

Abuse, Indifference and Exploitation: An Assessment of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections

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A report by the Milwaukee Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee



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Introduction

This report grew out of a recognition among those active in the work of the Milwaukee Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC) the systemic issues within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) demand an equally systematic cataloging. Through consistent correspondence with people held throughout the DOC, Milwaukee IWOC is particularly well-suited to this task. The aim of this report is to give voice to those incarcerated within the Wisconsin DOC in a way that will encourage broader public recognition of their humanity and the dire situation of those held in Wisconsin prisons, and to encourage people moved by what they read to stand in solidarity with them.

Emphasizing the voices and perspectives of those most directly affected by incarceration is a key element of this report. Many of our contacts are desperate for the public to hear their stories because their experience with internal complaint systems has been largely negative, but they must also face the stigma that comes with incarceration. People who have no direct contact with the system often prefer not to think about the day-to-day life of incarcerated people, embodying Angela Davis' idea that "prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings."

In an effort to demonstrate the importance of listening to incarcerated people, we have utilized public records as well as research by others in order to demonstrate the credibility of the claims of abuse and exploitation that are so often made by people held in Wisconsin prisons. While many other policy matters include the perspective of multiple stakeholders, including those with first-hand experience and knowledge about the matter at hand, incarcerated people are almost always left out of discussions about the prison system despite them being the most affected by policy decisions.

Another theme that persists across the various issues discussed in this report is the lack of transparency and accountability within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. Whether it is responding to internal complaints by the incarcerated or to the general public, administrators at both the facility and system-wide level consistently refuse to adjust policies that put incarcerated people at risk when pressed to do so. This lack of transparency is also seen through the lack of public disclosure of corruption and abuse by staff and administrators. This lack of transparency, combined with the dehumanization of the incarcerated, creates an utterly toxic situation that severely undermines the department's stated mission to, "Protect the public, our staff and those in our charge" and "provide opportunities for positive change and success."

This report is not an exhaustive list of the issues within the Wisconsin DOC. Rather, it is an attempt to amplify and expand on some issues raised by those most directly affected by incarceration.

Notes and Content Warnings

In most cases we have used the words of the incarcerated verbatim, though not always with attribution. By maintaining the anonymity of those who have shared their perspectives and experiences, we hope that any added scrutiny resulting from this report will not lead to retaliation against those whose words appear here. If someone has consented to having their name associated with their words in this report it will appear, but otherwise the authors are anonymous. Since our ability to independently verify what is reported is limited by the institutions as well as the realities of incarceration, we must rely on the information we receive. In many cases, issues persist across institutions and are reported by multiple people who have little ability or reason to contact each other before writing to us. Direct quotes from incarcerated people will be shown in italics.

By its nature, this report will deal with issues of self-harm, medical neglect and mistreatment, and other forms of abuse. Rather than provide content warnings on each section, we are including a general warning here.

We have tried to include relevant portions of public records within the body of the report, but the records used appear in full for viewing or download on our website. Because the canteen pricing sheets were made available in PDF form or as printed sheets, they have been transcribed into a public spreadsheet.

All documents used in this report are available for viewing and download on our website at this link:

<https://wisconsinprisonvoices.org/actions/report-on-abuse-neglect-and-exploitation-in-the-wisconsin-doc-as-of-march-2019/>

Executive Summary

This report investigates five specific issues within the Wisconsin DOC: deaths in DOC facilities, lockdowns, potential misuse of incapacitating agents like pepper spray, exploitative canteen prices, and problems with food service provided by institutions. While much more could be said about each topic, this report attempts to place the words of incarcerated people next to public records and other data obtained by Milwaukee IWOC in order to demonstrate the systemic nature of the problems within the Wisconsin prison system.

The Committee on Inmate and Youth Deaths, established in 2001, meets on a quarterly basis to discuss deaths which occur within DOC facilities. The committee is made up of medical professionals working both within and outside the DOC as well as other DOC officials and people not affiliated with the DOC but for this committee. While the reports of this committee list the number of deaths in DOC facilities as well as the members of the committee, it is unclear what recommendations have emerged from this committee and which (if any) have been enacted in order to reduce deaths within DOC facilities.

