

Missoula County Media Release

Contact: Erin Kautz

Grants Administrator

ekautz@missoulacounty.us

406-258-4904

Feb. 3, 2020



\$600,000 Grant Will Boost Mental Health Services in Missoula County Criminal Justice System

Missoula County will continue to integrate more mental health services into the local criminal justice system over the next year and a half thanks to a nearly \$600,000 grant from the state Department of Health and Human Services Addictive and Mental Disorders Division.

The \$584,652 in funding through the department's County and Tribal Matching Grant program will pay for staff and programming to address mental health and substance abuse issues that often coincide with criminal behavior. It will allow the county to continue providing crucial crisis stabilization services at the Missoula County Detention Facility, which include a jail therapist; a care coordinator who provides case management and peer support, both during incarceration and for up to three months after release; and Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for law enforcement.

The grant will also provide additional funding to support new resources, including:

- A CIT coordinator to lead training efforts, which includes organizing Missoula's annual CIT Academy that provides training to law enforcement and other first responders on how to best help individuals in crisis. Around 40 representatives from local law enforcement agencies and other criminal justice sectors have received this training annually since 2016.
- A mental health coordinator at Partnership Health Center to facilitate communication among mental health providers, law enforcement and anyone seeking information on local services.
- A full-time referral and outreach coordinator at Western Montana Mental Health Center, who, in addition to providing case management for involuntary mental health commitment cases, will work with law enforcement to provide outreach and early diversion work with vulnerable populations.

Missoula County and its partners identified these necessary additional resources last April during a Sequential Intercept Mapping workshop, a process that pinpoints gaps in services that would help divert individuals from jail at the different points in which they interact with the criminal justice system.

"Studies show that providing crisis services locally is better for the person in crisis and saves the community money in the long term," said Josh Slotnick, current commission chair. "Missoula County is committed to using collaborative, innovative and effective strategies to better respond to these crises and provide the best available quality of care."

Increasing access to resources for individuals experiencing mental health and substance abuse crises is a key component of the [Jail Diversion Master Plan](#), which Missoula County and the City of Missoula adopted in 2016 with the goals of reducing jail overcrowding, decreasing criminal recidivism, enhancing public safety and more effectively using taxpayer money. According to the National Institute on Mental Illness, people in a mental health crisis are more likely to encounter police than get medical help. As a result, 2 million people with mental illnesses across the country are booked into jails each year. Nearly 15% of men and 30% of women booked into jails have a serious mental health condition.

Other jail diversion efforts through Missoula County and its partners include:

- Involvement in the National Association of Counties' [Stepping Up Initiative](#), which provides participating agencies with a planning framework and other resources to develop policies, programs and practices to safely reduce the number of people with mental illness or substance abuse disorders who cycle through the criminal justice system.
- Creation of the Strategic Alliance for Improved Behavioral Health and Wellbeing, a collaboration among local elected officials and high-level stakeholders from the community interested in improving services and responses for individuals with mental illness. This group recently received additional funding from the Montana Healthcare Foundation to continue their work for the next two years to address, at the systems-level, the unmet behavioral health care needs of Missoula's vulnerable populations, which specifically includes low-income residents, people experiencing homelessness and individuals who have co-occurring substance use disorders.
- Development of data-driven solutions to address over-incarceration of vulnerable populations through a \$700,000 grant from the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge. This funding led to the creation of the [Criminal Justice Coordination Council](#), which studies Missoula County's adult and juvenile criminal justice system to identify challenges, raise public awareness, consolidate efforts, and formulate policy, plans and programs to improve the system. The MacArthur grant also funded the Sequential Intercept Mapping workshop.
- Donation of a four-acre parcel near the Missoula County Detention Facility to the City of Missoula, which will use the land to develop permanent supportive housing for at least 30 people experiencing chronic homelessness. This facility, which will include a navigation center offering support services, will help reduce this population's interactions with law enforcement and local emergency departments. Many studies show that when people with mental health disorders are housed, the number of crisis mental health incidents, and subsequent criminal behavior, is reduced.
- Establishment of [ROAD Court](#), a DUI treatment program in Justice Court aimed at reducing the number of repeat DUIs in Missoula County. The program uses evidence-based practices to help repeat DUI offenders with substance abuse issues become healthy and productive community residents.
- Creation of Calibrate, a prosecution-led pretrial diversion program in the Missoula County Attorney's Office. Calibrate is a first-of-its-kind program in Montana that identifies low-risk offenders early and gives them an opportunity to avoid criminal conviction by addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior, such as addiction. The program will save taxpayer

dollars, improve the chances of offenders succeeding and free up resources so prosecutors can focus on violent criminals.

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

###