

DECEMBER 16, 2011 - Agenda Item 2.d.

MR. TERRY JESSEE, MENTAL HEALTH STAFF, YELLOWSTONE COUNTY DETENTION CENTER
FOR THE LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE
PANEL ON JAIL SUICIDE

Over the past several months, I've researched the so-called "Kentucky Model," reading about it and talking with one of the creators of that program, Connie Milligan. I believe that the program has serious merit, and could be a significant intervention to prevent jail suicides in Montana. Several graduate level textbooks have included the Kentucky Model as an example of best and evidence-based practice in prevention of jail suicide, including *Prison and Jail Administration: Practice and Theory* by Peter M. Carlson.

However, even in the articles that Milligan and her co-creator Ray Sabbatine have written, they acknowledge that local governments could not afford the cost of the program in Kentucky. For that reason, they went to the Kentucky legislature for funding. Estimated annual cost for the program is \$2.1 million.

As in Kentucky, Montana counties cannot afford to pay for this program. At current funding levels, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services does not have the resources to build and run this program. At current funding levels, the Montana Law Enforcement Academy does not have the resources to provide training for detention officers in this program.

Starting from scratch, staffing for this program alone would cost an estimated \$350,000 per year. That's for five counselors, the minimum required to provide 24/7 coverage. To ensure that all jails had appropriate clothing, bedding, and other equipment as needed to work with the program would cost another estimated \$100,000. Providing four hours of training for all jails would probably take the best part of a year, and could cost as much as \$150,000 more.

House Bill 60, as proposed by Rep. Bob Ebinger in the 2009 session, estimated a budget for an experimental pilot program at approximately \$400,000 for the two years. Although it was approved by the House Judiciary Committee (14-4) and by the House generally (55-45), that bill was tabled by the House Appropriations Committee in April of 2009 and died there.