

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 4/22/2026

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

From: Denita R. Ball, Milwaukee County Sheriff

Subject: Office of the Sheriff, 2025 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

This informational report provides a report on how the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office set and achieved its 2025 goals.

POLICY

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
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ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Alignment to the above strategic goals is articulated in responses to the questions below.

BODY

Please tell us about your progress on your Department/Office's top goals in 2025. If any of your goals have changed, briefly explain why, how they are "SMARTIE" goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable), and how they align to the county's racial equity strategy.

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office's (MCSO's) goals continue to revolve around a deliberate, collaborative approach to public safety, as the agency believes strongly that a community can't become healthy or healthier without its residents feeling comfortable and confident in the spaces in which they live, work, and recreate. Therefore, it continues to be the broad goal of the MCSO to engage with constituents in a manner that builds lasting, trusting relationships, makes this agency's law enforcement efforts more effective, and improves atypical or non-traditional strategies that, collectively, should improve constituents' quality of life. As in recent years, the work to bring this goal to fruition is ongoing and evolving, even as it aligns with the MCSO 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.

- ❖ Goal 1: Progressive and effective recruitment, hiring, and retaining personnel.
- ❖ Goal 2: To provide proactive, timely, and effective public safety on our freeways, county roads, in our parks, and jail, and for our MCSO personnel and Milwaukee County Jail occupants.
- ❖ Goal 3: to implement a comprehensive community engagement strategy that fosters community partnerships between our diverse communities to strengthen relationships and build trust as we work towards a safer community.

1. What key factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?
 - a. The creation of a new ReadyOp or "easy fill" form for career seekers considering deputy sheriff, correctional officer (CO), and civilian positions, has allowed the MCSO to more efficiently engage and track interested parties and shepherd them through the process, from expressing interest to applying for work, and more. This form's ease-of-use has led our CO hiring lists to grow from single to double digits.
 - b. The creation of an agency-wide recruitment team has allowed the MCSO to apply a "full-court-press" recruitment strategy, deploying multiple teams of agency members simultaneously to multiple target-rich recruitment areas and events, from college campuses to career fairs, and public safety-adjacent trade shows. The creation of this team has generated a greater level of enthusiasm across the MCSO for members to participate in the recruitment process. The team has also served as a great retention tool, as it has led to agency members learning to better articulate the "why" of their own choices to work for and remain at the MCSO.

- c. Having the MCSO's award-winning youth Cadet Post, a training and mentorship unit that prepares 14-20-year-olds for future careers in law enforcement, assist with recruitment has helped the agency more consistently engage high school- and college-aged students who may have an interest in public safety careers. A quarter of Cadet Post 890's young members have graduated from the program and joined the MCSO over the past year.
- d. The implementation of an hourly courtroom bailiff pilot program and a deputy sheriff lateral transfer program have deepened the MCSO's pool of qualified potential hires, with both programs attracting recent law enforcement retirees and active law enforcement officers who enjoy the sector but seek positive change in a different setting.
- e. The creative recomposing of the MCSO's seasonal Parks Unit, comprised of deputy sheriffs and investigators from all areas of the agency, that allowed the agency to more consistently respond to the Milwaukee County Parks System's most challenged sites and allowed the agency to develop better strategies to preemptively address challenged parks. The result was a 36 percent reduction in Part I (major, violent) crimes occurring in county parks. This positive momentum has also been influenced by the MCSO conducting and acting on feedback to its Parks Safety & Community Engagement Survey.
- f. More strategic deployments on Milwaukee County's freeway system have led to increases in OWI, reckless driving, road rage (shots fired) arrests, which in turn has shown a reduction in dangerous driving incidents.
- g. A partnership with the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) to confront and prevent car meetups that inspired mass incidents of reckless and dangerous driving has led to fewer such meetups and fewer such incidents on city streets and the freeway system.
- h. The implementation of the HAAS Safety Alert System, which notifies drivers in real-time, when an emergency vehicle is approaching or when they –drivers– are approaching a stopped emergency vehicle, has reached thousands of drivers on the Milwaukee County freeway system, giving greater protections to first responders and helping drivers travel more carefully.
- i. The MCSO worked with Milwaukee County leadership to provide more than 30 tours of the Safety Building, to advocate for support and funding for the planned Justice Courthouse Complex Project.
- j. All supervisors (sergeants, lieutenants, and captains) received enhanced leadership training.
- k. The Milwaukee County Jail (MCJ) earned best practice re-accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare (NCCHC).
- l. The MCSO was selected to participate in the Falcon Suicide Prevention Pilot Program.
- m. The MCJ began using the WRAP restraint device, a new, safer, humane restraint system, which allows for the restraint of troubled jail occupants who are a physical risk to themselves or others, while keeping the

