

## Drug program operator plans improvements; CCCS offers diverse services, classes

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The local nonprofit taking over Butte-Silver Bow's Chemical Dependency Center is ready to hit the ground running and eventually expand and improve programs for people struggling with addiction, its chief executive said.

Mike Thatcher, of Community, Counseling and Correctional Services, said he's been asked why any organization would want to take on the financially troubled program, but he said it's too important a service for Butte to lose.

It is unknown of how much CCCS will be paid by Butte-Silver Bow because funding is based on the number of clients and services provided.

Thatcher said the organization bid on the contract because "nobody should be denied the ability to access services."

Thatcher plans on Friday to ask for letters of interest from current employees to see if they'd like to continue working in the center once CCCS officially takes over on July 1. CCCS will begin the transition process in June. CCCS employees would start in July, he said.

Butte-Silver Bow is transferring the program to the private CCCS after the program mounted more than \$1 million in losses since 2005. The city-county is the last in the state to provide addictions services through its health department.

Chief Executive Matt Vincent announced the change in February, saying local government is in the wrong business administering chemical dependency services out of the health department.

With more than 30 years of experience in operating treatment programs and a staff of more than 20 licensed addiction counselors, Thatcher said CCCS is ready for the new challenge. He said the new treatment center will likely be located in its building at Mercury and Clark, so no time will be wasted searching for a venue.

Thatcher said CCCS has always contracted with diverse groups, including counties, federal prisons and the state. He added that its administration has experience managing the complex billing process the dependency center must follow.

The nonprofit offers many diverse services, including parenting classes, and those may be integrated into the Chemical Dependency Center's services in the future.

"We want to see things become a wrap-around delivery ... It's called holistically approaching this instead of a one-size-fits-all" treatment, he said.

Thatcher said he hopes to organize a luncheon within the next few weeks that will bring all the stakeholders together to talk about the city-county-run chemical dependency center's strengths and weaknesses and how to improve services for clients.

"Give us a year, you're going to see that things have been enhanced, expanded and improved," Thatcher said.