FISCAL SNAPSHOT

EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT/RETENTION CHALLENGES AND OVERTIME HOURS/COSTS

Date: January 2026 **Analyst: Robin R. Risko**

Summary

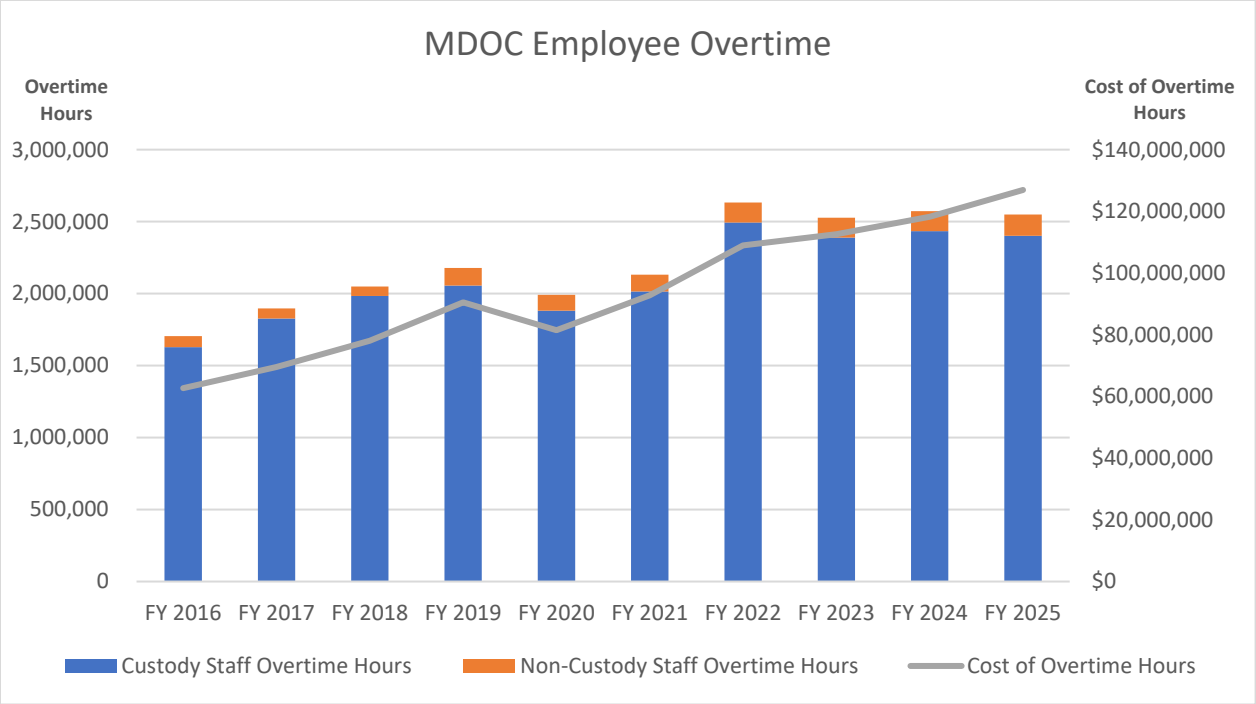
The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) continues to face challenges related to recruiting and retaining staff. This is part of a national trend affecting numerous employers. Challenges facing MDOC include generational turnover, staff burnout, labor market conditions, less scheduling flexibility, and an overall reduced interest in law enforcement careers. MDOC employees make up 21% of the state's workforce but MDOC struggles to fill vacant positions and continues to be short staffed. Vacancies occur throughout the department, but vacancies occur primarily with corrections officer positions. As a result, overtime costs are significant and continue to increase.

Background

Recruiting challenges include having to compete for talent in communities where there is already a reduced labor force and the inability to compete with benefits offered in other areas of employment (i.e., no remote work opportunities; facilities need to be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). MDOC struggles to retain staff primarily due to the nature of the work, the lack of scheduling flexibility, and staff burnout.

Recent Activity

MDOC continues to commit resources to recruitment and retention of employees. Recruitment efforts include advertising by means of the internet, television, and billboards; facility-specific recruitment teams and hiring events; satellite academies for some sites; and hiring additional recruiting staff, including a social media recruiter and a recruiter focused on the Upper Peninsula. Current retention efforts include restructuring the wage scale for corrections officers and including additional step increases for corrections officers and supervisors. Retention efforts over the past few years have included increased pay for health care, skilled trades, and transportation staff, as well as recruitment and retention bonuses for staff ranging from $1,000 to $3,000 depending on years of service.



The Bottom Line

As of December 31, 2025, MDOC had 1,388.2 vacancies across all classifications. Of those, 829.2 were corrections officer vacancies, 393.0 were healthcare staff vacancies, and 166.0 were central staff vacancies. Overtime hours are significant because of these vacancies. Historically, corrections officers overtime hours account for anywhere between 93% and 100% of total overtime hours. Overtime is paid at either one and one-half or two times the employee's regular rate of pay depending on the circumstances (i.e., voluntary vs. mandatory). In FY 2025, MDOC paid $126.9 million for a total of 2,548,901 staff overtime hours. Of those hours, 2,401,370, or 94%, were corrections officer overtime hours.