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### **New Report Highlights the Importance of Montana Treatment Courts, Unmet Need**

*Approximately two-thirds of Montanans with drug-related convictions do not have access to treatment courts.*

*Bozeman, Mont.* – According to a new report released today, over 1,600 Montanans would benefit from treatment courts each year, but due to limited funding and capacity, there are only 28 state treatment courts serving about 550 participants at present. In addition to state treatment courts, there are eight tribal drug courts (Healing to Wellness Courts) serving Montana’s American Indian tribes. The analysis recommends additional state investments to expand existing programs and support new treatment courts as a cost-effective way to improve criminal justice and health outcomes. This report was commissioned by the Montana Healthcare Foundation and conducted by NPC Research.

“Treatment courts are the most researched and effective criminal justice intervention we have for defendants with substance use disorders,” said Beth McLaughlin, the Montana Supreme Court Administrator. “However, many people in Montana that need these services still do not have access to them.”

Treatment courts reduce recidivism by providing access to drug and alcohol treatment for offenders with substance use disorders. Participants must remain law-abiding, engage in the workforce through employment or job training, and pay outstanding restitution and fees. The analysis notes that treatment courts often cost less than processing offenders through the regular criminal justice system. Treatment courts can thus reduce the burden on taxpayers by achieving better outcomes for offenders, and by reducing incarcerations, re-incarcerations, and the number of people under criminal justice system supervision.

“Most drug court participants receive drug and alcohol treatment through Montana’s Medicaid Expansion,” said Dr. Aaron Wernham, CEO of the Montana Healthcare Foundation. “The success of these programs depends on partnerships between the courts and high-quality treatment programs, so continuing Medicaid expansion is essential to the success of treatment courts in Montana.”

Montana’s treatment courts are currently funded in part by an annual allocation of \$1.3 million in state tax dollars and competitive, time-limited federal grants. Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts are currently funded mainly by tribes. In order to expand access to these services, the report’s recommendations

include increasing the general fund allocation, identifying alternative funding streams, and reinstating Medicaid funds for treatment services. To read the full report and recommendations, please visit: <https://mthcf.org/resources/treatment-courts-report/>.

More information about Montana's treatment courts is available at: <https://courts.mt.gov/courts/drugcourts>.

#### **About NPC Research**

NPC Research provides quality social services evaluation, policy analysis, research, and training. It is dedicated to improving the effectiveness of human services offered to individuals and their children, families, and communities. NPC's highly skilled staff works closely with community partners and policymakers to implement research strategies that provide timely answers to policy-relevant questions. To achieve its purpose, NPC creates a supportive work environment that fosters productivity, cultural responsiveness, and creativity. Learn more at [www.npcresearch.com](http://www.npcresearch.com).

#### **About the Montana Healthcare Foundation**

The Montana Healthcare Foundation makes strategic investments to improve the health and well-being of all Montanans. Created in 2013, MHCF has approximately \$170 million in assets making it Montana's largest health-focused, private foundation. MHCF contributes to a measurably healthier state by supporting access to quality and affordable health services, conducting evidence-driven research and analysis, and addressing the upstream influences on health and illness. To learn more about the Foundation and its focus areas, please visit [www.mthcf.org](http://www.mthcf.org).

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