GALLATIN COUNTY JUSTICE COUNCIL

Overview

The Gallatin County Justice Council program operates under the auspices of the county's Court Services department. There are three justice councils. Each council consists of four to six trained community volunteers. Offender participants may be referred to the program either as part of a pre-trial diversion agreement, or as a post-conviction sentencing condition. According to the program's mission statement, the Justice Council program objectives are to:

- reduce the impact of crime in the community;
- reduce the use of jail space for participants; and
- reduce participant recidivism.

According to the program's brochure, each justice council provides the structure under which community members guide an offender's reparations to and reintegration with the community. This guidance and supervision is provided in the form of a reparative agreement between the offender and the council and by the council's follow-up on the participant's progress. Under a reparative agreement, the participant accepts responsibility for his or her offense and agrees to take certain actions to make reparations. The council then follows-up on the offender's progress toward fulfilling the terms of the agreement.

If an offender and victim are willing and prepared, the justice council may schedule a face-to-face victim/offender dialogue.

Each council meets monthly to hear initial and follow-up cases. Each council also selects one member to serve on an executive committee. The executive committee is a steering and decision-making body. If the program coordinator is concerned about whether a referred offender should participate in a justice council, the executive committee makes the final decision about whether to accept or reject that participant. The court is notified if an offender is rejected.

Staffing

Gallatin County provides a 0.5 FTE in its Court Services department to administer the program. This coordinator:

- develops and maintains policies and procedures;
- recruits community volunteers to serve as council members;
- coordinates training for the community volunteers;
- interviews and screens all offenders who are referred to the program;
- attends and keeps records of justice council and executive committee meetings; and
- acts as a liaison to the community and the courts by providing informational briefings and reports.

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Funding

The program was initially funded in 2000 by the Montana Board of Crime Control from a U.S. Department of Justice grant. This Community Corrections Program Pilot Project grant provided $54,000 for start-up costs and training for a program coordinator. The grant was renewed annually until 2004, when Gallatin County formed its Court Services department and absorbed the continuing costs of the program. The program coordinator estimates that the county spends about $10,000 annually to support the Justice Council program, which is primarily spent on salary, with minimal expenses incurred for office supplies and travel.

Data

The following tables illustrate the number of participants between FY2007 and FY2011 by source of referral, type of referral, and outcome.

Table 1 - Source of Referral

	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	Total
Bozeman Municipal Court	2	14	12	12	21	61
Belgrade City Court	23	10	13	17	23	86
Misdemeanor Probation				2		
Total	**25**	**24**	**25**	**31**	**44**	**147**

data coming soon for following tables .....

Table 2 - Type of Referral

	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	Total
Pretrial Diversion						
Deferred Prosecution						
Post-conviction sentence						
Total						

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Table 3 - Disposition

	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	Total
Determined inappropriate						
Terminated program						
Completed						
Total						

Primary Point of Contact

Ms. Barbara Rainey, Justice Council Program Coordinator, Gallatin County Court Services, (406) 582-3710, Barbara.Rainey@gallatin.mt.gov.