

Attorney General – Elected Official Budget Request 2013 Biennium

1. Child Sexual Predator Unit

FY 2012: \$0
FY 2013: \$272,989 General Fund

The Child Sexual Predator Unit is critical in helping local law enforcement respond to increasing demands for investigative and prosecutorial assistance resulting from child sexual predators.

Child Predators:

Every day, sexual predators attempt to entice and solicit Montana kids through online chat and social networking sites. As a result, some Montana children have been enticed into uploading inappropriate images of themselves, unwittingly becoming victims of child pornography.

Other children fall victim to hands-on physical and sexual assaults by these perpetrators. In any given month, 700-900 people in Montana go online to search for and download child pornography, some involving victims as young as two years old. Some of these individuals will act on their impulses and use the Internet to seek out child victims. Perpetrators use children to manufacture pornography to sell and distribute via the Internet. Others assault children in their communities.

In sexual predator and child pornography cases, the department's Computer Crime Unit provides forensic support to local law enforcement agencies by retrieving evidence, such as images or videos, from a suspect's computer or phone. The unit's caseload continues to grow and additional resources are needed.

Sexual or Violent Offender Registry:

Beyond the challenges of online exploitation, law enforcement agencies also confront difficulties when dealing with non-compliant sex offenders. Every year roughly 40 to 70 registered sex offenders do not fulfill the registry's legal requirements – such as notifying law enforcement when they change address or employment – and are declared non-compliant. Frequently, non-compliant offenders have left the city, county or state and their whereabouts are unknown.

The Montana Department of Justice assists local and federal law enforcement by tracking down non-compliant offenders and providing prosecutorial assistance to County Attorneys on compliance matters.

Summary

The continuation of this grant funded enforcement unit is critical in maintaining the services outlined above. The general fund request is for the second year of the biennium and includes three FTEs: a criminal investigator, a prosecutor and a forensic computer analyst. What these positions do is vitally important to the safety of Montana communities and to the safety of our children.

2. Drug Diversion Enforcement Unit

FY 2012: \$0
FY 2013: \$520,180 General Fund

The misuse and abuse of prescription drugs has become a very serious public safety problem affecting communities across the state of Montana. In 2009, prescription drugs were a contributing factor in the deaths of over 300 Montanans. In recent years, the Division of Criminal Investigation Narcotics Bureau reports that roughly 40 percent of the drug cases agents handle are related to prescription drug abuse.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the state are reporting substantial investigative and prosecutorial workload issues resulting from this growing problem. Local agencies are dealing with an increasing number of pharmacy robberies, home invasions by pill seekers, doctor shopping, prescription fraud, black market distribution, illegal sales and possession of prescription drugs. These enforcement challenges exceeded the resources of existing state and local drug enforcement teams. As a result, most of these crimes were never prosecuted.

Recognizing the need to address this problem, the Montana Department of Justice sought federal grant funding in 2009 to develop a Drug Diversion Enforcement Unit comprised of three investigators, a prosecutor, a public outreach coordinator and an administrative assistant. Since the creation of the unit, over 150 multi-jurisdictional drug diversion cases have been initiated for prosecution throughout the state.

Summary

The continuation of this grant-funded enforcement unit is critical to assist local law enforcement efforts to reduce prescription drug abuse and addiction. The general fund request is for the second year of the biennium and includes the six FTEs that make up the Drug Diversion Enforcement Unit.