

CORRECTIONS TO COMMUNITY

QUARTERLY NEWS FROM ALTERNATIVES, INC.

SUMMER 2021



Mission Statement:

We promote public safety and challenge offenders to become responsible, productive citizens.

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Board of Directors

The Montana Community Corrections Association Welcomes Director Brian Gootkin

By Erin McGowan, Montana Community Corrections Association Executive Director

Greetings! My name is Erin McGowan, and I have served as the Montana Community Corrections Association (MCCA) Executive Director and lobbyist since 2015. MCCA represents the common interests of all five prerelease centers and their affiliated programs across the state. When not in the legislative session, MCCA remains busy, representing community corrections interests at various legislative interim committees, but perhaps most importantly as a voice/avenue with the Montana Department of Corrections. We now meet monthly, in person, with the new Department of Corrections Director Brian Gootkin, and often other leaders within the department. This open and regular communication is essential.

I have had the pleasure of working with Brian for many years. In Brian's previous role as Gallatin County Sheriff, I worked with him as a Board member of the Montana Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association. In my role working with the local public health officers across the state, then Sheriff Gootkin and I worked with a team to pass community mental health response legislation—which has helped to strengthen the community behavioral system somewhat. I think we both look forward to continuing this crucial work in our new roles, as behavioral health and addictions certainly cross over into the corrections population.

Accomplishments so far working with Brian during his short tenure are underway and include: smoothing out the offender pre-screening process, updating offender Room and Board payments, implementing Covid subsistence payments during the peaks of the pandemic, and planning to co-present during the legislative interim committees. Director Gootkin has also toured all of the prerelease centers across the state (Billings, Butte, Helena, Great Falls, and Missoula). He has been able to see the value of our programs first-hand and seems to have an understanding of the value that they bring to the corrections system. MCCA looks forward to our continued partnership with Brian and the Department of Corrections during the remainder of the Gianforte administration.

"I have toured numerous facilities around the state and am impressed with the dedication and professionalism. I look forward to working with our partners and improving relations." - Director Gootkin



*Director Brian Gootkin,
DOC Director*

For more information on Director Gootkin please visit the DOC's website at www.cor.mt.gov

Enhanced Transitional Supervision Services

By Karli Morris, ETSS Case Manager and Susy Paddock, Reentry Services Supervisor

Alternatives was awarded a contract with the Department of Corrections titled “Enhanced Transitional Supervision Services” (or ETSS) in December of 2019. The program consists of two Case Managers in Yellowstone County and one in both Carbon and Stillwater counties who work with offenders referred by the State Probation and Parole Office that are in need of additional support. There are a number of services provided, ranging from job development, assistance in applying for disabilities, counseling services, drug and alcohol monitoring, and GPS services. As of mid-March, the ETSS program has worked with 563 different offenders and has received 837 total referrals to a broad range of services.

As Alternatives moves in to the second year of ETSS, we look back on a year of great learning...learning how to adjust our services while continuing to provide support to our clients during a pandemic. Coping with the pandemic has been a difficult experience for everyone. Our team, with help from the staff of our Beta Jail Alternatives Program, came up with solutions to the hurdles we are facing during this time. The term “reentry” is corrections’ buzzword right now. Reentry refers to the transition of offenders from prisons and jails back into our community. The ETSS Department and the Department of Corrections are working with offenders to provide supervision and treatment options so they can remain in the community. The goal of ETSS is to help offenders receive opportunities and support to become productive, working citizens in our community.



ETSS Staff (L-R): Annette Saylor - Enhanced Supervision Manager, Susy Paddock - Supportive Housing & Reentry Supervisor, & Karli Morris - Case Manager IV

“ETSS has been an incredible resource to our Probation and Parole Officers. During the COVID-19 shut-down, it was one of the few resources PO’s could utilize to monitor our offenders in an efficient and accurate manner. As we slowly return to “normal”, we continue to use the wide range of services in order to help our offenders better themselves and our community.” Katie Weston, Region-IV PO-II

Curbing the Jail Overcrowding Issue in Stillwater County

In September 2020, after more than a year of planning and approvals, Stillwater County began its Sheriff’s Labor Detail program. The program is spearheaded by Under Sheriff Randy Smith and is based loosely on a program in Yellowstone County.

