

Missoula County Media Release

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June 4, 2018



Missoula County to Develop Supportive Housing Program to Reduce Recidivism

MISSOULA — Missoula County will partner with the District XI Human Resource Council to develop a Supportive Housing pilot program to help residents returning from incarceration find housing and other necessary services.

Like many communities across the state, Missoula County struggles with addressing the needs of people experiencing homelessness and helping individuals returning to the community after incarceration. However, with the state's second-highest population of homeless individuals, the second-highest number of individuals under Department of Corrections supervision, and an extremely low rental vacancy rate, Missoula faces an uphill battle to assist these vulnerable populations.

The Supportive Housing Program, funded through a \$153,000 grant from the Montana Board of Crime Control, will use a Housing First model to assist these individuals while reducing recidivism and promoting community safety. The 15-month program will work closely with DOC staff to help returning citizens find housing and other essential services.

"This new program will divert returning residents from homelessness and increase their ability to be successful in the community," Commissioner Nicole Rowley said. "At the same time, it should reduce recidivism rates of participants, saving taxpayers' money and increasing public safety."

Securing housing provides returning citizens with the stabilization necessary to meet other post-release needs, such as obtaining employment and healthcare, which help decrease the likelihood of recidivism. For example, a similar program implemented in Pennsylvania's Union County resulted in the recidivism rate dropping to 22 percent for program participants – well below the county's recidivism rate of 53 percent and the state's recidivism rate of 60 percent.

Missoula County is one of three communities in Montana to receive the funding through a competitive grant process. Missoula County Grants and Community Programs, a division of Community and Planning Services, will manage the grant.

The program is currently hiring for two positions, a re-entry case manager and housing stability coordinator. The re-entry case manager will work with DOC staff to connect returning citizens to local resources and assist them in locating and applying for housing, as well as connecting them to resources for rent assistance. The housing stability coordinator will develop a housing stability program to help foster positive relationships between property managers and returning residents, as well as develop a locally supported landlord risk mitigation fund. Full job descriptions and application information are available at <http://www.humanresourcecouncil.org/>.

For more information, call Erin Kautz, Missoula County grants administrator, at 406-258-4904 or email ekautz@missoulacounty.us.

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