While there is a formal committee tasked with investigating these deaths, our investigation of lockdowns within the DOC reveals that while state law gives prison officials the ability to convene a disturbance review panel, none have been convened in almost 10 years despite there being numerous lockdowns reported. While these lockdowns often result in permanent changes to how incarcerated people are able to visit loved ones or make use of facilities like the library, the lack of interest in convening these panels further suggests a lack of transparency and institutional accountability.

In response to numerous reports of threats to use pepper spray and other incapacitating agents, we investigated the use of incapacitating agents within the DOC. Multiple incarcerated people report staff threatening to use or using pepper spray on people while being assaulted with no medical care after the fact or while engaging in self-harm. These incidents would go against the policies set out in the training that all DOC staff are required to undergo before being issued pepper spray, which state unequivocally that pepper spray is not to be used in order to make someone move and that incarcerated people should receive necessary medical attention following exposure to pepper spray.

We also investigated the canteen system in the Wisconsin DOC in order to expose the way in which this system forces incarcerated people to pay for the cost of their own incarceration at exploitative prices. While contractors who are awarded the canteen contracts can expect substantial revenue from canteen sales, incarcerated people often struggle to pay for basic toiletries, food, and medicine. By placing the bid price for canteen services from 2012 to today alongside the prices between contracts in one concise dataset, we hope to bring transparency to this part of the so-called “prison industrial complex.” In addition to this reported data, we

have also calculated what someone making Wisconsin's minimum wage could expect to pay for these items if they were charged the same rates as those inside DOC facilities.

In addition to the canteen pricing, we have also attempted to investigate problems in the food provided by the institution itself, as incarcerated people can often be forced to augment the food provided by the state with canteen purchases if sufficient food is not provided. This investigation revealed acknowledgement by prison staff of consistent problems in receiving the food ordered as well as an increase in complaints about food service at a particular DOC facility which coincided with allegations of mismanagement of food service by incarcerated people at that same facility.

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Deaths in DOC Facilities

Deaths in DOC facilities would on the surface appear to be an area where minimum standards of transparency and accountability could be maintained. However, this is far from the case.

One need look no further than the Committee on Inmate and Youth Deaths, established in April 2001 to “provide the Department of Corrections Secretary and the facilities with an objective review of inmate and youth deaths.” The committee meets four times a year, and comprises doctors, nurses, and prison administrators as well people not affiliated with the DOC but for this committee.

In 2016, the committee reported that 66 people had died in Wisconsin prisons. Of these deaths, 36 were “anticipated” deaths meaning the person had a medical diagnosis of illness and a life expectancy of less than one year. The remaining 30 were classified as unanticipated, meaning there was no medical diagnosis. 12 of those unanticipated deaths were suicides, with the remaining 18 being reported but not described in further detail.

Their 2017 report listed 43 deaths in custody, 31 of which were anticipated. Of the 12 unanticipated deaths, six were suicides with the remaining six being reported but not described.

The meetings of this committee are public meetings, but much of their work is done in a closed session, so it is difficult to know what (if anything) came out of these discussions or what they have recommended in order to reduce deaths in the DOC. Of course these statistics can lead one away from discussing these deaths in human terms. Since we do not yet have the 2018 report, here are some first-hand accounts of deaths reported by incarcerated people during 2018:

From Columbia Correctional Institution:

"We had another suicide in our seg unit DS-2. The inmate that killed himself was Devin Katzfey. He was DOA on 9-1-18 at 4 AM at the Hospital. He was a young man only 22 years old. It was his first time in seg. He was doing 180 days in seg...He was asking for help but nobody would listen....How many people have to kill themselves before change comes. The seg units in CCI are hell"

Another incarcerated person at Columbia reports that non-lethal incidents of self-harm are not only very common, but frequently ignored by DOC staff:

"Suicides are treated with skepticism. Staff will stand outside the door and not know if a guy laying on 6th floor with a noose around his neck is serious. They say they perform CPR and try to help, but it is their practice to wait for a

response team to arrive, then go in to the cell, only after restraining him will they check if he is medically sound.

