

MCF-Stillwater Earned Living Units

Overview for Incarcerated People

The Minnesota Department of Corrections is starting a new program called Earned Living Units. This program will first be at MCF-Stillwater until it closes in 2029. Earned Living Units are for people who have done well during their time in prison. They will get more freedom and choices. Even though it starts in Stillwater, people in all men's DOC medium and close custody facilities who meet the eligibility criteria can apply. We hope to expand this program to other facilities in the future based on what we learn in Stillwater.

The daily life in Earned Living Units will be very different from what it is now. These units will look, sound, and feel different. The goal is to offer a living experience with fewer restrictions because of the positive history of those chosen for these units. However, DOC will still be responsible for everyone's safety. The people selected for these units will help design them, including making community rules, accountability structures, and choosing incentives.

Here are some examples of incentives that might be offered in the MCF-Stillwater Earned Living Units:

- Opportunities for personal growth and rehabilitation
- Education programs, including college and post-college opportunities and the tattoo program
- Facilitating and participating in rehabilitative groups
- Volunteer and other enrichment opportunities
- Employment
- Transition support
- Increased access to visiting
- Physical space improvements
- Single cells, with the chance to earn two cells per person for more living space
- Greater access to recreation and the outdoors
- Better furniture options (like couches)
- More opportunities for personal choice
- Better canteen and dining options
- More electronics choices
- More clothing choices

Eligibility Criteria

The specific eligibility criteria for Earned Living Units will be shared soon. Overall, we are looking for people who have shown good behavior and progress towards their goals. They must be in a medium or close custody facility (except for those in the Minimum Security Unit at Stillwater, who can also apply). They

must have served at least one year in prison and have a release date after October 1, 2026. We will also use the MNSafeD¹ assessment to determine eligibility.

Application Process

To be considered for the Earned Living Unit, a written application must be submitted. This application should include basic background information and one-page answers to three questions. Accommodations will be available for those who need them. Applicants must also provide the names of at least one DOC staff member who can speak to their successes and growth while incarcerated.

A team of staff from across the agency, including MCF-Stillwater representatives and leaders, will review the applications and make selection recommendations. Final decisions will be made by DOC leadership.

Additional information about eligibility criteria, the application, and how to submit your application will be available in facilities starting the week of June 30.

¹ The MNSafeD is a validated risk assessment instrument that has proven to be accurate in predicting institutional misconduct for Minnesota's prison population. Individuals will be provided information about their score and what it means for their application.