration work camp, NDCS changed the name in December of 1998 to more accurately reflect the programmatic emphasis of the facility. The mission of WEC is to provide an integrated program that combines evidence-based practices with treatment and educational opportunities. The overall goal is to reduce recidivism through behavior change and to assist incarcerated individuals with successful community reintegration, thereby, keeping people safe.

It is the philosophy of WEC that behaviors and attitudes that reflect positive work ethic and behavior can be learned and transferred to other areas of an individual's life. WEC provides incarcerated individuals with work experience, substance abuse treatment, education, cognitive restructuring, and life skills programs to enhance positive work ethic. Specifics regarding vocational, educational, and life skills offerings will be referenced later in the Programs section.

To be assigned to WEC an individual cannot have a history of sexual assault or have certain Part I violent offenses on their records, and the offender must have been convicted as an adult of a felony offense. The facility does not accept referrals from juvenile courts or county courts.

WEC currently has 200 beds and houses incarcerated individuals classified as minimum custody. Prior to placement at WEC, individuals are screened utilizing the STRONG-R assessment tool. This tool identifies each person's criminogenic needs to ensure that each case plan targets their specific needs. Probation, parole, and NDCS have partnered to provide a seamless transition between each of these agencies. This partnership is critical to the success of this facility

The length of stay varies depending on a person's sentence structure and parole eligibility date. People who successfully complete WEC receive release on parole at their earliest parole eligibility date, release on their mandatory discharge date, or custody promotion to community corrections. Individuals who do not complete WEC's program successfully may be transferred to other NDCS institutions with their parole status determined by the Nebraska Parole Board, be demoted in custody to the appropriate level, or both.

Case plans are developed for each individual based upon his identified needs. Incarcerated individuals do not have access to cash while at the facility and tobacco products are prohibited. Only approved visitors are allowed to visit and may visit once per week. Phone calls are restricted to one hour per day.

REFERRALS, ADMISSIONS, AND DISCHARGES AT WEC

One of the issues referenced in previous annual reports was the underutilization of WEC. As illustrated in Table 1.0, from the time the facility opened in 2001 until November 5, 2008, the facility was below capacity, which at that time was 100 individuals.

Table 1.0 – Number of Offenders/Inmates at WEC, June 30th, Each Year Since 2001

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Number (as of June 30th)</u> |
|-------------|--|
| 2001 | 26 |
| 2002 | 72 |
| 2003 | 92 |
| 2004 | 75 |
| 2005 | 85 |
| 2006 | 73 |
| 2007 | 66 |
| 2008 | 68 |
| 2009 | 100 |
| 2010 | 174 |
| 2011 | 178 |
| 2012 | 148 |
| 2013 | 124 |
| 2014 | 186 |
| 2015 | 192 |
| 2016 | 182 |
| 2017 | 199 |
| 2018 | 175 |
| 2019 | 152 |
| 2020 | 196 |
| 2021 | 197 |
| 2022 | 177 |
| 2023 | 199 |

As Table 1.0 indicates, legislative action and efforts by the department increased the number of inmates at WEC beginning in 2010. This increase is due to the implementation of LB83 (2007), which allowed incarcerated individuals to be placed at WEC, and LB274 (2009), which gave NDCS discretion over WEC placements.

As indicated in Table 1.1, a total of 8,192 offenders/inmates have been admitted to WEC.

**Table 1.1 – Number of Admissions per Year to WEC
from April 30, 2001 to September 30, 2023**

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Average Per Month</u> |
|-------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 2001 | 98 | 10.9 |
| 2002 | 209 | 17.4 |
| 2003 | 267 | 22.3 |
| 2004 | 244 | 20.3 |
| 2005 | 250 | 20.8 |