They take no concern to the mental health crisis here. I can't tell you how often I have seen a guy cut himself. For attention or otherwise. The numbers are staggering. Staff gets frustrated and looks at those who self harm with disdain. Often referring to them as "cutters". In segregation they have a habit just letting the inmate bleed."

That these two reports are for Columbia is notable in part because Milwaukee IWOC has been engaged in a [public pressure campaign](#) against administrators at Columbia for almost a year in response to repeated and consistent complaints from those held there. Sadly, these efforts were in vain, as another incarcerated person would take his own life there before 2018 was finished.

Lockdowns

[State law](#) allows wardens to place an institution on "lockdown" following a disturbance "that prevents the normal functioning of the institution." If the disturbance results in an injury, the Secretary of Corrections "may convene a disturbance review panel to investigate the disturbance," and if such a panel is convened they are to produce a written report as a panel that is then submitted to the secretary. This is by no means the only legal authority that prison administrators have to limit the mobility of incarcerated people, even if there is no disturbance. This is sometimes referred to as "Modified Confinement," and while this issue is not discussed in this report, it should be recognized that a disturbance does not necessarily precede increased restrictions on incarcerated peoples' movement within the institution.

In July 2017, Oshkosh Correctional Institution was placed on lockdown following deaths from drug overdoses. This led to many sweeping changes to visiting procedures, outlined by one person incarcerated there:

Rec time done by unit in shorter shifts compared to longer, more open shifts before

Schedule personal laundry with locked door

Potted houseplants discontinued

Library periods shortened by 5 mins

Strip searches after visits

Inmates cannot use restroom during visits, if they do so, the visit terminates

Visiting room tables are cut to 12" tall

Inmates no longer deliver training kitchen food to tables

No photos at visits

No games at visits besides cards

No sharing food on visits – if your mom can't finish her order it goes to waste

No pockets on pants or shirts

No belt loops on pants

Inmates no longer retain the envelope that letters come in, unless it's legal mail

Inter-library loans are discontinued

An open records request for the notes and reports of any disturbance review panels convened after a lockdown was initially denied for being overly broad. When the request was revised to include a specific date range, in this case the years 2010 and 2018, the request returned no responsive documents.

When asked why a request which was initially rejected for having been too broad would return no responsive records over an eight year period, an official of the DOC confirmed that it was because not a single disturbance review panel had been convened during that time. While lockdowns can often lead to permanent changes in how an incarcerated person can visit with their loved ones or make use of services like the library (as was the case at Oshkosh), it seems that no official within the administration of any prison saw fit to seriously investigate the causes of the lockdown using statutory tools already at their disposal.

Use of Pepper Spray and other “Incapacitating Agents”

On October 8, 2018 a person held at Wisconsin Secure Program Facility (WSPF) was [assaulted](#) after a guard apparently failed to detect a large knife. Here is an excerpted account of the incident in the words of the person who was assaulted:

On 8 Oct. 2018, I was stabbed in my head 3 times by i/m Jesse Keith, while at group indoor rec, which the Administration requires us to attend in order to get out of solitary confinement. Keith's knife was approx. 15" solid still [steel], "hid" in his waistband ... Then [a guard] CS-sprayed me in my face as I lay on the ground with Keith over me trying to stab me. Finally, they sent me to GBCI, denied all my meds (psych + medical), denied my legal property for 30+ days (claiming to search it), kept me in a feces/urine sprayed cell for first 2- days with 31 staples in my head + "minor" stab wounds elsewhere – I couldn't even get a bandaid!!"

Another [person](#) held in Waupun Correctional describes threats to deploy these agents against people who are threatening self-harm or suicide:

It is known that inmates are doing self harm on a constant basis. Either they are being allowed to run headfirst into doors and walls or jump off sinks, while officers say "you are playing, where's the blood?" Inmates have also been cutting and hanging themselves. While an inmate is hanging Officers will stand there, pulling at their mace, and state "get down from their before I spray you".

These incidents would stand in stark contrast to the stated policy governing use of incapacitating agents as well as the required training that all employees authorized to carry such agents are to receive before carrying things like pepper spray. While the DOC was unable to produce a list of all employees who have received the training and those who have not, Milwaukee IWOC obtained the [training materials](#) for this mandatory training.

