

Work Release Expansion Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will a work release facility increase crime in our community?

A: Work release facility clients seldom engage in criminal behavior while participating in the program. Facilities of this type can discourage and have been used to displace existing criminal behavior through the presence of staff and other law enforcement personnel.

Q: Who are these people and why are they being released in my county?

A: State law requires individuals releasing from state prisons to return to their counties of origin. A work release facility allows the individuals who are required to release to the surrounding area to be prepared to succeed.

Q: What benefit does a work release facility provide?

A: Work release facilities provide benefits to participants and local communities. In addition to recidivism reducing services like training and employment opportunities, community reintegration and access to rehabilitative services in the community, these facilities provide a stable workforce for local employers as well as employment opportunities at the facility for the surrounding community.

Q: What sorts of crimes have work release participants committed?

A: Participants in the work release program are completing sentences for a wide variety of conviction types. A breakdown of participant criminal histories is available for review in the reference section of this website.

Q: Who is coming in/out of the facilities?

A: Participants in this program are authorized under the authority of a community corrections officer to a leave and return to the facility for specific reasons such as school, work, counseling and outings with family or friends. In addition to families it is also common for families and children to be visiting program participants at these facilities.

Q: What actual impact does work release have on recidivism?

A: Participation in a work release program prepares the individual for their reentry to society by reducing risk factors like a lack of education or employment experience while enhance protective factors like family or community connections. The net result is an estimated 3% reduction in recidivism compared to the general prison population.

Q: If someone offends, do they get to participate again in WR?

A: Each applicant for this program is screened carefully by several layers of staff. In the event an applicant has participated in the program previously their prior performance is considered in the application process.

Q: We do so much already transitional populations...Why here?

A: The Department of Corrections is exploring expansion of this program in areas where data and records show individuals required release to the area are denied services due to a lack of capacity. These individuals are currently released at a higher likelihood for recidivism. Some counties being explored have existing work release facilities which are too small to serve their returning population's needs.

Q: What is the screening process for program admission?

A: The following eligibility criteria must be met to be considered for transfer to Work/Training Release:

- Has earned or will have earned the appropriate prison custody classification level within twelve months of the Earned Release Date (ERD)
- Has no active felony detainers, warrants or deportation holds
- Plans to release within the state of Washington
- Does not have a current or previous recommendation for civil commitment by the End of Sentence Review Committee
- Is physically and mentally able to participate in the Work Release program and secure and maintain employment and/or education/training or maintain oneself without on-site medical assistance
- Intends to become gainfully employed or participate in education, vocational training or significant or targeted transitional programming
- Known victim safety concerns must be mitigated and approved by a victim advocate
- If convicted of a sex offense, must be amenable to crime-related treatment and not pose an assessed risk to public safety
- Has completed or successfully participated in treatment during his/her incarceration to the best of their ability, if treatment is indicated
- Has a release plan or crime of conviction which meets local facility siting/community board agreements
- Individuals convicted of Murder 1st Degree are not eligible for Work/Training Release unless it is part of the DOC's structured reentry planning process.

As part of the screening criteria, Work/Training Release supervisors review each referral or application individually and verify the information above.

Additional screening criteria are applied prior to transfer to Work/Training Release based on crime type, sentence structure requirements, medical clearance, conflicts such as a lack of a social security number, or administrative or programming holds.

Q: What are the Behavioral Health needs of those who participate in WR?

A: The general and behavioral health needs of work release participants mirror those of the general population in the community. Thankfully these individuals have access to health care benefits and are able to begin receiving services from the same community based providers they will continue receiving services from after their release to the community.

Q: Will this facility bring Sexually Violent Predators (SVP) from other counties?

A: Individuals under consideration for civil commitment or presently civilly committed as sexually violent predators are not eligible for this program.

Q: Will this just be a facility or will there be support services paid for as well? Will they offer services available in the same location i.e. treatment, support groups, education?

A: Unlike a prison which provides services inside of a secure perimeter, the concept of work release is to provide a safe and secure housing environment which allows the participant to access a wide variety of supportive services, education and employment opportunities in the community while cooperating with monitoring and receiving case management services. Existing facilities are successful in making community based services available to their client populations.

Q: What are the housing options long-term? After WR, where do these individuals reside and what housing options are available to them?

A: In most cases individuals releasing from this program return to the homes of their family members and friends in the areas where they lived before their prison sentences. In the event an individual needs assistance with locating or paying for transitional housing the department maintains an extensive transitional housing database with long-term affordable options in nearly every community.

Q: There's an epidemic of substance abuse. Are we adding a criminal element to an already growing problem to our county?

A: Work release programs reduce the risk for future criminal behavior in a community by preparing the population of individuals required to release to that community for their future by providing access to education, employment, counseling, substance abuse treatment, medical care and community reintegration.

Q: Will this Reentry program be connected to community in a strategic way?

A: The purpose of the department's stakeholder outreach and community involvement process integrated with our siting process is to develop or enhance strategic connections and purpose.

Q: Are all the beds available today currently filled?

A: At any given time there are approximately 1,200 individuals who have been approved to transfer to work release. These individuals are waiting for bed space to become available in their release areas. For many, the opportunity to attend and participate in this program will expire due to reaching the end of their sentence term prior to a bed becoming available.

Q: If Snohomish received a facility would it provide relief for King Co? Would King county still need a facility at that point?

A: A small number of Snohomish County clients are able to access work release services in King County before releasing to Snohomish County. Shifting this number to a facility in Snohomish County would not relieve the capacity shortfall in King County. The release volume in Snohomish County is sufficient to support a work release facility and indicates significant numbers of releasing individuals do so without the advantage of work release services.

Q: Is there or will there be substance abuse treatment for in/out patient?

A: Work release participants access substance use disorder and other types of treatment through community treatment providers accessible to the general public. These are the same treatment providers who they will continue to receive services from upon release to the community.

Q: How will you deal with transportation challenges?

A: The Department of Corrections currently operates 12 Work/Training Release facilities which have differing levels of access to public transportation. In areas where public transportation is not adequate the program provides additional options to include transportation by staff.

Q: Do you plan on building or just site a location in the 8 month timeframe?

A: The Department does not plan to build a new facility. The approved and funded expansion plan and siting model specifies solicitation of long term leased facilities with funding for tenant improvements. In the event an existing, currently sited location is proposed and receives the Community Advisory Committee's recommendation, it is possible the initial 50 bed, 8 month timeframe could be met with an operational facility by June 30, 2020.

