



Internal Memo

Date: September 18, 2025

To: Friends and Family of Incarcerated Persons

From: Paul Schnell, Commissioner

RE: Update on the Phased Closure of MCF-Stillwater

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) continues to prepare for Phase 1 of the MCF-Stillwater closure. This is an update to the progress since the September 11 memo:

MCF-Stillwater Population Update:

Efforts to gradually reduce the population at MCF-Stillwater remain on track. As of last week, the population at Stillwater was 617. Transfers are occurring as planned, with a goal of reaching 553 individuals at that facility by the end of the month.

MCF-Stillwater Programs and Housing:

- **Earned Living Unit (ELU):** Final placement decisions for individuals who will reside in the ELU have been made. The facility is preparing for additional intakes.
- **Atlantis Treatment Program:** The treatment team continues to actively interview and onboard new participants as we move toward our goal of reaching 93 residents—which we anticipate reaching this week. The expansion represents a significant milestone for the program, bringing new opportunities for growth within the Atlantis community.

As part of this growth, we are enhancing our treatment approach by expanding Peer Support. This includes Certified Peer Support Specialists from Stillwater as well as other facilities who have recently transferred to the ELU. In the coming weeks, all Certified Peer Support Specialists will join a meeting with the Atlantis team to strengthen collaboration and integrate lived-experience perspectives into the program. Their involvement will help foster meaningful conversations around recovery, resilience, and community building.

We are also working closely with a case manager to facilitate Thinking for a Change (T4C) for all pre-treatment clients who are not currently in active treatment. This will provide valuable skills and structured programming to support positive decision-making and personal growth.

As we continue to expand, we recognize that community is at the heart of successful treatment. Our goal is to create an environment where participants feel connected, supported, and empowered to help one another as they work toward long-term recovery. The addition of peer-driven support, combined with the dedication of our treatment staff, will further strengthen this shared sense of purpose and collective progress.

Cellmate Requests:

A cellmate selection process was created for individuals transferring out of Stillwater. Individuals moving to other facilities can request to live with a preferred cellmate at their new facility within the first 90 days of arrival as long as the facility is able to accommodate roommate requests. For example, the dorm structure at Moose Lake means that requests are not possible.

- 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.

Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we undergo significant changes in Minnesota's correctional system. Your participation in programs, respectful behavior, and commitment to personal growth are essential in creating a safer and more supportive environment for everyone.