



# LEON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Walt McNeil, Sheriff

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## ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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### **LCSO Detention Facility Partners with MIT to Improve Re-entry Programs**

The Leon County Sheriff's Office Detention Facility participated in a nationwide study group convened by Leon County Government with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Sloan School of Management. Through a nationwide application process, Leon County was chosen in this collaboration with MIT students to evaluate re-entry programs for people transitioning from incarceration as well as identifying best practices and innovative models for the re-entry process.

Leon County was the sole applicant chosen in the state of Florida along with applicants in Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, and South Carolina. The study hopes to deepen MIT students' understanding of America's diverse economic, cultural, and social characteristics across the nation's rural and small-town settings. Approximately 700 people return from a correctional institution to Leon County each year. A fourth of that total reoffend and are reincarcerated within three years of release. The overall cycle of incarceration not only impacts the offender but has multi-generational economic and social implications for families and the community.

From February until May, the MIT students, working with officials from local government, businesses, and corrections, researched workforce strategies to support stable, healthy families and safe communities. The goal is to reduce the demand for the costliest public services, including corrections and mental and behavioral healthcare. MIT students will continue to work on and analyze this study into early summer, as well.

On-site visits and studies were planned with students and the chosen applicants, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the students turned to virtual meetings with Leon County officials, including detention facility inmate programs supervisors. Ready4Work and vocational certification courses for inmates were outlined as examples of LCSO re-entry programs involving community partners such as Florida A&M University and Tallahassee Community College.

The Leon County team consisted of more than 50 community stakeholders who, collectively, organized and joined meetings to provide feedback for the study. "These are the types of creative collaborations that help bolster the efforts of our ALLinLEON initiative to make Leon County a safer place to live, work, and play," said Sheriff Walt McNeil.

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