

NEWSRELEASE



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New inmate phone system offers lower rates

The Department of Corrections has implemented a new phone service for offenders incarcerated in several Montana correctional facilities that cuts in half the cost of phone calls placed to families and friends.

Telmate, an Oregon-based company, began providing phone service Feb. 25 to about 1,750 offenders at Montana State Prison, Montana Women's Prison, Treasure State Correctional Training Center, Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility and Riverside Youth Correctional Facility.

Telmate, which was awarded the contract in competition with eight companies responding to a request for proposals, offers a rate that is 56 percent lower than the previous rate. The cost of a 30-minute phone call, collect or pre-paid, to any place in the United States is \$3.84. That compares with \$8.75 under the previous contract.

This is the second time in about five years that a contract has resulted in a significant rate decrease.

"The Department of Corrections recognizes the importance of offenders in secure facilities being able to stay in touch with friends and family, and the need to provide an affordable means of doing this is equally important," said Corrections Director Mike Ferriter. "Having contact with a support system is critical to offenders' progress toward rehabilitation."

In the contract, Telmate agreed to waive a variety of fees, including those for prepaid account setup, prepaid account funding, refunds, account maintenance, inactive accounts, regulatory cost recovery and universal service fund administration.

Telmate also has features that allow the department's Investigative Bureau to monitor calls and develop call detail reports. The new system saves staff time, as inmates will be able to report inmate telephone-related problems directly to Telmate using inmate voicemail, eliminating the need for use of written notes to correctional staff.

Inmates will have their own telephone account to hold money instead of making payments to an individual called number and the system can integrate with an inmate's trust account. Friends and families are able to post payments to inmates' telephone account using the Telmate website: <https://pay.intelmate.com/shop> or by calling the toll free customer service line at 866-516-0115. Deposits for phone time become available instantly on an inmate telephone account or a destination number prepaid account.

Money from phone calls, beyond what's needed to cover the cost of the service, is deposited in the inmate welfare fund, which is used to pay the cost of television service for inmates, provide financial assistance to discharging inmates, family days, re-entry functions, inmate pay and hygiene items.

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