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 2006 | 225 | 18.8 |
| 2007 | 225 | 18.8 |
| 2008 | 237 | 19.8 |
| 2009 | 289 | 24.1 |
| 2010 | 439 | 36.6 |
| 2011 | 537 | 44.8 |
| 2012 | 475 | 39.6 |
| 2013 | 415 | 34.5 |
| 2014 | 496 | 41.3 |
| 2015 | 436 | 36.3 |
| 2016 | 527 | 43.9 |
| 2017 | 495 | 41.3 |
| 2018 | 417 | 34.8 |
| 2019 | 425 | 35.4 |
| 2020 | 453 | 37.8 |
| 2021 | 405 | 33.8 |
| 2022 | 347 | 28.9 |
| 2023 | 281 | 31.2 |
| TOTAL | 8192 | 30.45 |

According to WEC’s records, 4,065 probation offenders have been referred to the facility for intake, but only 2,247 (55.3%) were actually admitted into the program. From July 2007 through September 2023, 5,945 incarcerated individuals were admitted to WEC.

Table 1.2 – Number of Discharges per Year from WEC
April 30, 2001 to September 30, 2023

| Year | Number | Average Per Month |
|-------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 2001 | 58 | 7.3 |
| 2002 | 174 | 14.5 |
| 2003 | 252 | 21.0 |
| 2004 | 261 | 21.8 |
| 2005 | 256 | 21.3 |
| 2006 | 222 | 18.5 |
| 2007 | 202 | 16.8 |
| 2008 | 212 | 17.7 |
| 2009 | 281 | 23.4 |
| 2010 | 414 | 34.5 |
| 2011 | 506 | 42.2 |
| 2012 | 499 | 41.6 |
| 2013 | 423 | 35.3 |
| 2014 | 455 | 37.9 |

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2015 | 448 | 37.3 |
| 2016 | 528 | 44.0 |
| 2017 | 508 | 42.3 |
| 2018 | 398 | 33.2 |
| 2019 | 410 | 34.2 |
| 2020 | 462 | 38.5 |
| 2021 | 393 | 32.8 |
| 2022 | 344 | 28.7 |
| 2023 | 275 | 30.6 |
| TOTAL | 7981 | 29.7 |

As illustrated in Table 1.2, of the 8,192 offenders/inmates admitted, a total of 7,981 have, to date, been discharged from the facility.

Table 1.3 details the number of successful discharges annually. During the time period under review, 81.4% or 6,499 offenders/inmates were successfully discharged from WEC.

Table 1.3 – Number of Successful Discharges per Year from WEC
From April 30, 2001 to September 30, 2023

| Year | Number | Average Per Month |
|--------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 2001 | 41 | 5.1 |
| 2002 | 147 | 12.3 |
| 2003 | 205 | 17.1 |
| 2004 | 214 | 17.8 |
| 2005 | 220 | 18.3 |
| 2006 | 200 | 16.7 |
| 2007 | 171 | 14.3 |
| 2008 | 174 | 14.5 |
| 2009 | 231 | 19.3 |
| 2010 | 305 | 25.4 |
| 2011 | 395 | 32.9 |
| 2012 | 407 | 33.9 |
| 2013 | 336 | 28.0 |
| 2014 | 387 | 32.3 |
| 2015 | 358 | 29.8 |
| 2016 | 419 | 34.9 |
| 2017 | 410 | 34.2 |
| 2018 | 317 | 26.4 |
| 2019 | 348 | 29.0 |
| 2020 | 397 | 33.1 |
| 2021 | 296 | 24.7 |
| 2022 | 282 | 23.5 |
| 2023 | 239 | 26.6 |
| TOTAL | 6499 | 24.2 |

As shown in Table 1.4, a total of 1,031 offenders/inmates were not successful during the time period under review. This represents 12.9% of the total number of discharges.