According to a powerpoint presentation used in the training sessions, guards are to determine whether use of an incapacitating agent is justifiable or desirable before deploying as well as “provide clear direction to inmate.” The incident described above, where one incarcerated person has assaulted another with the victim of the assault also being sprayed in his face while being assaulted, hardly seems to fit such a description.

There is also discussion of medical attention that may be necessary in cases of incapacitating agents exposure. According to the training material, medical staff should provide appropriate medical care to incarcerated people who have been exposed to an incapacitating agents. Comments embedded in the powerpoint file used in the training suggest that while staff would “need to know” that medical staff should be advised when these agents are used and that incarcerated people should receive a change of clothing, the subsequent slide’s comments suggests they “might need to know” that those exposed to incapacitating agents are also entitled to have changes of bedding and the opportunity to shower. Why these requirements are not all universally necessary for people using these agents was not clear based on the training material.

The lesson plans for the training explicitly state that “OC” (here referring to Oleoresin Capsicum, commonly referred to as “pepper spray”) is not to be used as a punishment or to make someone move.

Let’s look at each of the statements in the OC Policy a bit closer now.

1. OC is not to be used as punishment or to facilitate offender movement.

The ECRM states that: Field staff in DCC may direct the use of OC spray toward an offender, a third person, or animal *only* when acting in self-defense or defense of a third person.

OC use is *not authorized* because an offender refuses to follow orders or for the purpose of causing bodily harm or discomfort. In all instances, de-escalation should be attempted prior to use of OC.

This stands in stark contrast to the second report from inside Waupun Correctional where people who are threatening self-harm or suicide are threatened with pepper spray if they do not comply with an order.

Canteen

On April 1, 2013 the Wisconsin DOC entered into a contract with Keefe Commissary Network, headquartered in St. Louis, MO, to provide canteen services for Wisconsin prisons. The corporate predecessor to Keefe Commissary network was purchased in 1974 by the owners of Enterprise Rent-A-Car. While Enterprise has tried to [publicly distance](#) itself from its lucrative prison profiteering business, a copy of Keefe's proposal to the Wisconsin DOC obtained by the Milwaukee IWOC show that not only are the companies closely related, but that Keefe's operations depend heavily on IT and other infrastructure from Enterprise.

4.1.1 Proposer shall provide a description of services and activities as they relate to correctional services and products.

Response: Keefe Supply Company is an affiliate of Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Enterprise, established in 1957, is a privately owned company headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri. Currently, Enterprise has annual sales exceeding \$14 billion worldwide. With over 50,000 employees and more than 500,000 cars in the fleet, Enterprise is the largest rental car company in the world.

Being allied with this business and the financial resources is a great benefit. It possesses technological power of world-class proportions; employing over 400 programmers, technicians, and systems managers. Enterprise has the largest set of AS/400's in the world serving a single purpose with a complete satellite network spanning the globe. These are integrated with over 1500 PCs connected to LAN's in a frame relay configuration across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

The Centric Group, formerly known as the Enterprise Capital Group, was established in 1974 to diversify the interests of Enterprise Rent-A-Car. The Centric Group is the managing parent of 6 companies including Keefe Supply Company and its' affiliate, Keefe Commissary Network. The Centric Group achieved sales of over \$793 million in 2011, with 2,522 employees and are forecasted to achieve sales of over \$856 million in 2012. The Keefe Group, comprised of Keefe Supply Company, Keefe Commissary Network L.L.C, Access Corrections L.L.C., and Access SecurePak L.L.C, is the major contributor to Centric Group's revenues with staffing of 2,215 employees nationwide and 2011 sales of over \$683 million.

In 2018, the DOC began soliciting bids for a new contract for canteen services. While that bidding process was ongoing Keefe continued to supply canteen services. Records obtained by Milwaukee IWOC confirmed that Keefe submitted a bid for this contract, though in this proposal there is no mention of their relationship with Enterprise Rent-A-Car. The DOC decided to award the contract to Union Supply Group according to an [intent to protest](#) document sent to the DOC by lawyers working on behalf of Keefe. While the outcome of their protest was not clear, reports from incarcerated people suggest that Union Supply has taken over canteen services.

