



**1. In what ways do you think correctional services could benefit from greater involvement of individuals with lived experience?**

The Michigan Department of Corrections believes that employing people with lived experience is vital in helping individuals under our supervision obtain success. In 2021, MDOC hired the first Peer Recovery Coaches, trained and certified professionals who live in sustained recovery from drugs and alcohol, to work inside our prisons and in our Parole and Probation offices. These Coaches have been an asset to the individuals they work with by educating them on community resources and recovery pathways, providing insight into the challenges and experiences of those struggling with substance use disorder, and instilling hope that individuals can recover from addiction and become productive members of the community. Not surprisingly, staff members have benefited from their knowledge and have accepted them as critical part of the treatment team.

**2. Are you aware of any programs that you would consider 'best practice' for supporting the engagement and work of individuals with 'lived experience' in your jurisdiction?**

Can you please give us a brief description of how these programs may be supporting:

- Male in prison or the community
- Female Offenders in prison or in the community
- Juveniles
- Particular target groups (e.g., the elderly; long-term offenders; drug addicted; mentally ill; indigenous; ethnic group ... etc.)

MDOC has Recovery Coaches at four prisons, housing both males and females, working in collaboration with the Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT) programs. They work with all individuals interested in MAT or those already on medications in conjunction with mental health services to provide individual and group treatment. They meet with people observed to have diverted the MAT out of the medication line, hoping to bring them into compliance with the medication line rules and procedures. They also attend case management meetings with facility staff, discussing high intensity patients, as a valued resource on recovery.

The department has also embedded Recovery Coaches in 15 county parole and probation offices across the State of Michigan. An additional 8 counties are supported virtually by our team of 23 Coaches. The program is funded by State Opioid Response grant funds. Coaches work alongside agents to assist individuals as they work towards



their recovery goals, resulting in higher rates of successful completion of supervision. The program has been shown to reduce parole and probation violations, positive drug screens and reincarceration.

**3. Have you made any recent policy or legislative changes to support or expand the engagement of individuals with lived experience (e.g., allowing for the hiring of individuals with a criminal record)?**

Since the inception of the Recovery Coach program, MDOC has been intentional about hiring individuals with criminal records, including felony offenses.

**4. Is there anything that you are planning or considering for the future in supporting the deployment or employment of individuals with lived experience?**

In the fiscal year 2025-2026, the department proposed expansion of Recovery Coach services in Parole and Probation offices. The budget proposal also included training incarcerated individuals to be Recovery Coaches, enabling them to provide support to peers struggling with substance use disorders. The proposal, supported by the governor and the Senate, was unfortunately not adopted. The department will continue to seek out additional funding in the future.

**5. Do you believe there is a role for individuals with lived experience to provide feedback on new legislative, policy or program development?**

Individuals with lived experience are included at the state level, helping to craft legislation and develop policy. At MDOC, people with lived experience participate in the development and implementation of programs.

**6. Do you see any particular obstacles or concerns that might interfere with the greater involvement of individuals with lived experience (e.g., trust or acceptance from existing staff?).**

While field agents quickly accepted Recovery Coaches in supporting individuals on probation and parole, correctional staff have demonstrated greater hesitation. This skepticism is related to the nature of their work and culture within the prison system.