



Community Corrections

For Immediate Release

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Community Corrections pays many dividends

Macomb County's innovative alternative sentencing programs saved county taxpayer's more than \$8 million in incarceration costs during 2010. But the actual value to the county goes far beyond that amount.

"Not only does our Community Corrections program save upfront money by keeping non-violent criminals out of the County jail, we will save significant dollars going forward. Our efforts help individuals from becoming repeat offenders and to become productive members of society again," said Macomb County Executive Mark A. Hackel.

Hackel said Macomb County's Community Corrections department is a national model with an impressive record of rehabilitating non-violent offenders.

Both Hackel and Macomb County Sheriff Anthony Wickersham stressed that public safety is always the highest priority, and added that only non-violent offenders who aren't a threat to the community are eligible to participate.

"Alternative sentences aren't granted to just any offender," Wickersham said. "We have strict criteria, the key one being that participants must be non-violent and compliant with our rules and procedures."

Under the direction of Russell McPeak, the department's mission is to provide effective, local, community-based alternatives to incarceration that promote public safety, hold offenders accountable, and improve their ability to live lawfully and productively in the community.

"Our focus is relieving jail overcrowding through Court-approved sentencing alternatives," McPeak said. "This is accomplished through detailed assessments of individuals and comprehensive rehabilitation programs they must follow."

Assessment is key, noted McPeak. "It helps us identify the offenders' needs and tailor a plan that will make him/her a stable, functioning individual who is less likely to be a repeat offender."

The department's programs include substance abuse, inpatient and outpatient treatment, daily reporting services, urine testing, community service work, job training assistance, cognitive restructuring and pre-trial release supervision.

During 2010, the program served 5,476 individuals and is on pace to serve the same amount this year. Approximately 85 percent have substance abuse problems.



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The department completion rate for substance abuse testing is 65 percent, he noted, while its residential treatment program completion rate is 60 percent. The average residential treatment program participant completes 70 days of treatment.

“Those people who are discharged for non-compliance or rule violations generally only complete about 14 days of treatment,” McPeak said.

While there is a typical emphasis on “zero tolerance,” McPeak said the department recognizes how difficult it is to conquer a dependency.

“Re-offending is an ongoing threat that requires intervention rather than automatic punishment,” he said.

Other department programs have had successful completion rates ranging from 75 to 80 percent.

One of the department’s more visible efforts is its community service program, which provides free labor to non-profit community organizations. “This program allows offenders to repay society and develop sound work habits,” McPeak said.

Among the Macomb County charity groups that have benefitted from this program is the St. Clair Shores-based We Are Here Foundation. The foundation is focused on environmental issues, education and works to cleanup parks, Lake St. Clair and Clinton River shorelines. In addition, the foundation recycles computers for the needy and helps financially strapped families move out of foreclosed homes.

According to Tom Cleaver, executive director, the foundation utilizes the program every week.

“We put the offenders to work and they put in a lot of hard hours,” he said. “I would say that 99 percent of the participants come to us with a good attitude. They are taking responsibility and want to fulfill their obligation.”

Cleaver said he is a solid proponent of the program. “We think it’s great and we have a terrific relationship with the County’s department.”

Macomb County receives more than \$1.9 million from various state funding sources each year to operate the department. The County also contributes about \$360,000 from its general fund.

Hackel said it is money well spent.

“It costs the County about \$84.75 per day to incarcerate an inmate, and this program saved us 96,800 bed days last year for a total savings of \$8.2 million,” Hackel said. “This savings is impressive. It allows us to re-direct County dollars toward other important needs.”

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Macomb County Executive
Mark A. Hackel



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More importantly, according to Wickersham, the program hopefully keeps offenders from re-entering the criminal justice system again.

“We have also turned thousands of lives around and put offenders on a positive track where they are contributing to our community,” Wickersham said. “There is a definite dollar value for this human investment we have made that you can’t easily quantify.”

The department has been in existence for 20 years and has a 13-member advisory board that provides recommendations for program improvements and modifications; as well as, identifying additional community contacts and resources. The board is composed of prominent judges, law enforcement professionals and business leaders.

“I really need to salute our advisory board for their commitment and dedication to what we are trying to accomplish,” McPeak said. “Their professional advice and direction is a tremendous assistance.”

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