When [asked](#) how they would describe the canteen services provided by Keefe Commissary Network in September 2018—while Keefe was protesting the decision to award the contract to another competitor—one person put it succinctly:

“Exploitation! The prices are outrageous. You pay or you go without – no other options, and the prices keep going up and up and we haven’t gotten any sort of raise in wages in years”

[Another](#) at a different prison also describes problems with processing orders:

“Oh, don’t get me started on those idiots down in St. Louis! Who puts soda in with potato chips and candy bars? They do, they dont give a rats ass if its destroyed or not they know if we return it it will be 2 more weeks till its rectified and they’ll just do it again. That’s if you get your order right in the first place”

In an [open letter](#) to those on the outside, one incarcerated person described the experience of dealing with Keefe:

Canteen is always a hassle. Keefe, the company with the canteen contract, gets more right than wrong, but at what point does the error rate become unacceptable? ... At least 1/3 of prisoners ordering canteen have orders completed wrongly. There is missing stuff, added items, packages sliced or broken open, crushed chips, etc. Then how refunds are handled is frustrating. It could take several weeks, and the business office might take deductions out for obligations. You never know. Would you patronize a store that charged you more, had poor service, forgot half your order and crushed your chips and cereal? What if your donuts were moldy? If your cheese was runny with globs in it?”

As is to be expected, incarcerated people are acutely aware of the impossible situation that prison vendors like Keefe put them in: forced to give the small amount of money they earn to a business that can charge whatever it wants for things and deliver damaged goods without fear of incarcerated people going to a competitor.

The projected sales of items, included as part of the bid, demonstrate the extent to which companies like Keefe rely on neglect and deprivation on the part of state prisons to give them a market for their products. Among the items Keefe anticipated selling the most of when preparing their bid were antibacterial soap, toothpaste, laundry detergent, deodorant, and aspirin. With the exception of antibacterial soap, which could not be identified on the Union Supply price sheet (likely since an alternative was offered), each of these items were projected to increase in annual sales between the two contracts.

In an effort to bring transparency to this predatory and opaque business and demonstrate the lucrative nature of the prison industrial complex, the Milwaukee IWOC has begun tracking the prices from where they were projected to be when Keefe was awarded the contract to where they were as recently as August 2018. One thing to note is that, per the DOC policy as listed on the order form, “these prices can be changed at any time without notice.” In 2018 the contract

was awarded to Union Supply group, and the price sheet obtained by Milwaukee IWOC is used to track the price from when the contract was awarded to Keefe in 2013 up until today. We attempted to trace the price of identical or equivalent items between both price sheets from inside and the two bids. All price sheets used to build this dataset are publicly available for download.

Before discussing prices, it's important to remember the very low wages that incarcerated people earn in Wisconsin. [According to the Prison Policy Initiative](#), the highest hourly wage that any incarcerated person in Wisconsin can receive is \$1.41, though that pay rate is exceedingly rare and only available to those who are allowed to work through Badger State Industries. Those who work only within the prison itself can earn a maximum of \$0.42 an hour, though that too is exceptionally high. The lowest wage an incarcerated person could be paid is \$0.09.

Our analysis of Keefe's bid and the price as of August 2015, the earliest available price data, show that 147 items had gone up in price between 2013 and 2015 while only 5 had decreased. The largest single item price increase was for hypoallergenic laundry detergent, which was projected to cost \$3.69 according to Keefe's bid but was being sold for \$8.44 in August 2015, a 128% increase. A total of 48 items which were included in the bid were no longer available on the August 2015 price sheet, including dryer sheets, Matzo crackers, and 24-hr antihistamines.

By the time Union Supply Group submitted their proposal in 2018, 40 items which were included in the Keefe price sheet could not be found in the Union Supply price list.¹ The largest single-item price increase from Keefe's successful 2013 bid to Union Supply's bid in 2018 was for perm repair, the price of which increased by \$5.16 in five years to over nine dollars per kit. 8 items which were sold either in bulk or larger sizes in 2013 were sold in smaller quantities or volumes in Union Supply's price submission.

