

For Immediate Release
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Park County to Evaluate Best Path Forward to Decriminalize Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders

The Park County Health Department was recently awarded a \$49,250 planning grant from the Montana Healthcare Foundation to explore implementation of a recovery court program and other best practice opportunities to divert mental illness and substance use disorder cases out of the criminal justice system.

The focus of the grant funding to develop a strategic plan for reducing the number of adults with co-occurring behavioral health and substance use disorders in the local detention center. The focus will be on helping our community identify the criminal justice, social service, health contacts and costs of serving people with mental illness and substance use disorders; and design a system that improves system efficiency and outcomes.

“I am very pleased to see us moving in the direction of establishing a Recovery Court. Many individuals charged with crimes will continue to re-offend, so long as their addictions and/or mental health issues are not properly addressed. A Recovery Court will be a positive step forward for this Judicial District.” Brenda Gilbert, 6th Judicial District Court Judge

The strategic planning process will include a Sequential Intercept Mapping process. This process will bring together key stakeholders to develop a ‘map’ that illustrates how people with mental illness and substance use disorders come in contact with and flow through the local criminal justice system. The map identifies opportunities and resources for diverting people to treatment and indicates gaps in services.

The program will contract with an independent consultant to complete the Sequential Intercept Mapping and strategic plan built on evidence-based strategies from other regional and state programs. Stakeholders include members of local and regional behavioral health, law enforcement, and the judiciary.

Specifically, stakeholders include:

Park County Health Department
6th Judicial District Court
Park County Sheriff's Office
Park County Detention
Park County Attorney's Office
Park County Commission
City of Livingston City Manager
Livingston Police Department
City of Livingston Attorney's Office
Southwest Chemical Dependency
Western Montana Mental Health Center
Livingston HealthCare
Justice of the Peace

Youth Court
Adult Probation & Parole

“I am very excited that we received a planning grant to help us design and implement a Park County recovery court. Once complete, those suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems will have options available to them other than incarceration. This will encourage individual healing and increase public safety all while saving taxpayer dollars.” - Sheriff Scott Hamilton

The strategic plan is set to be completed by the spring or summer of 2018.

For more information contact:

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