Defendants work one 8-hour day for each 2 days of jail/detention sentenced. The workers are supervised by Deputy Ren Crain with the Stillwater Sheriff’s Department and are tasked with performing such tasks as road cleanup, yardwork, washing vehicles and anything else that might be needed depending on the site. Judges Lee Cornell and Matthew Wald have utilized the program, citing that it gives back to the community where a crime has been committed. It has been a good tool for the courts to utilize with jail overcrowding and detention not being available due to COVID-19. It also provides seniors in the area assistance where it might be otherwise cost prohibitive for them.

The Stillwater Alternatives office has partnered with the sheriff’s department, handling all the necessary paperwork and documenting hours for the courts. Since inception, a total of 262 hours have been worked in Stillwater County through March 31, 2021, with 168 hours performed in the 3rd quarter alone.



Stillwater County Under Sheriff Randy Smith



Deputy Ren Crain

Graduation Day

Alternatives, Inc. works closely with School District #2 of Billings and Adult Basic Education to provide 16 hours HiSet/GED coursework and study each week for residents of Passages. In 2020, this coursework was temporarily suspended due to COVID-19, but that didn't stop Dorissa Garza from completing her HiSet studies on her own and passing the exam. Between 2019-2020, 11 other residents passed the exam. Plans are in place for the 2021/2022 school year to provide a fulltime educator to teach this coursework at Passages in hopes of graduating more residents. Graduation assists these residents in employment placement, a requirement of the Pre-release programs of Alternatives.



*Dorissa Garza
HiSet Graduate*

Quality Assurance: The Mission to Be Great, Not Just Good

By Kristi Padilla, Contract Assurance Coordinator

Alternatives, Inc. employs 160 plus persons in five locations including the Passages Women's Center on South 27th Street and Alpha House at 31st and 1st Avenue North in Billings. 7,000 community referrals annually, and nearly 400 residential clients each day, are managed under contracts with Federal, State, County, and Municipal authorities. These contracts generally stipulate in specific terms the requirements under which services are to be delivered including treatment, security, maintenance, facility, housekeeping, and financial management. To assure that these standards of operation are not simply met but met with excellence, Alternatives employs quality assurance staff including Kristi Padilla - Contract Assurance Coordinator, Rick Deady - Emergency Safety Planner/PREA Coordinator, and Stacy Purcell - Substance Compliance Manager. These personnel proactively assist staff in understanding program requirements, spot check performance, and responding to monitoring and evaluation reports.

Since January it's been busy time with audits of our various agency programs! Between the Montana Department of Corrections, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, United States Probation and Community Treatment Services we have had seven audits. We kicked off the new year with a FBOP Full Monitoring and Preoccupancy Inspection and a United States Probation audit. In the month of May the Department of Corrections spent some time with us at Alpha House while Passages was experiencing a CPC audit. An Interim Monitoring by the FBOP welcomed us to May along with another USPO audit. Which takes us to July where a Community Treatment Services monitoring was conducted by Lashanda Williams, a Community Treatment Oversight Specialist out of Kansas City.

With exception of the DOC audit, all these evaluations have been conducted remotely, via email, telephone, and teleconferencing and involved significant amounts of data, files, and documentation to be forwarded electronically as they were full reviews of our programs contract compliance. Among many other things, our programs are evaluated for the quality and quantity of Mental Health services, comprehensiveness of urinalysis testing, Chemical Dependency outpatient services and Inpatient treatment as well as facility operations, safety, and security. Overall, the monitoring reports have been very positive; a testament to the good work done by staff. When there is an issue or "deficiency", a corrective action report is written and we can be certain that it will be evaluated again at the next monitoring. Alternatives, Inc. prides itself in maintaining high standards for operations and for addressing areas that are non-compliant with contract requirements.



