



The Illinois Department of Corrections

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDOC Launches Wellness Workshop for Corrections Families

First State Correctional Agency in Nation to Extend Wellness Courses to Family Members of Frontline Employees

(Springfield) – Today, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) announced it will begin offering a correctional wellness course for adult family members of frontline employees from correctional facilities from across Illinois. IDOC's Staff Wellness Response Team (SWRT) will present the first workshop to families later this week. This marks the first time a state correctional agency in the United States extended a staff wellness course to family members of frontline employees.

"IDOC is thrilled to expand its wellness program to encompass the families of our dedicated correctional staff," **said IDOC Acting Director Latoya Hughes**. "Together, we are strengthening support beyond the workplace, recognizing the unique challenges correctional families face and their vital role in the well-being and success of our staff."

"Recognizing the immense value of support between staff and their loved ones, I believe this course is an essential addition to our program," **said IDOC Staff Wellness Coordinator Jonathan Brown**. "This course will provide invaluable insight to family members, enabling them to grasp the experiences of correctional staff within our department. We hope family members will be better equipped to offer informed support to their loved ones and staff will learn to integrate familial support into their lives."

The 4-hour proprietary course, 'Correctional Family Wellness – For Families' was designed by Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, an organization that assists correctional agencies and other public safety agencies with countering occupation-related fatigue in their staff and cultivating a healthier workplace climate and a more engaged workforce through targeted skill-based training and research. The interactive course presents information to adult family members about how correctional work realities can impact family life with suggestions for dealing with scenarios commonly experienced by correctional families. The course is designed for adult family members of seasoned correctional employees and family members of new staff. Course topics cover the impact of the corrections work environment on employees, practical suggestions for adult correctional family members to support one another, managing job stress when it intrudes on home life, and the basics of effective self-care.

Mission: To serve justice in Illinois and increase public safety by promoting positive change for those in custody, operating successful reentry programs, and reducing victimization.

Expanding the family dynamic into wellness programming is part of IDOC's continued efforts to emphasize the importance of self-care and develop a departmental culture that demonstrates staff wellness. In 2017, IDOC began planning a program to promote staff well-being, which later became the Staff Wellness Response Team. SWRT's leadership, which includes line staff of various job titles, facilities, backgrounds, and experience levels, reached out to correctional departments in other states, first responders, law enforcement agencies, and mental health providers to learn about the successes and barriers to staff wellness initiatives to develop a framework for IDOC. Subsequently, IDOC created a full-time Staff Wellness Coordinator position to expand this progress into a sustainable and robust staff wellness initiative.

Currently, SWRT has 200 members throughout IDOC facilities along with three Staff Wellness Regional Coordinators to address the mental and emotional needs of staff. This highly trained team assists facilities following critical incidents and offers peer support through confidential referrals to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and AFSCME's Personal Support Program (PSP). SWRT offers 'Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment', a 10-hour voluntary course that analyzes the causes and signs of corrections fatigue and provides strategies for professional fulfillment and self-care, to current IDOC staff members and all incoming cadet classes. In FY22, SWRT developed and began hosting 'All Things You' wellness days at facilities featuring training focused on the eight dimensions of wellness for all staff members. In FY23, SWRT completed more than 10,000 peer-to-peer check-ins statewide and established staff wellness rooms at all IDOC facilities. These rooms provide a private area for staff to decompress after a critical incident, along with materials and resources beneficial to mental and emotional health. Last year, SWRT also launched a staff wellness podcast for IDOC staff, producing and publishing eight episodes with retirees, frontline staff, and executive staff as guests.

Adult family member of IDOC frontline staff who are interested in participating in a future class can submit a [form of interest](#) or reach out to the Staff Wellness Response Team at doc.staffwellnessresponseteam@illinois.gov.

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