

COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES OF THE BLACK HILLS

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January 31, 2005

City Council
City of Rapid City
300 6th Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Dear Council Members;

Community Alternatives of the Black Hills (CABH) is asking for your acknowledgment and support in its efforts to build a new facility on City property, immediately South of its current location at 5025 S. Highway 79. The purpose of this new building is to replace our existing modular structure and to allow us more space with which we can provide better services to our population and to the Community. I am sure that you have many questions about our operations and the population that we serve. While I prefer to answer your questions in person, and will do so at your earliest convenience, I hope to provide you with a brief overview of our Agency in this letter.

CABH began providing community corrections services in Rapid City in 1992, under a contract with Pennington County Community Corrections Board. In 1996, the Board was disbanded by the Governor, and CABH began contracting directly with the Department of Corrections. Also in 1996, CABH entered into its first five-year contract with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Since that time, we have maintained contracts with both entities. However; as you know, in February of 2004, the Department of Corrections opened its Rapid City Trustee Unit on Creek Drive and transferred our male, State inmates to that location, leaving us with a small number of female, State inmates and our Federal population. Federal "Residents" as we call them all, come in two varieties; Inmates who are referred to us by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), and Probationers or Supervised Releasees who are under the supervision of the United States Probation Officers (USPOs). While both categories consist of persons convicted of Federal Felonies, there are some basic differences between the two, which I will describe below.

BOP Inmates - These individuals are sent to us directly from Federal Institutions, so that we can assist them in the transition process from incarceration back to the community. They constitute approximately one half of our Federal population and may, by law, be placed in a Community Corrections Center (CCC) only for the last ten percent of their sentence or six months, whichever is less. BOP Inmates are referred to us by the Community Corrections Manager (CCM), a senior Bureau of Prisons official, whose office is located in Minneapolis.

With the referral, I receive a complete packet of information on the candidate; including a Presentence Investigation Report, Institutional Progress Report and Medical History. Following a thorough review of the file and a consultation with the CCM if necessary, I determine whether the candidate is accepted for placement. In making my decision, I need only answer one question affirmatively: Can we manage this individual? In other words; Can we protect the Community? Can we monitor and supervise this individual sufficiently, both in and outside of the facility, to the point where there is a reasonable expectation that he or she will not cause harm to others? Is there a reasonable expectation that this individual can benefit from our services and re-enter society as a productive member? If I believe that the inmate can be managed effectively, I will accept him or her for placement. BOP Inmates normally release to a period of "Supervised Release" under the supervision of the USPOs.

Supervised Releasees - The vast majority of offenders receive a two-part sentence following a conviction for a Federal crime: a period of incarceration (custody) and a period of Supervised Release. This Supervised Release is the Federal version of Parole and can last anywhere from one to five years, depending on the crime. It begins the day an inmate is released from custody. Some inmates go on Supervised Release and return to their communities straight from prison. Many, however, transition through a CCC like CABH and move to Supervised Release following their discharge. We receive a small number of Supervised Releasees immediately following their release from prison. Often they are sex-offenders who must undergo testing and/or Sex-offender Treatment prior to returning to the community. Some are placed here because they have no place to return to and are desperately in need of our services. The majority, however, are placed here by their USPO as a sanction for having violated one or more of the conditions of their Supervised Release. These are individuals who got out of prison and returned to their communities, and then returned to the same behaviors which often led to their original convictions; normally drugs and alcohol. In deciding whether I should accept a Supervised Releasee, there are two big questions that I must answer: Can we manage this individual? (and) If not here, then where? The reality is that Supervised Releasees, while often more difficult to manage, have done their custody time and no Judge is going to send them back to prison for one hot urinalysis or positive breath test. No Judge is going to send them back to prison because they stopped going to their sex-offender treatment or substance abuse aftercare. If they are back on drugs or alcohol, or if they are not going to their treatment, they do present a real threat to the community and must be taken off the streets. But if I do not accept them for placement, they may get to stay out there, or they may get placed in Detox or the Jail Work Release Program. As this is my Community, too, I would much rather have them at CABH where they can be monitored appropriately. Therefore; I normally accept them all.

Regardless of status, all residents of CABH get treated the same when it comes to security. Every resident receives a breath test every time they return to the facility from the community. Every resident must submit to random urinalyses: Inmates four times per month; Supervised Releasees at least twice per month. Residents are accounted for both in and outside of the Agency, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We conduct House Counts randomly, but at least once during each clock hour. Those who are not physically present in the facility must be accounted for through a sign-in/sign-out process.

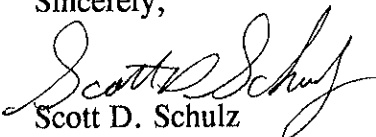
CABH does not allow residents to walk back and forth to work or treatment. We know how easy it would be for them to simply walk out of sight of the Agency and meet someone with a car, and then utilize their walking time for criminal behavior. Therefore we take them to work, and we pick them up when they are done. We maintain work schedules for all residents, so that when they sign out to work we know that they are actually scheduled to work on that day and at that time. We keep in contact with employers, not just to verify that our resident is present, but also to verify that the resident is being a reliable, responsible employee. We ask employers to notify us if there is any change to a resident's work schedule, so that an individual cannot call in sick or take a day off without us knowing about it. We even go so far as to match their paycheck stubs against our work-hours logs, so that we can tell if an individual told us that he or she was working when that was not the case.

CABH residents are allowed to access the Community, on a limited basis, for pleasure purposes, but again, accountability is paramount. We limit the time during which they may be gone from the Agency. We only allow them to go to places which have a telephone and the ability/willingness to page. No resident is allowed to go to restaurants which serve alcohol, or to places like casinos, bars, or the Civic Center when the beer vendors are open. Even private residences must be pre-approved by the assigned Case Manager who has verified the appropriateness of the individual being visited and the fact that there is no alcohol present.

Please know that while CABH is a work-release facility, it is also a Therapeutic Community. Though our residents are all expected to work, they are also expected to be involved in the rehabilitative process. Sex offenders attend sex-offender treatment. Those who have substance abuse issues attend treatment, aftercare or relapse prevention classes, and we transport residents to AA/NA meetings every week. We offer groups on Criminal Thinking, Anger Management, Women's Issues, Parenting, Job Seeking and Keeping, and Financial Responsibility, to name a few. We even offer a Foods and Nutrition class where they are taught to plan, purchase and prepare healthy meals after they leave us. While classroom space is limited in our existing facility, the proposed new building would have sufficient space to expand our elective programs and offer more in-house activities. And though most of our substance treatment is currently being provided in the Community, our future goal is to have a treatment provider on staff and to ultimately become a licensed out-patient treatment facility.

I hope that this letter has provided sufficient information to at least warrant further discussion. There must be Community Corrections in Rapid City. There must be a place where the offender population can be safely housed and allowed a supervised re-entry into society. For more than twelve years, CABH has been the provider of those services. With your support, we plan to continue providing them. I look forward to meeting with you and answering any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,


Scott D. Schulz
Director