

## **Meth treatment center in Lewistown ready to open**

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LEWISTOWN - The first 14 patients at a new 80-bed, \$10 million methamphetamine treatment center are scheduled to arrive here Friday.

"This is the culmination of four years of trying to put together a program that's new and exciting," said Mike Thatcher, chief executive officer of Community Counseling and Correctional Services of Butte, which contracted with the state to build and run the facility.

An open house at the Nexus Correctional Program is planned Wednesday.

The Nexus program will offer a highly structured, nine-month treatment program for meth addicts convicted of crimes, seeking to change their thinking and lifestyle, Thatcher said.

"We'll be dealing with people who have intensively and extensively abused this drug, and the majority of the research suggests that they will be suffering greater cognitive defects," he said.

Structure is important because meth addicts tend not to have it, said program administrator Don Schroeder.

"They've been staying up all night, using crystal meth and alcohol, living moment to moment," Schroeder said. "This structure gives them a model for the way they're going to have to start living their lives responsibly."

Thatcher said patients will undergo daily group therapy, substance abuse counseling and counseling to deal with other issues such as domestic violence, anger management and grief and loss.

"With crystal meth, you pretty much destroy all the people around you," Schroeder said.

The program will also focus on job skills and life skills from doing laundry to going back to school.

"Parenting classes are critical because a lot of these people have kids and we want them to be responsible parents," Schroeder said.

About the only free time in the week will be Sunday afternoon, when families can visit.

After nine months of intensive learning, the patients will graduate.

"Most of these guys have met with failure in everything they have ever tried - school, family, relationships and jobs - so we celebrate all the successes we can," said Schroeder. "And we hope they'll be successful when they leave this program."

Graduation will be followed by six months in a prerelease center, Thatcher said.

Corrections officials say the center is expected to add 12 men per week and be full by late July.

Elkhorn Treatment Center, the women's meth treatment center in Boulder opened in April and has filled about half of its beds, officials said. Boyd Andrew Community Services of Helena built and is operating the women's center under a contract with the state.