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Summary

The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) continues to face challenges related to recruiting and retaining staff. This is part of a national trend affecting numerous employers. Challenges facing the department include generational turnover, staff burnout, labor market conditions, less scheduling flexibility, and an overall reduced interest in law enforcement careers. MDOC employees make up 22% of the state's workforce but the department continues to be short staffed. Vacancies occur throughout the department, but vacancies occur primarily with corrections officer positions. As a result, overtime costs are significant and continue to increase.

Background

Recruiting challenges include having to compete for talent in communities where there is already a reduced labor force and the inability to compete with benefits offered in other areas of employment (i.e., no remote work opportunities; facilities need to be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). The department struggles to retain staff primarily due to the nature of the work, the lack of scheduling flexibility, and staff burnout.

Recent Activity

MDOC continues to commit resources to recruitment and retention of employees. Recruitment efforts include advertising by means of the internet, television, and billboards; facility-specific recruitment teams and hiring events; satellite academies for some sites; and additional recruiting staff, including a social media recruiter. Retention efforts include increased pay for health care, skilled trades, and transportation staff, as well as recruitment and retention bonuses for staff ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 depending on years of service.

The Bottom Line

As of September 30, 2023, there were 1,020 corrections officer vacancies, 533 healthcare staff vacancies, and 123 central staff vacancies. Overtime hours are significant because of these vacancies. Historically, corrections officers overtime hours account for anywhere between 93% and 100% of total overtime hours. Overtime is paid at either one and one-half or two times the employee's regular rate of pay depending on the circumstances (i.e., voluntary vs. mandatory). In FY 2023, MDOC paid \$112.6 million in overtime costs.

