

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 22, 2026

To: Marcelia Nicholson-Bovell, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Executive Director, DHHS

Subject: An informational report from the Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update on youth ordered to correctional placements and progress on the implementation of a Secured Residential Care Center for Children and Youth (SRCCCY) under Wisconsin Act 185

File Type: Information

REQUEST

The Milwaukee County Board has requested periodic updates from DHHS on the number of youth from Milwaukee who have been committed to State juvenile correctional facilities as well as the progress on the construction of the Secured Residential Care Center for Children and Youth (SRCCCY).

The State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) – Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) is responsible for the operation of the Lincoln Hills School for Boys and Copper Lake School for Girls as well as the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC). This report identifies commitments to these facilities via court order and the type of placement for youth as they transition back home from the facilities.

In March 2018, the Wisconsin State Legislature adopted Act 185 paving the way for the development of local alternatives to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake. Act 185 directs the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake for use as youth correctional facilities by July 1, 2021, and authorizes County-operated SRCCCYs. Under Act 185, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) maintains supervision over youth with adult court sentences and youth in the Serious Juvenile Offender Program (SJOP) within Type 1 facilities, but the supervision of youth under other correctional placements would be transferred to the counties.

POLICY

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Chapter 301; Chapter 938
Related County Board File No's:	24-60, 24-61, 23-56, 23-57, 22-34, 22-35, 21-28, 21-29, 20-20, 20-21, 19-22, 19-23, 19-236, 18-17, 18-924, 18-545

BACKGROUND

New commitments to Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake

The chart below shows the number of youth who have been committed to the DJC per month. Please note that commitments can fluctuate daily and a final number of commitments in the most recent month may not be available until the next month’s report.

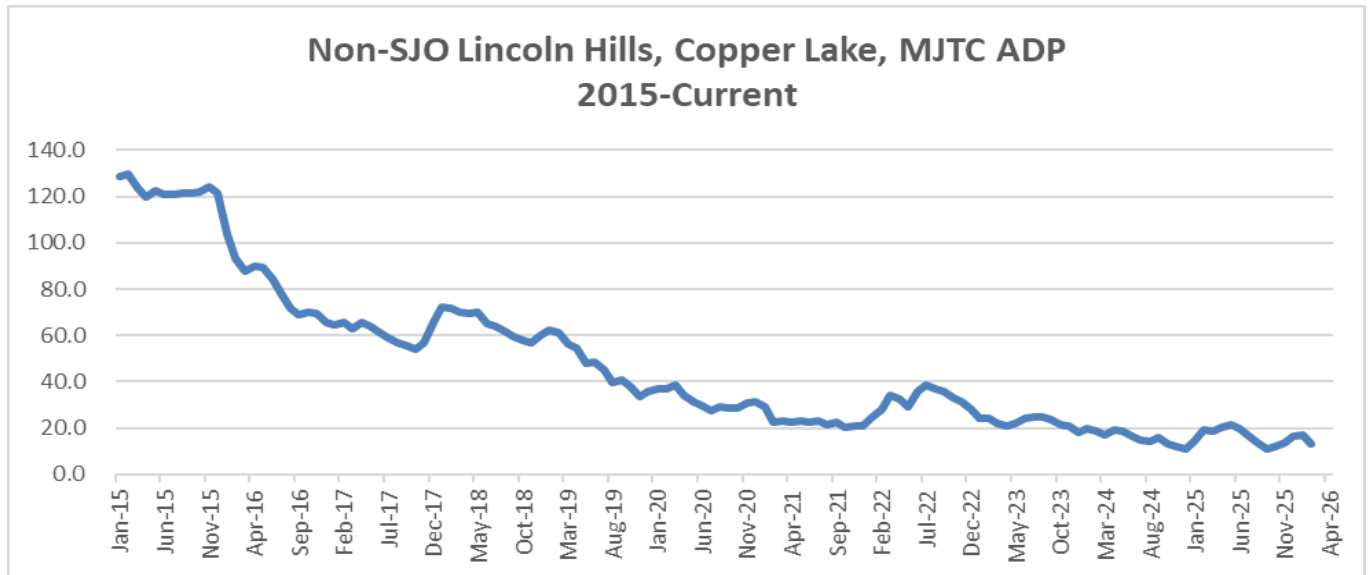
New Commitments	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
January	11	3	6	3	6	4	1	8	2	1	11	5
February	12	8	5	5	1	6	5	9	5	3	4	3
March	9	6	3	3	4	2	3	5	2	5	3	6
April	14	4	9	3	2	0	3	5	2	5	3	-
May	11	7	4	3	3	3	2	1	3	1	6	-
June	8	4	5	1	8	7	2	8	7	3	2	-
July	7	8	4	3	2	1	4	6	4	1	4	-
August	8	4	6	5	5	2	3	4	2	5	3	-
September	6	9	5	6	5	3	2	2	2	8	4	-
October	8	12	4	8	2	4	2	3	3	5	4	-
November	11	5	7	6	5	4	2	2	2	1	4	-
December	4	3	13	6	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	-
Total	109	73	71	52	47	40	32	57	38	40	52	14

Type of placement with the Division of Juvenile Corrections

As of March 25, 2026, there were a total of 45 boys at Lincoln Hills School (32 youth who were placed on SJO orders and 13 youth who were placed on regular DOC commitments), 10 youth at Mendota (six youth who were on SJO orders and five youth who were on regular DOC commitment orders) and there were two girls at Copper Lake School (two youth who were placed on SJO orders).

