

CCCS wins contract

118-bed facility east of Anaconda will likely staff up to 20 additional people
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A Butte-based corrections organization has landed the contract for a 118-bed facility just east of Anaconda.

Community, Counseling and Corrections Services has received a state Department of Corrections contract to operate the START Program, which houses adult male felony offenders who have violated the terms of their probations.

"We're excited," CCCS executive director Mike Thatcher said Monday night. "It's been a long, arduous process." The 20-year contract means CCCS will build a new \$12.5 million facility for the program at Montana Highways 48 and 243. The 37 workers who currently staff START on the Montana State Hospital campus at Warm Springs will keep their jobs, and CCCS will likely add up to 20 more positions once the new facility is finished, Thatcher said.

CCCS has operated the START program as a pilot project since 2005; its current 88-bed facility on the Warm Springs campus is slated for demolition.

Both CCCS and Two Rivers Authority of Hardin responded to the state's call for bids to run START as a permanent program. After Two Rivers bid was rejected as incomplete, the department and CCCS entered negotiations.

"Working with CCCS is always a good partnership," said Gary Willems, DOC's contracts management bureau chief. "During our negotiation process CCCS had to be very patient. As always, they were professional and cooperative." The contract was awarded after the department and CCCS agreed upon the rate of \$95.98 per prisoner per day, up from \$79.80 at the current facility.

"The building they're operating now is a state-owned building, but they're building a new structure, so obviously the cost is not going to be the same," said Bob Anez, a spokesman for the Department of Corrections.

The department is proposing an aggressive construction timeline, with the new building to be in operation in December 2009, Willems said.

"Weather conditions ... will play a part," he said.

Thatcher said CCCS will use contractor Swank Enterprises for the project; construction is expected to begin in March.

The START Program is designed to give offenders a taste of incarceration, coupled with treatment to help raise the odds they can successfully return to their communities, a [news release](#) said.

"Since it opened about three years ago, START has diverted from prison almost three out of every four offenders admitted to the program and returned them to community placements," the release said.

Although the state initially proposed a 98-bed START Program, it plans to ask the Legislature for funding for a 118-bed program.