



Legislator Alert

To inform and educate our Legislators about important

Behavioral Health Issues

February 1, 2007

Paying for Drug Treatment Programs: Is Far Less Costly Than Jails or Prison

If you look at the top ten offenses of Montana convicts, you can see that substance abuse is driving the increases in requests for millions of new dollars for the Department of Corrections. Former DOC Director, Bill Slaughter, further acknowledges that “many men and women who find themselves in prison are there because they just cannot avoid drugs and alcohol while on probation and, after numerous chances, they are revoked back to prison...” About 47% of all adults currently in prison are in this category. Yellowstone County Sheriff Chuck Maxwell estimates that 85 to 90 percent of inmates in his jail have some type of chemical addiction.

According to Mona L. Sumner, Chief Operations Officer at Rimrock Foundation and one of the leaders of the drug court movement in Montana, **“80 to 97 percent of the offenders who go through drug court treatment programs get out of the criminal system for good. In terms of money well spent, the return on investment dollars is enormous.”**

Drug Courts are an integral part of the solution to overcrowding at all levels of the criminal justice system. When drug courts, quality professional treatment, and safe housing are brought together, Montana can logically expect to see a reduced need for prison beds and less jail overcrowding in our larger communities almost immediately.

Top 7 Offenses of Montana Convicts

Since 1995, these have been the most common convictions among people sent to the Montana Department of Corrections.

Males	Females
1. Theft	1. Drug possession
2. Drug possession	2. Theft
3. Burglary	3. Forgery
4. Felony DUI	4. Bad check over \$150
5. Sale of drugs	5. Sale of drugs
6. Bad check over \$150	6. Felony DUI
7. Criminal endangerment	7. Other drug offenses

Drug Courts and Treatment are the Overdue Solution

Community-based drug courts, which combine appropriate punishment with longer term treatment of drug addicts, have a proven record of ongoing success in other states. **These programs provide a common sense diversion from jails and prison beds.**

Drug courts throughout the country, particularly in California, have brought recidivism (including parole violations) down to 8%. As states struggle to balance budgets, there is a growing trend to make criminal justice reforms that both save money and increase public safety.



A state leader in providing behavioral health services

In Summary

The emergence of a national movement of treating, rather than incarcerating, nonviolent drug offenders has the attention and support of legislators and the public across the country.

By taking a public health approach toward handling drug offenders, policymakers are saving their states millions of dollars.

Because drug courts have proven effective at reducing drug abuse and crime: **We urge your support of either one of the following bills.**

HB 78
Representative John Parker

HB 472
Representative Elsie Arntzen

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Rimrock Foundation is Montana's oldest and largest private, non-profit treatment center. Rimrock has more than thirty-eight years of experience in treating people who suffer from compulsive disorders and their families. Through that experience we have developed one of the most effective nationally-recognized treatment programs available today.

**For more information regarding treatment services,
please call (406) 248-3175, or 1-800-227-3953,
or visit our Web site at www.rimrock.org**