

# NEWSRELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Experts assess state's sex offender treatment programs**

A team of national experts has endorsed a Montana Department of Corrections plan to develop a sex offender treatment facility and urged that it be part of a broader effort to strengthen the state's process for managing such offenders.

Kurt Bumby and Madeline Carter from the Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM) offered 31 recommendations for establishment of the facility and the department used those suggestions in developing its request for proposals that was issued Aug. 8. The project was authorized by the 2007 Legislature.

"The Montana DOC is to be commended for recognizing both the unique opportunity before them in establishing a minimum-security sex offender treatment facility and the challenges associated with such an endeavor," the report said.

In addition to providing advice on the treatment program, Bumby and Carter assessed the existing system for assessment and treatment of sex offenders in Montana. They said they "were impressed by the extent to which Montana has embraced promising practices in many areas of sex offender management.

They praised state policymakers for supporting the proposed treatment center and concluded that Montana is unique in its efforts at "balancing retributive and deterrence goals with rehabilitative goals, thus supporting a more balanced approach to sex offender management" that has proven to reduce recidivism and increase public safety.

"Indeed, the citizens of Montana are likely well-served by the comprehensive sex offender management structure currently in place, which has the potential to contribute significantly to public safety," the pair wrote in their 59-page report.

The CSOM team recommended ways to improve the methods of evaluating sex offenders, providing more timely access to treatment at Montana State Prison, creating more consistency in treatment and expanding treatment capacity within Montana communities. The report suggested creation of a team that would be charged with developing a "formal, assessment-driven system of sex offender services that is supported by all stakeholders," such as judges, victims, the state Board of Pardons and Parole, and local screening committees for prerelease centers.

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The report also recommended specialized training for probation and parole officers who focus on supervising sex offenders and a more structured system for dealing with those who violate conditions of their community placement. The experts said corrections officials should expand efforts to educate the public about the sex offender treatment program, who will be served in the facility and how the results will be tracked.

Corrections Director Mike Ferriter said the Bumby-Carter report provides the department with its first truly comprehensive review and analysis of sex offender management efforts in Montana. Key corrections officials will discuss ways to implement the recommendations, he said.

“This is an invaluable resource as we continue our efforts to improve the way we deal with this challenging population of offenders,” Ferriter said. “We felt it was important for the experts to do more than give advice on what the new treatment facility should look like. We wanted a clear picture of where these national experts think we can do more and do it better.”

The department is seeking proposals for development and operation of a 116-bed treatment facility for lower-risk sex offenders. The project is a recognition of the fact that sex offenders account for about one out of every four prison inmates in Montana and that the only existing inpatient treatment program, located at Montana State Prison, is overburdened.

“We believe that creating a facility dedicated to intensive treatment of sex offenders will go a long way to improving public safety when sex offenders return to communities across this state,” Ferriter said. “Research shows that treatment works to reduce recidivism dramatically, and this project is a recognition by Gov. Schweitzer and the Legislature that a new approach will benefit offenders and, more importantly, victims and the public.”

A copy of the CSOM report is available online at:

<http://www.cor.mt.gov/Issues/MontanaReportSexOffenderTreatment.pdf>

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