*Kristi Padilla,
Contract Assurance Coordinator*

Public Safety Officer Standards and Training (POST)

By Justina Goldhahn, Beta Jail Alternatives Supervisor

Alternatives continues to ensure staff are trained and compliant with the State's standards for Public Safety Officers. In July 2020, Alternatives sent Joey Anderson, Beta Jail Alternatives Manager, to the Montana Law Enforcement Academy Pre-Trial Services and Misdemeanor Probation Officer Basic Academy at Dawson Community College in Glendive, Montana. This training included 120 hours of on-site training and an additional 20 hours of online study. The curriculum was approved by the Montana POST Council and included MLEA certified instructors. The curriculum included legal and culturally specific topics, working with Child Protective Services, the MT court system, case planning and management, substance use addiction and treatment, mental health first aid, court room testimony, risk and needs assessments, defensive tactics, firearms, ethics, risk management, and domestic violence, among others. This certification and training fulfill the Montana Code Annotated training requirements to perform Misdemeanor Probation Services for local courts.



Front row (L-R): Vanessa Williamson (Lincoln County Probation Department), Molly Gasiewicz (Missoula Correctional Services), Nikki Palin and Dillon Hrchka (Gallatin County Pre-Trial Services). Back row (L-R): Keegan Rothie (Probation and Parole), Kenneth Breen (Lincoln County Pre-Trial Services), Joey Anderson (Alternatives, Inc.)

"It was an amazing experience to meet and network with agencies around the state with the same goal as our organization." Kara Padilla-Jablonski

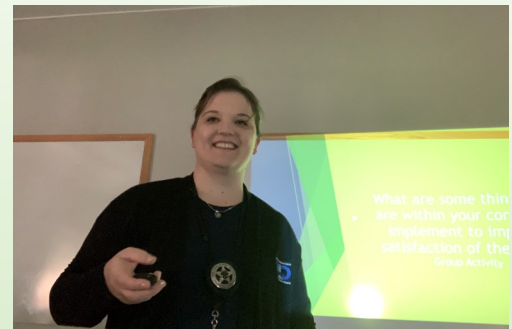
Additionally, Alternatives sent Misdemeanor Probation Officers, Kara Padilla-Jablonski and Eric Braun to the POST Instructors' Development course in January 2021. These staff are now able to teach at the annual Pre-Trial Services and Misdemeanor Probation Officer Basic Academy at Dawson Community College.

Investing in a Dream: Student to Instructor

I wanted to take a moment to express some gratitude. I just returned from Dawson Community College where I was an Instructor representing my company, for the Montana Law Enforcement Academy POST Pre-Trial Services/Misdemeanor Probation Basic Class #3! There are many things about that sentence that are very meaningful for me. Twenty years ago I enrolled in Dawson Community College as a Freshman starting my college education. 2 years later, I attended the Montana Law Enforcement Academy for the 1st time. I remember walking around the grounds with the thought "How amazing would it be to teach here" and have held onto that dream since. Being able to return to my College and teach what I do on a daily basis here, for a purpose that impacted me so much when I started in Law Enforcement is out of this world for me!

Thank you to Justina Goldhahn, Beta Jail Alternatives Supervisor, for the amazing support and encouragement she has shown me since becoming my supervisor. Dave and Jan, thank you for your pushes and desires to evolve that continue to make Alternatives better.

Thank you for investing in me! You have invested time, resources, training, and patience. Without all of you I would not have had the opportunity to make my dream a reality. I feel very accomplished and proud of my last 20 years thanks to Alternatives! Just a million Thank You(s)



Kara Padilla-Jablonski recently taught a course at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy POST Pre-Trial Services/ Misdemeanor Probation Basic Class.

