

Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Expansion of Opening Avenues to Re-Entry Success (OARS) to Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland and Iron Counties

The Citizens of Northwest Wisconsin Request

That the Wisconsin Department of Corrections OARS program be expanded to Northwestern Wisconsin.

Background

The OARS program enhances public safety by supporting the successful transition, recovery, and self-sufficiency of offenders with mental health needs as they reintegrate into the community. This is a vision and effort that should be supported and encouraged by every county in the state.

- OARS enhances public safety by reducing recidivism and revocation rates.
- OARS is available in 44 counties, none of them in the very Northern part of Wisconsin.
- OARS has strict criteria to participate.

Most people being released from incarceration face difficulty obtaining housing and employment. Those who are afflicted with addiction need to have a safe and sober place to land when they are released to prevent relapsing into unhealthy lifestyles.

During incarceration, prior to release, is an opportune time to plan for the first weeks and months and year out of prison or jail. According to the *Brookings Institution*\*

- Prisoners who are rearrested are most likely to do so during the first year of release.
- Those who are not arrested in the first year are less likely to be arrested once again.
- In addition, recently released prisoners experience much higher mortality rates than the general population.

The OARS program contractor has offices in Superior Wisconsin. This could be a base for OARS in Northwest Wisconsin.

\* <https://www.brookings.edu/research/twelve-facts-about-incarceration-and-prisoner-reentry/>