restrained party in an upright seated position, rather than risky prone position.

- n. NARCAN has been made available at/in every housing unit in the MCJ.
 - o. The MCJ booking room implemented new arrest crisis intervention booking procedures in partnership with the MPD.
 - p. Probationary MCJ staff began receiving additional mental health training.
 - q. Increased collaboration with Wellpath helped the MCSO to better determine the physical and mental health needs of people in the MCJ's care, which has led to a continuous rate of hospital runs/hospital watches to reduce negative outcomes for jail occupants.
 - r. The MCSO launched its Civilian Volunteer Program, which allows Milwaukee County residents to "gift" their time to the MCSO to help produce and staff community engagement events. This program has begun to alleviate the workload of the MCSO's Public Affairs & Community Engagement (PACE) Unit, which consists of four full-time members who host or participate in more than 200 community events, annually.
 - s. The MCSO launched an internship program and is currently working with area colleges and universities to recruit, vet, and place student interns at the agency.
 - t. The MCSO launched the Sheriff's Community Advisory Board, which consists of 17 community members who offer insights and guidance to the Sheriff.
 - u. In the interest of transparency and accountability, the MCSO hosted a public town hall meeting to review and discuss the results of the MCJ audit, which recommended safety and policy changes in the jail.
 - v. The MCSO collaborated with the Red Cross to feed residents displaced by an apartment building fire.
 - w. The MCSO increased participation in our Medical Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program.
 - x. The MCSO hosted a 190th anniversary celebration, in collaboration with the Milwaukee Deputy Sheriff Association and the Retired Deputy Sheriff Association.
 - y. The MCSO joined the Sherman Park Neighborhood Watch.
 - z. The MCSO hosted the agency's 5th Annual 414 Trust Kickball Tournament.
2. What key factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?
- a. Even as recruitment efforts are working, staffing remains a challenge due to the lengthy process of onboarding qualified applicants, among both CO and deputy sheriff ranks. Low staffing hinders the MCSO's ability to have a legitimate staffing relief factor, compelling the agency instead to rely on overtime to fill required work shifts.
 - b. Wage compensation and compression remain a challenge, as the MCSO seeks to compensate members fairly and competitively.
 - c. The Milwaukee County Jail returning to pre-COVID operations has been

hurt by the court system's case backlog, which has led to some MCJ occupants being in our custody far longer than the facility was designed for. This includes high risk occupants remaining at the MCJ, rather than being moved to other, more appropriate facilities, because of the court backlog.

- d. Maintaining/securing security related equipment (facility cameras, body cameras, etc.) in the MCJ remains a struggle, as equipment ages out of effectiveness, and funds are scarce.
 - e. While working to improve occupant wellness outcomes in the jail, the MCJ has seen an increase in hospital runs and hospital watches – an average of one per day, two factors that further negatively impact the agency's staffing challenges.
 - f. A consistently high jail occupant population does not allow for proper occupant classification or maintenance of housing units.
 - g. On any given day, more than 25 percent of MCJ occupants have diagnosable mental health challenges.
 - h. A lack of a centralized unit or department to manage multi-agency contracts often slows and bogs down the administration of such contracts.
3. If any goals are changing, please list those and briefly explain why. (Please put "N/A" if your goals will remain the same.)

N/A

FISCAL EFFECT

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

PREPARED BY:

Office of the Sheriff, Denita R. Ball, Milwaukee County Sheriff

APPROVED BY:

ATTACHMENTS:

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk