

Hi Reps. Minier, Winter, and Morrow,

Thank you so much for taking the time to discuss the many positive impacts Wi-Fi would have on Vermont correctional facilities. Please find below more specifics on how these expanded resources could benefit both staff and incarcerated folks by bridging the current digital divide in corrections.

Note any appropriation of GF dollars would be outside the Governor's recommended FY26 budget.

Hope this is helpful as your committees amend their respective policy recommendations to the House Appropriations Committee regarding this critical reform effort.

Many thanks,
Isaac

Benefits of Wi-Fi for Vermont Correctional Staff

- Modernized workplace with access to contemporary technology (same as in community):
 - Currently, all facility records are kept on paper/pencil (versus tablets/digital tech), which leads to poor data collection
 - Antiquated technology alienates staff, particularly younger staff, and can lead to lower retention
 - Lack of automation overburdens already overstressed staff, increasing burnout
 - DOC is already facing staffing crisis, and any efforts to relieve staff burden and improve workplace experience/increase retention, are top priorities
- Staff unable to use State-issued technology or even personal cellphones to connect to outside world (cell service does not penetrate facilities):
 - State-issued technology (digital logbooks, tablets with a mobile Offender Management System, RFID swipe access) would create a more streamlined and modern work environment
 - Correctional environments already disconnect staff from community, and lack of Wi-Fi further contributes to this feeling
 - Greater connection family and social supports while at work could decrease the toll of facility jobs on DOC frontline staff
- Bodycams:
 - Wi-Fi throughout correctional facilities would allow continuous syncing of video footage for correctional officer bodycams, rather than bulk uploads of footage. The rollout of bodycams has been in bargaining with labor partners for the last several years.
- Increased staff training opportunities:

- Internet access across facilities would create additional training opportunities and expand educational resources for staff, including CCV classes and coursework for staff on break
- DOC hopes to use Wi-Fi to create a remote satellite Vermont Correctional Academy within the walls of a facility for those staff who cannot travel to the physical VCA for six weeks of in-person instruction in the Northeast Kingdom due to family or other obligations

Benefits of Wi-Fi for Vermont Incarcerated Individuals

- Enhanced vocational training:
 - Wi-Fi would allow DOC/community partners to offer vocational training machines and computer modules to incarcerated Vermonters for accredited certifications in advance of release
 - This would create additional job opportunities for Vermonters reentering communities while also plugging holes in the Vermont workforce
 - Incarcerated individuals could use Wi-Fi to apply for jobs from behind the walls of correctional facilities as they prepare for reentry
 - *Note: as in Maine/other correctional systems, incarcerated individual internet access would be highly restricted and monitored using approved/whitelisted sites*
- Expanded Community College of Vermont/educational resources:
 - Wi-Fi connection would allow CCV to grow course offerings from two in-person classes per facility per semester to offering much wider array of coursework using asynchronous and/or remote online classes
 - Incarcerated individuals have requested greater diversity/array of classes to meet degree requirements, which DOC is currently unable to provide without Wi-Fi tech
 - These classes are needed to meet federal Title IV/Second Chance Pell Grant funding requirements
- Increased telehealth resources/opportunities:
 - Wi-Fi access in living units would enable incarcerated people to receive telehealth services directly where they live, increasing provision of care within correctional settings
- Use of medical alert bracelets:
 - Access to Wi-Fi within correctional facilities would allow DOC to explore biometric medical alert bracelets that could be worn by the most medically vulnerable incarcerated individuals or the full population to warn officers of any immediate changes in health potentially requiring staff/medical intervention.

- This could provide an early warning tool for staff that may avert critical medical incidents within facilities and encourage immediate response if they arise.

Isaac Dayno
State of Vermont