Even more revealing are the projected increases in item orders from the 2013 and 2018 requests for proposal. These suggest both a rise in Wisconsin's prison population between 2013 and 2018, since more people would be ordering items, as well as an assumed increase in reliance on canteen items among incarcerated people. The table below demonstrates this increase in projected sales for many common items ordered through the canteen.

¹ Due to changes in the formatting of price sheets as well as inconsistent availability, tracking continuity between contracts and comparing price sheets submitted for bids with order forms sent inside was difficult. If something could not be found on a sheet, it was given a value of "not listed."

Item	2013 Projected Unit Sales	2018 Projected Unit Sales	% increase
Ramen - Vegetarian	63,300	577,425	812%
Ramen - Texas Beef	205,300	864,966	321%
Strawberry cereal bars	3,400	110,718	3156%
Halal summer sausage	2,000	88,893	4345%
Sour cream and onion potato chips (1.5oz)	5,000	284,559	5591%
Hypoallergenic laundry detergent	75	15,456	20,508%
Toothpaste with fluoride	2,600	34,812	1239%

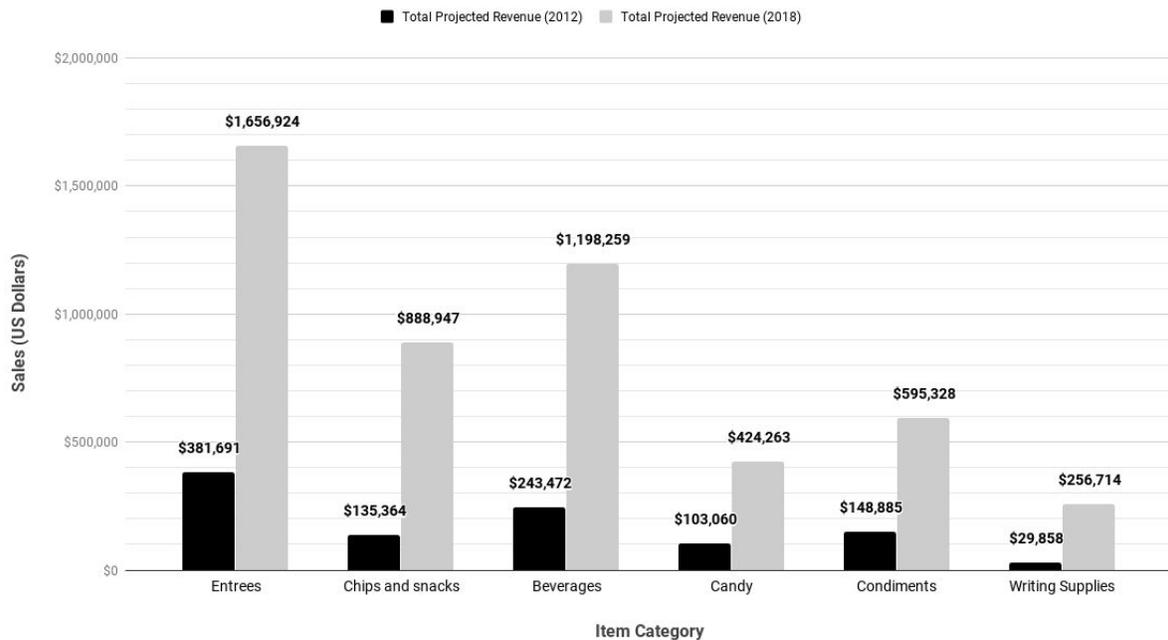
Another lucrative way to profit from selling canteen items involves selling items in smaller quantities, which requires incarcerated people or those supporting them on the outside to buy an item more often, usually at a higher price for the same amount. If an incarcerated person wanted to buy the same volume of sour cream and onion chips as is available for barbecue, they would have to spend \$1.20 on four smaller bags of chips, a full \$0.25 more than the barbecue chips. Again, nearly everywhere else outside of prison canteens, these items are sold for the exact same price regardless of flavor.

