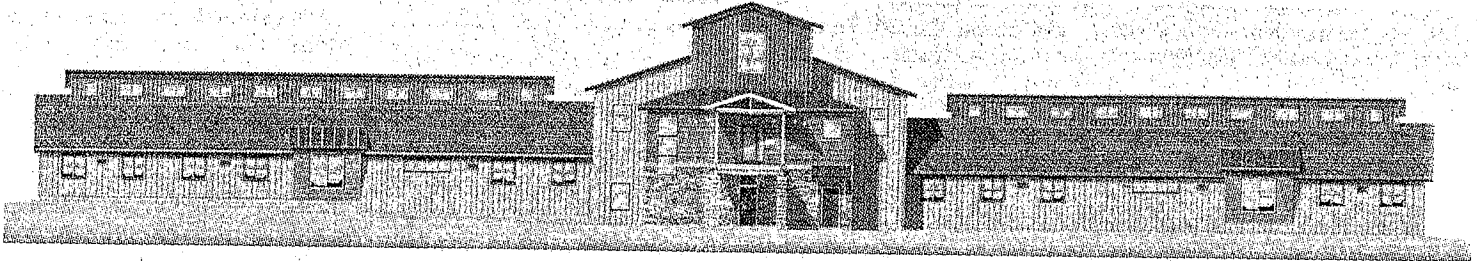


# 'Break the strings to their addictions'



Rendering of the Sullivan County Community Corrections Center, slated to open Aug. 1.

COURTESY IMAGE

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# New sentencing structure aims to offer more effective rehab

By **KRISTEN SENZ**  
Senior Writer

Sullivan County Attorney Marc Hathaway anticipates shorter and more effective sentences for many drug offenders once the Sullivan County Community Corrections Center opens in August.

"What we've been doing in the past is, we have not been



**Newport**

using sanction time wisely, and sanction time is the deprivation of liberty," said Hathaway of the way inmates spend their days in jail. "Part of a sentence is punishment and part of a sentence is rehabilitation."

About 15 offenders have already been sentenced to the community corrections center, which is scheduled to open Aug. 1, Hathaway said. The

180-day residential substance abuse treatment program at the CCC targets a drug-addicted population of offenders who are sentenced to six months to a year in county jail, usually for selling drugs.

"If we can break the strings to their addictions, then the theft they commit to support their habits and other crime (that surrounds the drug cul-

ture) will be reduced," Hathaway said. "No one believes that everyone will be successful, but we believe that the vast majority of people who go through this program will be better for it."

The programming at the CCC is designed as a continuum of intervention that will provide services to all inmates, even those who are only sen-

tenced for a few days. A research-based cognitive behavior and decision-making program, called "Thinking for a Change," will seek to teach inmates basic life skills and change thinking processes that lead to risky behavior. Building on that program is a substance abuse treatment curriculum titled "A New Direction," which is structured to give inmates

the skills they need for sustained recovery.

Presently, most offenders convicted of serious felony drug crimes are sentenced to jail and ordered to complete a 28-day residential substance abuse treatment program elsewhere in the state because, "It's risky to release an untreated addict back into the community," Hathaway said.

Because beds in off-site treatment programs are limited, many inmates spend months in jail waiting for a slot. With the CCC, programming for this population will begin within 10 days of sentencing, and instead of a 28-day program, they'll have access to an intensive 90-day program.

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"We may be able to effectively punish people and rehabilitate them with somewhat shorter sentences than we have traditionally," Hathaway said.

Following the 90-day intensive treatment program, inmates who exhibit good behavior will have the opportunity to get a job in the community during the day through the county's work release program. When they return at night, they will take more life skills and recovery courses. Inmates who successfully complete that program would then be eligible for Administrative Home Confinement, or electronic monitoring, which uses an ankle bracelet to track an inmate's whereabouts.

A key component of the community corrections model is the Sullivan County Aftercare Program, which seeks to help reintegrate offenders into society at the end of their sentences and throughout their probation period. For the first three months after release, offenders will be required to attend life skills classes and therapy sessions and submit to weekly drug screening by the county corrections department, in addition to drug tests administered by New Hampshire Probation and Parole. The county will then

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**MARC HATHAWAY**  
SULLIVAN COUNTY ATTORNEY

administer drug tests monthly for the remaining probationary period.

Many of the drug offenders and re-offenders in Sullivan County would like help with their substance abuse problems, but they lack the resources to get it, Hathaway said. "A large part of this population, they don't want that lifestyle, but they don't know how to get out," he said. "A lot of them look at this as an opportunity."

Developed in conjunction with the New Hampshire Public Defenders Office, the Sullivan County Department of Corrections and a variety of other stakeholders in the criminal justice system, the CCC program structure takes a holistic approach to both punishment and rehabilitation, while keeping concern for public safety at the forefront.

"It's about solving problems and it's about community protection," Hathaway said.

He and corrections department administrators have held two informational sessions about the new sentencing structure to familiarize public defenders and private defense attorneys with its guidelines. Hathaway said upcoming sessions would inform judges and law enforcement officers who act as prosecutors.

"I am enthusiastic about seeing greater results and more success," Hathaway said. "It is a very significant change, and we believe it will have significant benefits to the community."

According to a 2003 study by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, the Academy program costs taxpayers about one-third as much as incarceration. The program allows offenders to keep their jobs and receive treatment locally, while requiring regular monitoring by a judge and swift sanctions for violation of program conditions. The 2003 study showed Academy participants had roughly the same rates of re-arrest three years after completing their sentences as offenders who were incarcerated.

The Academy program has consistently been used more often in Sullivan County Superior Court than in any other court in the state. In 2004, the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies wrote that, "If all counties used the Academy at the same rate as Sullivan County ... the result would be a larger population serving their sentences in the community while receiving treatment and life skills training, a significantly reduced prison population, and significant financial savings to the state's general fund."

Sullivan County Attorney Marc Hathaway said recently that the success or failure of the Sullivan County Community Corrections Center is likely to receive as much attention as the Academy program did following its inception.

"I think our success or failure is going to be something that people will follow," he said, "and we have no intention of seeing this fail."

The opening of the community corrections center at the county farm in Unity in August will mark the first time any jail or prison in New Hampshire has integrated a secure inpatient substance abuse treatment program with a traditional detention facility.

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