



MISSOULA COUNTY DETENTION FACILITY

**Lieutenant Jeff Rodrick
Detention Training Supervisor**

Urban Institute and Staff

April 12, 2018

Ref: Missoula County Detention Facility response to recommendations.

To whom it may concern,

Foremost, I would like to thank the Urban Institute and the Native Outreach Project for the work they completed at our facility and for the information provided. I would also like to thank them for allowing me to compose this response letter. The purpose of this response letter is to express the Missoula County Detention Facility's legitimate governmental interest in providing a safe and secure environment for the inmates and staff, as well as allowing equal access to all inmates housed in our facility. I would also like provide information as to our past and current practices as well as our policies as they pertain to the recommendations listed below.

Data:

Upon reviewing my own records, since I have been responsible for the supervision of the community volunteer program, we have had approximately ten inmates formally request, in writing, to be allowed to practice ceremonial/rituals of their Native American culture, to wit, smudging. This has occurred over the last seven plus years. Of those, approximate ten formal requests, more than half of them have been inmates housed in the portion of the facility that is contracted to the Department of Correction.

Recommendations:

- **Provide books on wellbriety and recovery that are specific to Natives in the facility's library.** - The Missoula County Detention Facility would allow these books in their library for general distribution to all inmates. These materials would need to be purchased and sent to the facility from volunteer groups or organizations that are independent of our facility. We do not want to give the impression to our community that we are supporting one belief or one program over another. All religious and self-help materials are donated to the facility for community volunteer groups. These items are sent directly from the publishers or distributors to our facility as per policy.



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- **Provide a computer for individuals to learn those skills and then find employment prior to release.** – The Missoula County Detention facility would be willing to explore the opportunity of allowing community volunteers into the facility to teach “life” skills to the inmate population. At this time we do not have the facilities, financing, or staffing to accommodate a computer lab or to provide this service to the inmate population. We would explore this opportunity as we have with our yoga and creative writing programs.
- **Allow Native individuals to participate in ceremonial practices, such as smudging, prayer, organized song, carry medicine pouches while incarcerated.** – The Missoula County Detention facility would allow community volunteers an opportunity to provide study groups for those inmates who are seeking information about Native American practices. We do currently allow, and have always allowed our community volunteers to lead study groups with the opportunity to participate in dance and song. We currently do not, and will not allow ceremonial practices for inmates. The Missoula County Detention Facility will continue to respect the beliefs of all inmates housed in our facility but we will not be deliberately indifferent and allow one group to practice ceremonies and not allow others. We have a legitimate governmental interest, to provide a safe, secure, and equal opportunity environment to our inmates and staff. The Missoula County Detention Facility, at this time, does not have the resources, accommodations, or staffing to allow all inmates the opportunity to practice ceremonial activities. We currently would allow inmates to carry a medicine bag in our facility with the inmate’s understanding that their medicine bag; just like any other personal property is subject to a routine search for contraband.
- **Provide additional programming to wellbriety and talking circles that are specific to Natives.** – As stated above, the Missoula County Detention Facility would explore the opportunity for allowing more community volunteer led groups; however, no group shall exclude other inmates based on race, religion, sexual preference, or any other protected class. All community volunteers must pass annual background checks, and attend all trainings. As of today’s date, we have not been approached by any group wanting to provide this opportunity to our inmates, other than Kevin and Kathy as part of this grant.



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- **Provide Native language classes or cultural classes.** – This falls under the guidelines as stated above in regards to community volunteer led groups.
- **Establish a peer mentorship program with people who are Native and have been previously incarcerated.** – Currently the policy for the Missoula County Detention Facility volunteer programs is that persons who are convicted of felony crimes or who have been convicted of misdemeanor crimes are excluded from participating in these programs; however, we currently review each situation as each situation is different. The Missoula County Detention Facility would explore the option of distributing contact lists for inmates that list these types of recourses upon their release.
- **Establish an NA group.** - Unfortunately, the Missoula County Detention Facility has tried this on several occasions. Each occasion has ended in numerous violations of policy and even violation of the law. We ended the programs because we could not ensure the safety and security of the facility, inmates and staff. We would be open to the opportunity to review this request at a future time.
- **Adjust classification to allow individuals in different pods to attend programming and services.** - Do to legitimate governmental interests, safety and security of the facility, inmates and staff; we will not deviate from our current classification process and/or policies to allow inmates with varied classifications the ability to interact with each other in group settings. We will continue to allow inmates with the same classification and those who have achieved housing in general population the opportunity to attend community led services together.

Again, on behalf of the Missoula County Detention Facility, I would like to personally express my gratitude for the ability to respond to your recommendations and to stress our continued support for this program. If you or any of your staff are ever in need of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Respective,
Lt. Jeff Rodrick
Training Supervisor