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# Staffing shortages impact operations at Michigan's prisons

"I think it's at about 920 right now"



Like many other industries, the Michigan Department of Corrections said they are seeing 'significant' vacancies for officers across the state.

By [Ta'Niyah Jordan](#)

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LANSING, Mich. (WILX) - Prisons in Michigan are facing staffing shortages that corrections officers say threaten their daily operations.

Like many other industries, the Michigan Department of Corrections said they are seeing 'significant' vacancies for officers across the state.

G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility in Jackson is a local state prison in need of more corrections officers. Their union, the Michigan Corrections Organization, called their current need a "severe staffing crisis".

"They're at approximately 25% vacancy rate right now, which as you can imagine results in a lot of mandatory overtime for the remaining officers. So it's really taking a toll on the current workforce," said Byron Osborn, corrections officer and president of the Michigan Corrections Organization.

Right now, Michigan has hundreds of prison officer vacancies. "I think it's at about 920 right now," said Osborn. He said all four prison facilities in Jackson need more staff.

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*"Like many employers, the MDOC is facing significant staffing pressures in some communities. This has a direct impact on our current employees, who must consistently answer the call to ensure that our facilities can operate.*

*The MDOC has undertaken a variety of efforts to address staffing over the last few years, including investing record funding into recruiting around the state, operating quarterly corrections officer academies, changing to a 12-hour shift schedule at some facilities, offering retention bonuses, and recertifying former corrections officers who work for the MDOC in other roles to work voluntary overtime. These steps have helped us reach staffing stability at some prisons, but the Department continues to face very real challenges related to staffing in the current environment at others.*

*The Legislature and MDOC recently agreed to \$12m in recruitment and retention bonuses in the upcoming fiscal year for corrections officers. The goal of these incentives is to attract new candidates, while increasing the retention of current employees, with a focus on those in the first three years of their career with the MDOC. The Department has also invested in trying to improve the working environment, equipment, and experience of employees to increase retention, which is an ongoing effort at all prisons.*

*The Department is appreciative of the hard work of our employees who are ensuring that our facilities continue to run safely and effectively even as staffing presents a serious challenge at many prisons. The MDOC will continue to engage with our employees, prospective employees, the Legislature and others to develop and implement strategies to support our staff and operations."*

*— Kyle Kaminski, MDOC Spokesperson*

The Department has \$12 million to recruit and retain more staff. It's an incentive that MDOC said will attract more workers that are ready to fill these positions.

"We've got the departments utilizing other staff from outside of our ranks to try and help fill in the holes in our ranks, which then, of course, puts a burden on them," said Byron.

Osborn is now calling on lawmakers to solve what he calls a "severe staffing crisis."

Jackson area correctional facilities will have a job fair August 6-12 to hire Corrections Officers, Healthcare and Mental Health professionals, Food Service staff, Skilled Trades workers, and other positions. The fair will be located at the Jackson County Fair at Jackson County Fair, 128 West Ganson Street, Jackson, Michigan, 49201.

## Contact Information

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