

Ruling: Meth center does not need review

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The state does not need to undergo privatization review before awarding a contract for a proposed privately run methamphetamine treatment prison, Attorney General Mike McGrath ruled Tuesday.

The Department of Corrections argued that the treatment prison is a new program, wasn't replacing services already offered by the Department of Corrections, and thus was not subject to the 2005 privatization review.

A privatization review would have set back department plans to award a contract for the private treatment prison in mid-March. The agency now remains on schedule to have it open next year, said Corrections spokesman Bob Anez.

McGrath noted that the Legislature required the agency to contract with a private nonprofit to run the prison.

The attorney general's opinion carries the weight of law unless overturned by a court or legislative action.

MEA-MFT, a union whose membership includes state employees, had argued that the meth facility duplicates drug treatment programs already administered by the state and is subject to a review for privatizing those services.

The union had a gentleman's agreement that it would abide by McGrath's opinion and won't pursue the matter further in court, said Eric Feaver, president of MEA-MFT.