**Table 1.4 – Number of Unsuccessful Discharges per Year from WEC
April 30, 2001 to September 30, 2023**

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Average Per Month</u> |
|--------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 2001 | 17 | 2.1 |
| 2002 | 27 | 2.3 |
| 2003 | 47 | 3.9 |
| 2004 | 47 | 3.9 |
| 2005 | 36 | 3.0 |
| 2006 | 22 | 1.8 |
| 2007 | 31 | 2.6 |
| 2008 | 38 | 3.2 |
| 2009 | 50 | 4.2 |
| 2010 | 109 | 9.1 |
| 2011 | 111 | 9.3 |
| 2012 | 67 | 5.6 |
| 2013 | 41 | 3.4 |
| 2014 | 39 | 3.3 |
| 2015 | 61 | 5.1 |
| 2016 | 54 | 4.5 |
| 2017 | 46 | 3.8 |
| 2018 | 44 | 3.7 |
| 2019 | 33 | 2.8 |
| 2020 | 19 | 1.6 |
| 2021 | 43 | 4.8 |
| 2022 | 27 | 2.2 |
| 2023 | 22 | 2.4 |
| TOTAL | 1031 | 3.8 |

PROGRAMS AT WEC

Employment

Neb. Rev. Stat. §83-4,142 mandates that WEC provide regimented, structured, disciplined programming. Individuals are assigned to jobs at the facility or may apply to specific jobs and are paid for their work once per month, promoting independence and budgeting. They also receive feedback on their work performance each month from their job supervisors, which provides positive reinforcement for good work and/or suggestions for areas of improvement.

Programs available at WEC include supervised work crews, in which incarcerated individuals are taken to work at various government agencies throughout Southwest Nebraska. Those agencies and organizations include the Department of Transportation, Nebraska Game and Parks, county and city offices, Nebraska Forestry Services, and local schools. Incarcerated individuals working in these areas receive pay for their daily work. WEC has also expanded the service of its work crews to include

non-profit organizations; however, individuals must volunteer for these jobs and they do not receive pay for volunteer work. Many workers choose to participate in these rewarding volunteer opportunities. Examples of this type of work include loading and unloading trucks and sorting donated clothing, and commodities, to be distributed to other communities or shipped to other countries. The presence of WEC through its supervised work crews in Southwest Nebraska has significantly benefitted the workers as well as surrounding communities. People have the opportunity to reenter their home communities from WEC with a practiced routine work schedule, experience in teamwork, and a positive work ethic.

Table 1.5 summarizes offender/inmate labor at WEC since the facility opened.

Table 1.5 – Total Offender/Inmate Labor Hours at WEC
April 30, 2001 to September 30, 2023

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Total Number of Hours</u> |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| 2001 | 12,484 |
| 2002 | 34,406 |
| 2003 | 44,050 |
| 2004 | 44,091 |
| 2005 | 37,696 |
| 2006 | 32,413 |
| 2007 | 27,039 |
| 2008 | 37,369 |
| 2009 | 32,455 |
| 2010 | 23,519 |
| 2011 | 13,163 |
| 2012 | 10,042 |
| 2013 | 10,294 |
| 2014 | 12,233 |
| 2015 | 18,232 |
| 2016 | 15,542 |
| 2017 | 15,929 |
| 2018 | 16,220 |
| 2019 | 17,521 |
| 2020 | 8,722 |
| 2021 | 13,973 |
| 2022 | 15,415 |
| 2023 | 13,212 |
| TOTAL | 506,019 |

It should be noted that the total number of work hours in 2011 through 2023 were lower than in previous years. This is due to budget modifications, which reduced road crew corporal positions at WEC from eight to four. Additionally, total work hours do not include participation in non-profit organizations. During 2016, WEC was able to increase the road crew by two road crew corporal positions, bringing the number of team members to six. This has enabled the road crew worker program to provide more work opportunities to better serve and support surrounding communities. Hours for 2022 were updated from last year’s report to reflect the hours worked for the full calendar year.

Other work opportunities for incarcerated individuals at WEC include: maintenance, laundry/canteen, food service, porter positions, photographer, recreation, paint crew, gardener, and barber. Food service staff complete the Serve-Safe Manager course and they routinely offer the Serve-Safe Food Handler certification for food service workers. Many people re-entering society secure their first jobs in the food service industry. The experience, training, and certification WEC provides can give them an edge over other applicants in the job market.

Special Detail

The Special Detail Program provides the opportunity to work either on-site or off-site with intermittent, at least hourly supervision. Special detail positions available on-site are in the kitchen and warehouse/canteen. Off-site detail positions are managed by the Road Crew Team. For individuals to be eligible for the Special Detail Program, they must have minimal recent misconduct report history and have the support of their work supervisors based upon demonstrated work habits. Road crew special detail workers are also approved by members of the Board of Parole.

