

Law and Justice Interim Committee Meeting  
September 9, 2011

Montana Jail Standards/Review Process Update

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Dennis McCave, I am a Captain with the Yellowstone County Sheriff's Office. I am currently the Commander of our Detention Facility as well as a Board Member and former President of the *Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers Association*. I'm here today on behalf of the *Sheriff's Association* to give you a brief review of our efforts and commitment to the Montana Jail Standards and the subsequent "Review" (Inspection) process and more specifically, the applicability of that process in addressing the issue of suicides in Montana Jails.

The Montana Jail Standards have been in existence for over 30 years. In 1978, then Sheriff Pete Howard, now Judge Howard, initiated a process to draft and develop Jail Standards for the State of Montana, which was completed in 1981 through the assistance of the *National Institute of Corrections*. Our Jail Standards have been revised and updated several times since then, the last revision being done in 2006 and is scheduled for "updating" this year. The *National Institute of Corrections* (NIC), has given "technical assistance" to Montana with the original draft of Standards in 1981, and with the revisions in 1998 and again in 2006. These "Standards" have been developed to be consistent the *American Correction Association* (ACA) National Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities. Just this year the ACA, in co-operation with the "American Jail Association" (AJA) have published the first ever "Jail Core Standards", which we will be using in our upcoming update.

Besides the continual updating of our Jail Standards, we also, 2008, received another "Technical Assistance" grant from NIC to develop viable system of "inspecting" Jails, or as we call them "*Jail Reviews*", to evaluate their operations and organization in light of the current, established Standards. In 2009, training and *partial* "test" Reviews, to develop and validate the process, were conducted with "volunteer" staff from various Facilities throughout the State. Subsequently, an "Advisory Committee" was formed with representatives from the Sheriff's Association, the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) and the Montana Municipal Insuring Authority (MMIA). Starting in 2010, several Sheriff's responded to have their Jails "Reviewed". At this time, the Jails that have been reviewed by Peer Review Teams are; Musselshell, Sweet Grass, Powder River, Butte Silver Bow, Yellowstone, Custer, Lewis and Clark, Glacier, Valley and Rosebud. Of these ten (10) Jails reviewed, seven of them were well over

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90% fully or partially compliant on the Core (main) Standards, one (1) was just over 80% and two (2) were below 80%. Two (2) more facilities are scheduled for Reviews. When these "Reviews" are concluded, a review "form" is left with the Facility Administrators, reflecting the evaluation with each "Core" Standard to their Facility and operation. If any area is not in full compliance, recommendations/suggestions are made to address those areas.

One of the changes that was made to the Review Process after the 2009 partial "test" reviews were done, was a "resource" element was incorporated with each Review team. Each team would have with them an example of various "forms" used for various functions at other Facilities that could be incorporated and utilized at the Reviewed Facility to improve or enhance their operation. A "primary" Core Standard that is part of every Review is addressing how the individual Jail complies with the "screening and prevention" of suicide. (Example of "Review" forms for that area) As I mentioned, if a Facility being reviewed lacks appropriate Mental Health or Suicide screening forms, the Peer Reviewers conducting the Review will offer them "examples" of forms used by other Facilities. (Examples of Screening Forms)

As we continue with the evolution and sustainability of this "Review" process, and specifically looking at Mr. Rosston's report in the area of "Suicide Prevention in our Jails", it would be tremendously positive and helpful if the State, and this Body, could partner and assist us by looking very closely at his recommendations. Having a centralized reporting repository, a uniformed "standardized" assessment tool and *statewide*, consistent training on screening and suicide prevention would be a "tremendous" step in reducing the number of suicides in our Jails. Also, if there were some way to provide access to funding for equipment such as suicide resistant clothing and bedding, especially for the smaller facilities, along with reasonable access to Mental Health professionals to "ALL" jails in their communities, there would be little doubt that the number of successful suicide attempts in our jails would be reduced.

We will continue with our commitment to all Jails in the State of Montana, to enhance their overall effective operations, especially in the area of suicide prevention. The "Peer Review" process, I believe is critical in achieving this goal. Over the years, the MSPOA, MACo, MMIA and numerous Sheriff's Offices have supported these efforts with staff and limited funding. With an investment and partnership with the State and it's agencies, especially in the area of mental health and suicide prevention, I believe, success and sustainability could be assured sooner, rather than later.