A Board Member's Perspective: Screening Residents for Residential Placement (Alpha & Passages)

By Kathleen Candelaria, Board Member

The Screening Committees for Alternatives play a vital role in assisting facility staff in determining appropriate placement for offenders. The composition of the committees includes members from multiple disciplines in order to provide for an enhanced and knowledgeable decision. Board members, law enforcement personnel, and local P&P officers assist facility Directors and assessment teams on a weekly basis to offer offenders community programming. This is one Board member's perspective on serving as a community representative on a screening committee...

A few years ago, I was asked to participate in the Screening Committee for the Alpha House Pre-release Center. I agreed, but didn't really know what that would entail. We meet weekly for 1-2 hours. In the beginning I really felt I was out of my depth. I had no experience with corrections. Mostly I would sit quietly, ask questions periodically and felt I didn't contribute much. The first reality check for me was learning that these offenders were everywhere in my everyday life. Before Screening Committee, I'd never really given it any thought - at the car wash, at a restaurant, home construction sites (relevant as I am a realtor), everywhere. My eyes were opened.

The next transition was when Betty Ann Roan, then Director of Alpha House pushed me to share my thoughts on the offenders we were reviewing. When I told her I didn't have the experience the others at the table did, she told me that my opinion, as a member of the public, was exactly what they wanted to hear. This gave me new confidence in sharing my opinion.

As a woman, I was an adamant "no" to providing services to offenders who'd committed crimes against women and children. This was a deeply felt belief. Again, Betty Ann took me aside and told me, if we didn't help some of these

"Who were they? How did they get where they are?"

offenders with the programs that Alternatives could provide to them, the risk was that these offenders would be released onto the streets with no tools to help change their lives, and the risk of their reoffending was great.

Next came the benefit of learning of some of the offender's crimes, their stories. Who were they? How did they get where they are? For me, getting a chance to know who these offenders are - their backgrounds, and sometimes more about the crimes is important. I may still find them to be a risk to society, but other times, I find that knowing their stories helps me determine if offering them a chance to get some help, can offer them a second chance to be contributing members of society. On the flip side, I've been doing this long enough now that I do see names come up that I've seen before. Maybe it's part of getting older, and hopefully a little wiser, I do understand that we can offer them help, but it is up to them to accept the help, use it, internalize it, make the change.

Finally, the friendships I've made in the Screening Committee have been a gift. Getting to know that police officers and probation officers are real people, not just uniforms, is a change for me. Before, my only experience with police would be driving my car and seeing a police car on the road and panicking about my driving. At a time when the news is full of stories about police, I know, through the friendships I've made, that those stories do not reflect the men and women who protect our community. We are so fortunate to live in Billings, MT. And I'm grateful to Alternatives for the services they provide our community. Without them, how many offenders would be released to the streets only to reoffend because they'd not been given any tools, tools they'd probably never been taught growing up because of the lives they were born to? Sometimes when I tell people where I volunteer, you can see the looks on their faces. Looks of discomfort. It's so much easier to get behind volunteering for children or animals, but just like me, when I first came to the Screening Committee and thought I didn't have much to offer, learning about what Alternatives provides is eye opening. We should all be more grateful for what Alternatives does for our community. I know I am.



Kathleen Candelaria
Screening Committee Member



ALTERNATIVES

CORRECTIONS TO COMMUNITY

Alpha House

3109 1st Avenue North
Billings, MT 59101
406-259-9695

Passages

1001 South 27th Street
Billings, MT 59101
406-294-9609

Beta Alternatives / Compass

2120 3rd Avenue North
Billings, MT 59101
406-256-3501

Carbon Alternatives

PO Box 1652
Red Lodge, MT 59068
406-446-1675

Stillwater Alternatives

PO Box 1050
Columbus, MT 59019
406-322-4121

info@altinc.net

Find us on the web at www.altinc.net

If you prefer to receive our publication via email, please contact Gwen Albrecht at 406-256-3501 ext. 239 or galbrecht@altinc.net

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