Education

The Education Department is another key component at WEC. The adult basic education class assists those who are not high school graduates or who have deficits in educational abilities. Unless already established by another facility or agency, every person who enters the program undergoes testing to determine educational needs. Individuals who do not already have a diploma or GED, and are under 22 years of age, are required to attend adult basic education classes to work toward improving academic skills and earning their diplomas or GEDs. WEC has two full time teachers who provide educational instruction at WEC.

One of the goals of the Education Department is to help people earn their diplomas or GEDs, which enhances their employment potential upon reentry. For those who receive educational instruction at WEC, increasing educational competencies can improve their confidence, make them more employable, and help them to better understand contracts or other documents they sign. The Education Department can suggest options for continuing their education in the target communities.

Substance Use Treatment

Each person is assessed and evaluated at the Reception and Treatment Center (RTC) for substance use treatment needs and appropriate level of care. Those with substance use treatment needs participate in treatment at WEC, which includes substance use education, individual and group counseling, and attendance at self-help groups, facilitated by local volunteers.

The substance use programs at WEC are the Outpatient or Intensive Outpatient programs. People assessed as appropriate for substance use services are referred to the substance use program for regularly scheduled sessions. An individualized treatment plan is completed for each person. The intensity of each person's treatment is based upon the level of need. These sessions, which include group, individual, and educational sessions, focus on the impact of substance use. The groups use a cognitive behavioral approach to substance use. Topics covered include the biomedical effects of drugs and alcohol on the body, general health risks, the effects of substance use on decision-making, the effects of substance use on interpersonal relationships, and how addiction impacts choices and behaviors.

Evidence-Based Cognitive Behavioral Non-Clinical Programming:

WEC programming includes the following:

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is a cognitive behavioral treatment system that leads to enhanced moral reasoning, better decision-making, and more appropriate behavior. MRT is conducted in weekly groups, where clients present steps from their workbooks that have been completed as homework. Group facilitators use objective criteria to evaluate each participant's successful completion of the program's steps. There are 12 sessions in MRT, which are held once per week. MRT can generally be completed in 12 weeks.

Thinking for a Change is a cognitive behavioral curriculum developed by the National Institute of Corrections that concentrates on changing the criminogenic thinking of offenders. Thinking for a Change meets twice a week for twenty-five sessions and uses a combination of approaches to increase a person's awareness of self and others. Class participation, written assignments, and role playing reinforce skills that are taught and demonstrated by class facilitators. This deepened attentiveness to attitudes, beliefs, and thinking patterns is combined with explicit teaching of interpersonal skills relevant to offenders' present and future needs. Thinking for a Change can generally be completed in 12 weeks.

7 Habits on the Inside is a program modeled after the principles presented in the book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," by Dr. Stephen R. Covey, and is delivered in collaboration with the staff of the Franklin Covey Company. Franklin Covey's 10-12 week training course has been proven to be life-changing. Studies show that recidivism drops to as low as 8% and administrative violations drop by over 76% for graduates of the Seven Habits on the Inside. Once someone believes that they can choose their path in life, they begin to make changes before they are released which can lead to a successful parole and reintegration into society. Classes meet twice a week for approximately 12 weeks.

Getting it Right is an evidence-based program focused on reentry specific strategies to assist individuals preparing to leave the criminal justice system in the facilitation of successful transition and community reintegration. Program material consists of a five book Interactive Journaling Series that incorporates cognitive-behavioral therapy, the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change, Social Learning Theory, and Motivational Interviewing techniques. Participants meet once per week for approximately 17 weeks to complete the course.