Between the 2013 and 2018 contracts, 7 items were offered at smaller sizes or in smaller quantities than the previous contract. Any experienced shopper can confirm that this rarely results in lower prices per unit. Bic twin razors show a similar pattern. When Keefe submitted its bid it indicated that a 10pk of razors would cost \$1.25. However, in August 2015 the only way to buy a twin razor was individually at a price of \$0.16. This continued when Union Supply submitted their contract, though in that case they planned to raise the price to \$0.18 per razor. When bidding for the contract, Keefe priced a 14.4oz bottle of laundry detergent at \$0.90 but by August 2015, the only size available was 24oz, which sold for \$2.95, effectively doubling the price per ounce.

Products in the category “Feminine/Make-up” are particularly egregious.² While male antiperspirant went from \$1.40 in 2012 to \$1.48 in 2015, female antiperspirant went from \$1.26 to \$2.06, over a 60% increase. In 2012 Keefe planned to sell tampons in packs of 10 for \$2.48, meaning that someone earning the highest possible wage would have to work almost two hours just to afford a single box while one earning the minimum wage would have to work over 27 hours. By 2018, the price of panty liners, which the DOC projected to sell only three packs of in 2013, had risen from \$0.66 to \$2.06 in 2018 as projected sales were set to go from 3 to 402.

A comparison by category of the projected unit sales and expected revenue speak to both the growth in incarceration in Wisconsin and the increasing pressure on incarcerated people to pay for their own incarceration. Below is a comparison of some of the most common item categories (defined by the DOC) based on projected sales in both the 2012 and 2018 bids:

Estimated Annual Revenue from Canteen Sales by Category in Wisconsin DOC, 2012-2018



These totals are likely an underestimate in at least some categories, as changes in canteen offerings may mean new items sold in the most recent contract that were not sold under the previous contract. Because we are interested in a comparison over time, only items which were on the 2012 contract were tracked in the 2018 bid sheet, though the full price sheets are available. In total, Union Supply estimated that they would have total annual revenue of \$8,906,969 for all items sold through the canteen. In adding just the things that could be tracked between the two contracts, which involved tracking changes in item names and quantities as well as reclassification of items, we estimated that Union Supply could expect \$6,775,601 in annual revenue.

² The gendered language here is taken from the documents on which this analysis is based.

When looking at any price in the canteen list, consider the ratio of Wisconsin’s minimum wage (\$7.25/hr) to the minimum wage in Wisconsin prisons (\$0.09/hr). The table below shows the 2018 price given by Union Supply along with an estimate of how much that item would cost in the store if the same ratio of wage to price were applied to the outside minimum wage. The outside price equivalent for each item can be found in the canteen spreadsheet linked below.

Item Name	Size	2018 Inside Price	2018 Outside Price
Ramen	Each	\$0.23	\$20.14
Cola	20oz	\$1.30	\$104.72
Laundry Soap with Bleach	14.4oz	\$0.99	\$72.50
Dryer sheets	40ct	\$1.23	\$94.25
Toothbrush (full-size)	Each	\$0.39	\$31.42
Toothpaste with fluoride	4oz	\$2.96	\$238.44
Bic twin razor	Each	\$0.18	\$14.50
Barbasol shaving cream	5oz	\$2.79	\$224.75
Irish Spring Aloe Soap	3.75oz	\$0.85	\$68.47
Stamped Legal-size Envelope	Each	\$0.67	\$53.97
Deodorant	3oz	\$2.78	\$223.94
Tampons	20ct	\$2.74	\$220.72

In presenting these numbers, the Milwaukee IWOC is merely providing further corroboration of something incarcerated people have been saying in Wisconsin for years. People in Wisconsin prisons are forced to buy from companies that have little to no incentive to provide goods at fair prices or in usable condition, as they are granted a full monopoly. Mistakes are common and the products are often damaged, but the nature of the business is such that Keefe has little to no incentive to provide decent service to its actual customers, a dynamic which persists even if the vendor changes. Furthermore, the paltry wages paid to

prisoners are barely enough for them to purchase basic goods from the canteen, let alone try to save for once they are released. The full dataset of canteen price can be found [here](#).

One person held at Kettle Moraine demonstrates that canteen is not the only way that incarcerated people are made to pay for their own incarceration.

