

Corrections plans meth treatment contracts for Lewistown, Boulder

April 4, 2006 (Helena, Montana). Montana Department of Corrections Director Bill Slaughter announced Tuesday that the agency plans to contract with two nonprofit companies to establish methamphetamine treatment programs in Lewistown and Boulder.

The formal announcement of intent to contract with Community, Counseling and Correctional Services Inc. and Boyd Andrew Community Services reflects the results of a lengthy process in which proposals from those two businesses received the highest scores from a committee created to review and evaluate proposed projects.

CCCS, a Butte-based company, proposed an 80-bed men's treatment center at Lewistown and Boyd Andrew of Helena offered a 40-bed women's facility at Boulder.

The decision to approve the Boulder project is contingent upon state Land Board approval of the transfer of land for the facility from the Corrections Department to Jefferson County. The board is scheduled to meet April 17.

"This marks a new era for corrections in Montana, one in which individualized programs to meet the unique and varying needs of offenders is the driving force," Slaughter said. "The days of cookie-cutter corrections, where one size is supposed to fit all, are over."

The treatment centers are for those offenders convicted a second time or more of methamphetamine possession. An offender will spend nine months in intense treatment at the facility, followed by six months of aftercare at a prerelease center. Offenders can be sent to the centers by the department, either directly from court or after violating conditions of parole or conditional release. In addition, the state Board of Pardons and Parole could make a stay at one of the centers a condition of an inmate's parole.

While this program is less expensive than placing someone in prison for two years for possession, the goal was to save lives not money, Slaughter said.

"It's our belief that a program emphasizing treatment rather than punishment will be a more effective tool in helping offenders turn their lives around and break the powerful grip of meth addiction," he said.

Slaughter noted the meth treatment program, ordered by the 2005 Legislature, reflects Gov. Brian Schweitzer's commitment to increase the emphasis on community corrections programs that keep offenders out of prison.

"We're heading down a road that will be beneficial to offenders, Montana taxpayers and the corrections system as a whole," he said. "Everyone wins when we look for new, innovative ways of dealing with persistent problems such as meth."

CCCS expects to open its center around Feb. 1, and Boyd Andrew a month later.