Achieving Change Through Value-Based Behavior (ACTV-NE) is an evidence-based program designed to help individuals with a history of domestic violence transform their lives and relationships. ACTV-NE is a 30-week non-clinical cognitive behavioral intervention. The content of the 30 sessions is organized into five categories: The Big Picture (large concepts and basic tools to build core life skills), Barriers to Change, Emotional Regulation Skills, Cognitive Skills, and Behavioral Skills. This program is an opportunity for change that gives the individual the choice to focus on habilitation and prepare for successful entry to a healthy life outside of incarceration. This program became available at WEC during May 2023. Due to specific court requirements, individuals with Post-Release Supervision (PRS) sentences are not currently eligible for participation in ACTV-NE.

Ancillary Programs

Inside Out Dads connects incarcerated fathers to their families. The goal is to improve behavior while still incarcerated and to break the cycle of recidivism by developing pro-fathering attitudes, knowledge, and skills, along with strategies to prepare for release. Participants get the tools they need to become more involved, responsible, and committed in the lives of their children, providing increased motivation for them to get out and stay out. This class meets once a week for seven weeks.

Within My Reach is a skills-based program with critical, concrete tools that help participants control their own relationships in ways that will lead to more enriching, more satisfying interactions with the people who matter in their lives. Themes include: knowing yourself first, smart love, and making your own decisions. This group meets once a week for seven weeks.

Beyond Anger is a four-week curriculum which helps clients in institutional settings and community corrections address anger, reconciliation, and emotion management plus guidelines for daily living. Role playing and testimonials help clients explore spouse and family issues, forgiveness, and letting go of the past. The program stresses how to take action, deal with feelings, and make positive progress. Beyond Anger allows participants to identify sources of resentment and anger and develop strategies to move toward forgiveness and to reconcile and reestablish relationships or learn to move on when reconciliation is not possible. This class meets once per week for four weeks.

Code Academy is a vocation/life skills program, newly offered at WEC in 2023. WEC has partnered with Midland University, a liberal arts college in Fremont, Nebraska, to provide instruction in computer coding. Students learn to design full-stack applications using the React framework and Node.js and prepare to enter the workforce as a junior developer. Students also work on improving soft skills and communicating with other developers. Midland University has identified employers who need junior developers on an ongoing basis based on employers who have previously hired justice-involved individuals or who express a willingness to do so in the future. Applicants are screened for their ability to keep up with this challenging curriculum through a brief “Coding 101” session. The investment in Code Academy has the potential to prepare individuals for a lifelong and lucrative career in computer coding.

Illegal to Legal is a five-session course that encourages entrepreneurship and motivates participants to recognize the skills that they had used to commit their crimes and transfer those skills into a legitimate, money-earning career and legal lifestyle. Lessons each incorporate a video, workbook exercise, and a textbook to reinforce the provided information. Each lesson lasts approximately 75 minutes and participants meet once weekly.

C-Tech is a series of vocational courses taught in three distinct modules: Fiber Optics, Copper, and Telecommunications. Participants are taught interactively by use of instruction, PowerPoint presentation, textbooks, and worksheets, and they also utilize *Interactive Technology Boards* to verify that the work they prepared would function properly. This course meets once weekly for two 2-hour sessions on site and is taught by two WEC staff members who are trained instructors. The maximum class size is limited to 10 participants. Those who pass the modules earn certification in those areas of skill. These course modules are excellent opportunities for participants to increase their vocational skills and employment options in the future. This program is temporarily on hold due to the necessity to update program materials.

ABC OSHA (Associated Builders & Contractors) classes provides 10 hours each of *General Industry* and *Construction* instruction on the rights and responsibilities in maintaining a safe workplace while working productively. This grant-funded class is taught at WEC in a classroom by a contracted instructor. Each 10-hour class is accomplished in one week, three afternoons in a row.

ABC Construction also offers additional courses. ABC's theory is that each person who enters the construction industry is on the path to earning a competitive salary, learning a new skill, and building America with their own hands. The courses (ABC Core Construction and ABC Construction Math) provide classroom and practical application in construction. Under supervision of the instructor, participants will use approved tool sets to create small projects to present for grading and feedback. These grant-funded classes are taught at WEC in a classroom by a contracted instructor. Each course is a two-hour class, meeting twice a week for six weeks. ABC Virtual Electric is a class where participants use virtual electric panels to learn basic electrical wiring. This class is taught twice a week for six weeks. Due to a lack of local instructors, these courses were not available in 2023.

