

NEWSRELEASE

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Corrections opens new revocation-sanction center

WARM SPRINGS – A new corrections facility intended as an aid in reducing the growing pressure of an already overcrowded Montana prison system opened here Monday.

The START (Sanction Treatment, Assessment, Revocation and Transition) Center, an 80-bed facility that will be used as a less-costly alternative to prison, accepted its first 11 offenders Monday afternoon. The 2005 Legislature endorsed the concept of such a center.

It will serve two purposes for those who violate conditions of their parole, prerelease and conditional release placements. Some will spend up to 120 days at the center to determine if further community placement is appropriate and others will spend shorter periods at the center as punishment for their violations.

The goal of the program is to help violators stay out of prison and remain in the community where they can hold jobs, pay taxes and restitution, and make progress in turning their lives around. Currently, these offenders, with their releases revoked, account for about four out of every 10 admissions to Montana State Prison.

“This halfway back program fills a gap,” Corrections Director Bill Slaughter said Monday. “It brings a guy halfway back with a goal of getting him back into the community. This is the more innovative thing I’ve seen to address the large number of revocations.”

START will be operated as a three-year pilot project by Community, Counseling and Correctional Services Inc., a Butte-based nonprofit company.

Corrections officials hope that the stark reality of being behind bars for a short period of time will convince offenders to toe the line as a means of staying out of prison for even longer, and more expensive, stays.

CCCS already operates a prerelease center in Butte, felony drunken-driving treatment centers at Warm Springs and Glendive, and a federal juvenile corrections facility at Galen. The business also holds corrections contracts with the states of North Dakota and Washington.

The START Center, which will employ 34 people, is housed in a building that was originally constructed in 1972 to house court-ordered commitments to the Montana State Hospital at Warm Springs. Although closed for that purpose in the late 1980s, the building later held inmates from the overcrowded Montana State Prison and most recently was used as the Butte-Silver Bow jail for about five years while a new structure was built in Butte. The jail relocated in September 2004.

The building was renovated by CCCS.

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