Milwaukee County is responsible for the supervision and case management for all youth who are in aftercare status and released from a correctional facility, including the Secure Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (SRCCCY) that are not in the Serious Juvenile Offender (SJO) Program. All youth who are released from a correctional setting and placed in the community are assigned to a CYFS Human Service Worker who provides supervision and case management for the youth and their families. The youth are all receiving individualized services in the community including, but not limited to, GPS monitoring for the initial 30 days or more in the community, intensive monitoring and advocacy, restorative programming and clinical services. As of March 25, 2026, there were 22 youth on aftercare status back in the community. Of those youth, there was one youth placed in a secure setting pending sanctions, adult court or revocation.

Over the last several years, the average daily population (ADP) of Milwaukee County youth in Lincoln Hills, Copper Lake Schools and MJTC has been falling fairly steadily since 2015. Please see the chart below:



Milwaukee County SRCCCY Development:

This project reflects a 32-bed SRCCCY (now known as Milwaukee County Center for Youth – MCCY) which provides for a net increase of eight beds from the current Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP). A total of four beds of the 32-bed facility could be dedicated to girls, if needed.

Implementing the SRCCCY here in Milwaukee County will do the following:

- 1) To fulfill the collective goal of creating a local alternative option for Milwaukee County youth to be placed in a safe environment, closer to home.
- 2) To establish a youth justice model that emphasizes emotional regulation, pro-social decision making, enhanced social competencies, and family engagement and creates a safe and secure environment.
- 3) To better control secure placement costs for Milwaukee County youth.

The MCCY includes the following:

- Renovation of the two existing Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP) housing units at Vel R. Phillips
- Education – classrooms, teacher support and offices, a computer/learning lab, vocational programming, testing/consultation, and other multi-media activities
- Mental Health, Health, and Dental Care – space in the main building includes space needed to meet all basic physical, mental, and dental health needs, including space if needed for temporary housing of ill youth
- Recreation Space – indoor and outdoor recreation and green space
- Welcome Center, Visitation and Dining - public entry would occur via a welcoming vestibule and include space for family visitation and dining

Milwaukee County Center for Youth (MCCY) Progress Update

The MCCY officially opened on March 30, 2026 and is serving 12 youth in the Restorative Pathways Program (RPP) as of April 6, 2026. This number is subject to change as kids are ordered or released from programming. The RPP is the name of the program provided to youth within the Milwaukee County Center for Youth and is centered on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Youth will work with a trained DBT Unit Therapist, as well as participate in DBT skills groups, along with their parents and other family members. All youth also will receive education through Wauwatosa Schools, restorative justice programming, culinary arts, and other training opportunities in partnership with Milwaukee Area Technical College, and other individualized services based on their needs and court orders. Each youth is also assigned an Advocate through Running Rebels Community Organization who will work with the youth throughout their time in secure care and as they transition home or other out of home placement. All individuals working with the youth within RPP will receive DBT training to support the youth through their RPP programming.

Prior to the opening, the MCCY received occupancy approval from the DOC on February 19, 2026, and the opening event was held on March 5, 2026. The MCCY transitional team continues to meet several times per week to plan and implement the transition from current MCAP programming for the RPP. All MCCY positions continue to be filled, and training courses are scheduled and in process for all individuals working within the program. Policy, procedures and program documents are in process of being implemented. Finally, stakeholder engagement and training sessions have occurred with staff, legal partners and community-based partners as well.

Milwaukee County continues collaborating with the DOC and the Legislative Audit Bureau to develop procedures for the operating-loss reimbursement process to address potential funding gaps for serving girls at the SRCCCY. Wis. Stat. § 301.373 requires the State to reimburse counties for any annual net operating loss for services and facilities provided to female youth.

DHHS also continues to work with the DOC Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) and Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) to implement a process in which kids in the MCCY can receive treatment and services through MJTC.

Placement with Racine SRCCCY:

As of April 7, 2026, there were six boys who were placed in the Racine Youth Development and Care Center. CYFS has submitted a change of placement request to the courts in order to move three of the youth to the Milwaukee County Center for Youth (MCCY) and the other three youth are scheduled to be released sometime in or after April 2026.

DHHS will continue to update the County Board on any future changes.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

DHHS continues to work toward transitioning youth out of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools. CYFS has been leveraging its resources, including Opioid and ARPA funds, toward the ongoing development of community-based programming for justice-involved youth and their families through innovative initiatives. CYFS is also committed to building out a continuum of care to include targeted preventive and diversion services and initiatives. All these initiatives occur in the Milwaukee community and are focused not only on the youth but also their families and communities across Milwaukee County. This programming meets the youth where they are in unique ways that are individualized to their needs.

FISCAL EFFECT

This report is informational and there is no fiscal effect.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Executive Director
Kelly Pethke, CYFS Administrator
Regina Whiyee, Deputy Administrator

PREPARED BY:

Kelly Pethke, CYFS Administrator

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Executive Director

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Hon. Carl Ashley, Chief Judge