MPCC Access to Work Force

Mid Plains Community College (MPCC) has obtained a grant to offer four courses to support pursuit of gainful employment after reentry. These courses include First Aid/CPR, OSHA Four Hazard, Forklift Certification, Scissor Lift/Skid Loader, and Essential Skills for the Workplace. Within the recent contract renewal, some of these same courses will still be offered, but the college has the option to also incorporate additional courses as identified and agreed with NDCS/WEC and as instructors become available.

Incentive Program

One key goal at WEC is to create an environment that encourages positive change. Each individual at the facility has the opportunity to earn rewards for positive behavior. In the past, the program has focused on four categories: sanitation, citizenship, work/education, and behavior. Each person who meets the established criteria earns increasing rewards depending upon the level achieved. There are four levels available: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. The Incentive Program at WEC is currently being revised to modify the target categories and the available rewards (to ensure they are meaningful and attainable).

Recreation

In the spring of 2010, a full-time recreation specialist was added to WEC staff. The benefit of this position is to aid in the positive use of free time, physical exercise, and development of positive social interaction. This is accomplished through organized sporting activities, board games, tournaments, and special activities on certain holidays. The recreation specialist has actively scheduled and supervised recreational activities. Yard equipment can be checked out and used on a daily basis and a large shade shelter was added on the yard as well as a handball court.

Library is offered daily for those who enjoy reading. WEC also utilizes interlibrary loans to offer a greater variety of reading material.

Religion

The religious library is offered at the same time and place as the recreational library. The facility has worked with religious volunteers to meet the needs of the expanding religious affiliations represented in the population. Religious programs are provided for those who wish to participate. Religious study groups (conducted by incarcerated individuals) are offered for groups that have no community volunteer associated with those religions.

Visiting

Visiting is scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays (based on last names) with approved visitors. Individuals may apply for special, emergency, or extended visits based on criteria established in policies and procedures. Everyone is provided with the general rules and dress codes which they may mail to their visitors ahead of time. WEC recognizes the value in maintaining and repairing family relationships, and its benefit in a successful reentry to society. WEC staff recognizes the distance that some families must travel to visit and have made efforts to make the visit experience more family-friendly. There are toys and games available for different age groups. Craft activities are also available on occasion. WEC also offers virtual visits, which supplement in-person visitation opportunities. Visitors must reserve a visiting time online prior to the requested visit date.

INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINE ACTIVITY

There were 329 releases from WEC during fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023). Within that same time period, 67 incarcerated individuals were removed prior to successfully completing the program. Individuals at the WEC can be removed via three mechanisms. Individuals can be removed if determined to be a threat to themselves or others, or if they threaten to escape. The second mechanism is through serious or repeated violations of WEC rules. The third type of removal is by an individual's request for protective custody. As a result, they will be returned to the Reception and Treatment Center (RTC) or other NDCS facility and will be reclassified to a higher custody level. For success in the program, individuals must also demonstrate adequate institutional adjustment.

Incarcerated individuals during fiscal year 2023 were removed for the following reasons:

| <u>Reason for Removal</u> | <u>Number of Individuals</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Unsuccessful Discharges | 38 |
| Medical/Mental Health | 9 |
| Request Protective Custody | 8 |
| Other (Programming needs, new criminal charges, safety issues) | 12 |
| TOTAL | 67 |

Removals from the program increased over the last fiscal year by a total of 4.7%. At the same time, total admissions for the last fiscal year decreased by a total of 7.6%. WEC staff continue to develop ways to effectively deal with disruptive behavior.

RELEASE TO PAROLE, PROBATION, OR PROMOTION TO NDCS COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS INSTITUTIONS

People who are transferred to WEC are assessed for their recommended clinical and non-clinical needs. Everyone is expected to work on their identified needs by attending and completing the recommended classes offered at WEC prior to their parole or transfer to other facilities. Individuals who have completed their recommended classes may be reclassified for transfer to community corrections if time allows, preceding their release dates. Reclassifications are also completed at established intervals, per department policy.

COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION

Individuals successfully discharged from WEC are either released on parole (to be supervised in the community by a parole officer), released to post release supervision (to be supervised in the community by a probation officer), transferred to another NDCS facility (usually, community corrections in Omaha or Lincoln), or discharged directly from WEC when they reach their tentative release date. Conditions of parole are set by the parole board and conditions of probation are set by the courts. WEC staff prepare parole guideline reports for individuals who are under consideration for parole. A STRONG-R is completed on all incarcerated individuals upon reception at RTC, which establishes a level of risk as well as individual needs and assists in creating appropriate goals to reduce recidivism. WEC and Reentry staff work with them to plan for residence, employment, and other needs as they transition to life in the community. Navigation officers do the same for individuals who will be on probation. For individuals approaching a mandatory release date from WEC, reentry preparation and support become the focus. WEC staff and reentry specialists work with them to identify and address their needs and identify applicable resources within their target communities.

IMPACT ON PRISON COST

WEC cost approximately \$4.86 million to build, has 98.5 appropriated staff, and the facility operates on a \$8.4 million annual budget. The average daily population for WEC in fiscal year 2023 was 195.

The data in Table 1.6 shows the number of inmates assigned to WEC per month during fiscal year 2023.

Table 1.6 – WEC Admissions July 2022 to June 2023

| <u>Admission Month</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Admission Month</u> | <u>Number</u> |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|
| July 2022 | 35 | January 2023 | 33 |
| August 2022 | 39 | February 2023 | 31 |
| September 2022 | 24 | March 2023 | 42 |
| October 2022 | 29 | April 2023 | 25 |
| November 2022 | 26 | May 2023 | 30 |
| December 2022 | 18 | June 2023 | 20 |
| TOTAL | | | 352 |

During the same time period, 329 offenders/inmates were released from WEC. As Table 1.7 shows, 79.3% or 261 inmates were released successfully.

Table 1.7 – Work Ethic Camp Releases July 2022 to June 2023

| <u>Release Type</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Successful | 261 | 79.33 |
| Program Failure | 38 | 11.55 |
| Medical/Mental Health | 9 | 2.74 |
| Request PC | 8 | 2.43 |
| Other | 12 | 3.65 |
| Deceased | 1 | 0.30 |
| TOTAL | 329 | 100 |

The concept behind the construction of WEC continues to pay dividends for Nebraska. Previously, when WEC still housed probation offenders, the judge had to make a finding that absent WEC, a probation offender would go to prison. Since WEC opened in 2001, WEC successfully diverted 2,247 probation offenders who would otherwise have gone to other prison facilities.

The opportunity to transition to a lower custody level and receive WEC programming helps provide more successful community reintegration and reduces recidivism. Opening bed space at other NDCS facilities and reducing the number of people returning to prison makes WEC an effective use of taxpayer dollars.

ISSUES

The number of probation offenders admitted to WEC has decreased in the last decade. In FY 2011, probation offenders were 45.92% of admissions to WEC. In FY 2012, they were 34.44% of admissions. In FY 2013, probation offenders were 3.99% of admissions. In FY 2014, probation offenders were .82% of admissions. In FY 2015 probation offenders were .93% of admissions. Since FY 2016 there have been no probation offenders admitted.

WEC continually explores new avenues to expand vocational and recreation opportunities for its population. Increasing both types of opportunities contributes greatly to a person's occupational opportunities upon release and to more constructive use of free time while at WEC.

WEC is in its 22nd year of operation. Through the use of preventive maintenance, equipment and fixtures remain in operation. However, the equipment and fixtures have reached their expected years of service, which will continue to increase basic maintenance and/or replacement costs.

SUMMARY

The population served by WEC has changed since the facility opened in 2001, but the facility's goal to reduce recidivism through quality programs remains the same. WEC is a vital component in reintegrating offenders back into the community. It provides the structure and programs necessary for people to gain the tools to lead a law-abiding life and to establish and maintain steady and legal employment.