

**SHERIFF EARNELL R. LUCAS**

File No: 22-640

**DATE:** May 4, 2022

**TO:** Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Chantell Jewell, Superintendent, House of Correction  
James Burnett, Acting Chief of Staff, Office of the Sheriff

**CC:** Membership, Committee on Health Equity and Human Needs  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Board of Supervisors  
Steve Cady, Director of Research and Policy, Office of the Comptroller  
Steve Gorodetskiy, Strategic Initiatives Director, DHHS

**RE:** Joint Report on Vaccination Incentive Program Efficacy

In Resolution 21-632, the Board of Supervisors requested that the House of Correction and Office of the Sheriff together generate a report on the efficacy of Milwaukee County's in-custody vaccination incentive program in the December 2021 committee cycle. Further, the Board of Supervisors requested that this report be updated and made on a quarterly basis in subsequent committee cycles. This report fulfills this request and serves as the joint update of the House of Correction and Office of the Sheriff about the in-custody vaccination incentive program.

Pursuant to Resolution 21-632, \$50 in incentive funding have been provided to each resident of the House of Correction and occupant of the County Jail who has received an initial dose of an authorized vaccine on or after August 9, 2021, the date on which Resolution 21-632 became effective.

Since this date, 140 residents of the House of Correction have received incentive funding and 233 occupants of the County Jail have received incentive funding. Both facilities experienced decreasing levels of fully vaccinated persons in custody in the months following the introduction of the vaccination incentive program. On August 30, 51% (293 of 577) of House of Correction residents were fully vaccinated, and on September 1, 49% (409 of 840) of County Jail occupants were fully vaccinated. Due in

large part to population turnover in both facilities, these numbers were lower in subsequent months, in spite of the vaccination incentive funding: on October 6, 36% (294 of 811) of County Jail occupants had been fully vaccinated. On December 1, 27% (223 of 823) of County Jail occupants had been fully vaccinated. On December 29, February 2, and March 2, respectively, the relevant data were 44% (382 of 862), 30% (260 of 875), and 22% (207 of 925). At the HOC, on October 20, 44% (236 out of 542) of HOC residents were fully vaccinated, December 1 the numbers were 62% (352 out of 567), December 29 58% (317 out of 543), February 2, 44% (288 out of 653), and March 2, 40% (267 out of 665).

While there is no way, short of a survey of current and former residents and occupants to confirm their motivation for accepting vaccinations, officers and supervisors at both facilities insist, anecdotally, that the incentive payments were the driving force behind upward spikes in vaccination rates, such as January 19 (39%, 333 of 861, and a 5% increase over the previous week).

As was the case in Q4 of 2021, Q1 declines in vaccination rates in both facilities has likely continued to be impacted by an increased number of Wisconsin Department of Corrections transfers accepted from the House of Correction during the month of February, which resulted in the outward transfer of fully vaccinated persons in custody from both the House of Correction and the County Jail.

From an August 4, 2021, high of 55% (459 of 838) of occupants vaccinated in the County Jail, we experienced a significant decrease in average vaccination rates to 27.2% (211 of 935) between March 16 and April 13. The jail also, for many months, housed a significant number of individuals sentenced to incarceration with the Department of Corrections, a matter that likely led to the relocation of some vaccinated occupants from the County Jail to other facilities.

For context, early in 2021 the Sheriff's Office incentivized vaccinations by allowing fully vaccinated occupants out of their cells all day on both first- and second shifts, included access to the County Jail's occupant gymnasium. Occupants who declined vaccination were not allowed gym access but were still allowed out of their cells, just for half days – on either first- or second shifts, on alternating days. This practice was carried out with a two-fold purpose – to limit the spread of the virus, and to encourage vaccinations. This proved to be a very effective strategy. However, in early August 2021, vaccination rates among occupants began to decline.

Although population levels fluctuate daily at both facilities, and with them the percentages of vaccinated and unvaccinated residents and occupants, at present 40% (273 out of 684) of House of Correction residents and 26% (246 of 936) of County Jail occupants are fully vaccinated. This suggests a need for continued mitigation efforts via the vaccination incentive program. However, with a general, communitywide relaxing of attitudes towards COVID-19, in recent weeks and months, more creative and intensive vaccine advocacy may need to occur.

Both the House of Correction and County Jail have received support from Milwaukee County contractor Render in generating awareness of and engagement in the vaccination incentive program, and continued engagement with other county-based communications and stakeholder engagement contractors that perform similar work is advisable at both facilities. Additionally, both facilities are exploring measures to expand access to vaccination opportunities throughout the custodial process, with particular focus on the initial booking and intake processes at the County Jail.

In conclusion, both facilities maintain the position that, to the extent resources are available to them and staffing levels become appropriate, the House of Correction and Office of the Sheriff should employ any and all legally acceptable means to encourage vaccinations among residents and occupants and to strategically maximize the benefits of large swaths of our incarcerated populations being vaccinated. As it has been the most impactful of incentives presented to residents and occupants, the House of Correction and Office of the Sheriff recommend that the board continue the \$50 incentive program throughout 2022 and potentially beyond should the virus continue to affect our community.