"In most institutions prisoners are allowed to wash their personal clothes for free, however at Kettle Moraine they still require the prisoners to pay \$1.55 for washes, even though all the washer and dryers have long been paid for by the prisoners. Kettle Moraine is making thousands of dollars a year from this, but where is this money going to?...For decades prisoners have been paying \$7.50 co-pay each time that they needed to see a medical physician, dentist or an eye examiner...With the cuts in pay prisoners receive from \$4 up to \$20 dollars every two weeks, depending on the institution pay range."

Food service

When food provided to incarcerated people is of poor quality or portions are reduced, this can exacerbate problems created by increases in canteen prices, as incarcerated people will compensate with higher purchases of items through the canteen. It can also create a toxic environment given the numerous mental and physical health problems associated with not receiving adequate nutrition. At Oshkosh Correctional Institution, multiple incarcerated people complained of a decline in both quality of food and portion sizes. Responses to a survey of some people held at Oshkosh paint a vivid (if disturbing) picture:

"Horrid. A lot of it is stale or rancid. Way too much soy protein meal (one of the former kitchen workers came back with a package label for some sort of meat that clearly stated "not for human consumption." What was that about? Who knows. But why would that be in this institution. Portions: way lower than they say—food they serve to the public is definitely not even close to what they serve us"

"Inhumane. Food contains so much soy it has created health problems, such as stomach tumors, stomach cancer, digestive problems, bleeding in stool. Rotten foods and spoiled food, small portions, processed meat."

An examination of the [annual reports](#) released by Oshkosh Correctional Institution reveals that complaints from incarcerated people about food almost doubled from 56 in 2017 to 111 in 2018, though the nature and scope of the complaints are not given in the report. According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's [public database](#) of state employee pay, Oshkosh Correctional reclassified a ten-year veteran of the DOC to become the Food Service Administrator for

Oshkosh Correctional on April 16, 2017, though he is no longer listed in the public employee telephone directory. Contacts within Oshkosh Correctional trace the deterioration of food service at the facility to this administrator's time in this role, and have said that he was removed from the facility as a result of discrepancies in ordering and allocation of food service funds.

A public records request for his emails covering a period from October 2018 to November 2018 (the period covering his alleged dismissal from his role as food service administrator at OSCI) revealed widespread and routine problems with ordering from the primary vendor present in the records, Indianhead Foodservice Distributor. In a discussion of issues with a particular order, one employee from Prairie du Chien Correctional laments "there is rarely a week that PDCI [Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution] doesn't have issue with our order. Either mis-picks, outs, subs or short cases, you name it. The answer is supposed to be that we have to get our order in earlier to IDF [Indianhead Foodservice]. Beats me how that is going to solve the problems. I have just learned to live with it."

Incarcerated people must also "learn to live" with short orders in the kitchen, but for those incarcerated at these institutions these problems are not merely office annoyances. They lead to inadequate ingredients needed to make the scheduled meals, thus putting added pressure to spend more of either the money they receive for employment or funds from people outside on canteen.

The records themselves contained no direct acknowledgement of any corruption, but a financial specialist at OSCI did email the administrator asking about a missing document. On October 2, 2018 she wrote:

"I am missing the RFP [Request for Proposal] for all the items on this invoice, other than the eggs. Does anyone have the copy I need that you could forward to the Business Office? I don't believe this is part of the September order, as these items were already received and/or not listed on it."

Though the records span the entire month of October and November, this document was never provided by the Food Service Administrator and the attachment was not included in the open records response. The documents available to Milwaukee IWOC at the time of this writing are not sufficient proof of any wrongdoing with respect to food service at Oshkosh, though we are of course limited in our access to information considering we are just concerned members of the public.

Conclusion

These are just a few examples of the systemic abuse and neglect that incarcerated people in Wisconsin face within DOC facilities. In some cases, attempts to obtain records from the DOC relating to particular incidents, such as the death of Devin Katzfey, have been so far unsuccessful. Similar ambiguity also surrounds any recommendations made by the Committee on Inmate and Youth Deaths since its founding more than ten years ago.

There are many other issues which we would like to present in subsequent reports. We encourage anyone who is moved by the dire situation facing incarcerated people in Wisconsin to join us alongside those facing these oppressive conditions as we work towards alternatives to this abusive and exploitative system.