



Wyoming
Department
of Health

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Brent D. Sherard, M.D., M.P.H., Director and State Health Officer

Governor Dave Freudenthal

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 18, 2006

TO: Representative Randall Luthi, Chairman, Management Audit Committee
Senator Grant Larson, Vice Chairman, Management Audit Committee

FROM: Brent D. Sherard, M.D., M.P.H., Director and State Health Officer
Wyoming Department of Health

SUBJECT: Wyoming Department of Health Response – Drug Court Report

REF: S-2006-608

Please find attached the Wyoming Department of Health's response to the Drug Court Report as requested by the Legislative Service Office.

Thank you.

BDS/HB/jg

Attachment

c: Chris Boswell, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Wendy Curran, Policy Analyst, Office of the Governor
Heather Babbitt, Drug Court Coordinator, Substance Abuse Division
Steve Gilmore, Administrator, Substance Abuse Division
Ginny Mahoney, M.A., Chief of Staff

Wyoming Department of Health
Drug Court Report Response
July 18, 2006

Recommendation – The Division should continue to define performance and outcome measures and develop uniform reporting requirements for the data it requires.

Response – The Wyoming Department of Health agrees in part with this recommendation.

- Performance and outcome measures, data collection, and reporting standards for evaluation have been developed and implemented in the Case Management System that began full operation on July 1, 2006. As this report states, the measures listed here have been elusive, even at the federal level. Only recently were national outcomes developed.
- Local programs were included in the design of the case management system beginning in May 2004 with the *Wyoming Drug Court Statewide Technical Assistance Project* and continuing with the user's group, alpha testing and beta testing.
- The Wyoming Department of Health continues to work on defining performance measures for juvenile and family drug courts as well as policies on data entry requirements.
- The report asserts that statewide effectiveness of drug courts has not been demonstrated. However, without a comparison of the outcomes, costs, sentencing and supervision of offenders in the traditional court system, no valid conclusion can be reached by the Legislative Service Office evaluation staff, making the statement inaccurate and merely a reflection of the opinion of the program evaluators.

Recommendation – The Legislature should consider delaying a decision to alter the current grant funding process during the 2007-2008 Biennium.

Response – The Wyoming Department of Health agrees in part with this recommendation.

- The data system for drug courts has not been effective in gathering needed information to support changes in appropriations to fund drug courts in the state. It is reasonable to delay alteration of the grant funding process by making drug courts a standard budget item until the data exists to support the outcomes of the program.
- Delaying a decision to make drug courts a standard budget item until data is received will prohibit growth at the state level until the next biennium. There are additional communities discussing the planning and implementation of a drug court. Delaying state funding to those programs will result in locally funded drug court programs with little state authority to obtain or collect data or a "business as usual" approach to handling addicted offenders in those communities.

Recommendation – The Legislature should consider authorizing a steering committee to review different administrative models, and report recommendations for a comprehensive state administrative structure.

Response – The Wyoming Department of Health is neutral with regard to this recommendation.

- The scope of work done by the legislature is at their discretion and the Wyoming Department of Health and the Substance Abuse Division will continue to provide a high level of cooperation.
- Legislative intent for local drug courts is couched throughout Wyoming Statutes 5-10-101 through 5-10-107 and gives direction to the Wyoming Department of Health as to the appropriation to each local court. Currently the Department is complying with the statutory provisions.
- Oversight of the funding to local drug courts has been through the State Drug Court Panel, whose duties are defined in statute.
- Developing a state administrative structure could potentially restrict the autonomy of the local drug court program management committee and centralize drug court operations at the state level, rather than allowing community based restorative justice programs to work in the state. Maintaining some level of local autonomy allows communities to shape their drug court program to fit local circumstances such as drug use and arrest patterns and the availability of treatment resources and other services.