



Media Alert

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For immediate release

WCSO plan to assist mentally ill, homeless gets support

(May 9, 2014) –A Wayne County Sheriff's Office plan to assist inmates who are mentally ill and homeless while also saving taxpayers millions of dollars is scheduled for final approval by the Wayne County Commission next Thursday.

The Commission's Committee on Public Safety voted this week in favor of a \$432,000 contract with Elmhurst Home Inc. of Detroit to house up to 70 inmates a day at men's and women's facilities as they transition from the criminal justice system into society. The contract would run thru September 2017 and is estimated to save the county about \$90 a day for each participant.

The inmates will receive a variety of rehabilitation services, including individualized counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health agency referrals and services, educational tutoring and life skills training, said Chief of Jails Jeriel Heard. They also will receive three meals a day. Those eligible for the programs are pretrial and sentenced adult inmates who are conditionally released or court-ordered to residential rehabilitation. All participants will wear a tether and likely will be in the program for 30 to 120 days.

"Residential rehabilitation can be an effective alternative to incarceration--we believe this approach is an extremely viable way to help those in the system steer clear of future trouble," said Sheriff Benny N. Napoleon. "This is part of the deficit reduction plan we submitted to the commission last summer. Not only does it save money, but it reduces inmate recidivism by providing treatment in a structured setting."

In addition to Elmhurst Home, the Sheriff's Office has recommended use of three other residential treatment programs. If approved, they would provide another 100 beds for the program. Funding will come from Jail Commissary funds, revenue generated from inmate phone use, Heard said.

The Sheriff's Office has been chronically underfunded in operating the three county jails. Although funded to house less than 1,800 inmates a day, the Sheriff is required by court order to provide oversight for hundreds of additional inmates a day, including those monitored on tether. The underfunding creates a multi-million dollar annual deficit. The move to collaborate with agencies such as Elmhurst Home is considered yet another proactive step Sheriff Napoleon is implementing to address the agency's fiscal challenges while positively benefitting the transitioning population. Elmhurst Home is a nonprofit residential treatment program with a men's facility in Detroit and a women's facility in Highland Park.

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