

# Internal Memo

**Date:** August 28, 2025

**To:** Friends and Family of Incarcerated Persons

**From:** Paul Schnell, Commissioner

## RE: Updates Regarding the Phased Closure of MCF-Stillwater

The Minnesota Department of Corrections is reducing the population at MCF-Stillwater by about 50% by the end of September 2025. We know this may raise questions or concerns. Here is important information about the changes, why they are happening, and how we are supporting incarcerated persons.

### Cellmate Selection

- If you are moving from Stillwater, you can request to live with a preferred cellmate at your new facility within the first 90 days after you arrive.
  - Both you and your preferred cellmate will need to fill out a short form, and staff will review your request.
  - If approved, staff will try to make the move within a week, as long as it's safe and works with the facility's needs.

### Transferring and Visitation

- Case managers are being informed of transfers ahead of time to update case plans and to provide continuing reentry support.
- Friends and family do not need to reapply to visit another facility if they have already been approved.
- Incarcerated people who are transferred to another facility should inform their friends and family of their new location as the DOC does not provide this notification.

### Safety in Facilities

- Population and staffing levels will be monitored to keep facilities safe.
- Placement decisions use the MnSafeD risk tool, which helps predict safety needs.
- While facilities are experiencing higher population levels than in recent years, they continue to operate below full capacity.

## Property Limits and Transfers

When an incarcerated person transfers from MCF-Stillwater to another facility, the new facility may have different property limits. Most prisons have double-bunked cells, which require stricter safety rules.

- The standard limit is two bins of property, including legal materials.
- Some people at MCF-Stillwater have a third bin for legal or school materials. At other facilities, this may not be allowed. These rules are for fire safety and space reasons, not as punishment.
- If an incarcerated person has extra property, they will have 30 days to decide what to do with it. Options include sending items to family, friends, or your attorney.

## Digital File Storage

Policy 303.040, which covers computer file storage, is being updated for the first time in ten years.

- The personal computer folder storage limit for incarcerated persons is changing from 50MB to 20MB. This size limit allows for the storage of hundreds of pages of legal or school documents.
- Files not used for a year will be deleted to keep space available for active work.
- Personal and work files need to be stored separately.
- Storage is still available for legal, school, and reentry purposes.
- Personal storage devices (like USB drives) are not allowed for security reasons. The incarcerated person's personal folder is the safe and supported place to store approved files.

## Access to Programs

- Even with the population reduction, MCF-Stillwater will keep important programs:
  - Treatment Programs: The Atlantis substance use program is expanding from 34 to 90 beds.
  - Earned Living Units (ELU): A new program for people showing positive behavior. Participants will have access to education, MINNCOR jobs, the *Prison Mirror* newspaper, transitions support, and other programs.
- For those who are transferred to other facilities, transfers decisions will consider your program, education, and treatment needs to reduce disruption.
- We know how important work opportunities are, and the DOC is looking for ways to expand access to job assignments in facilities.

- For those in college or higher education programs, transfers will happen during academic breaks.
- Work Crews: The four Stillwater Institution Community Work Crews (ICWC) have moved to Lino Lakes.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we implement these changes. Our goal is to ensure a safe and supportive environment that prioritizes the well-being and rehabilitation of incarcerated people.