

BUTTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE MEDIA RELEASE

**JERRY W. SMITH
SHERIFF-CORONER**



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RELEASED BY : **Sheriff Jerry W. Smith**
CONTACT # : **530-538-6759**

CHICO STATE EXPERTS REVEAL SHERIFF'S ACS PROGRAM ON TRACK

The team of Chico State professors and criminal justice interns working with the Butte County Sheriff's Office to evaluate the Sheriff's Alternative Custody Supervision (ACS) program released its initial report at the September 19, 2012, meeting of Butte County's Community Corrections Partnership. The preliminary report indicates that the Sheriff's ACS program is on track and showing promise. The report also makes recommendations for overall improvement of the program, which are being implemented.

The Sheriff's ACS program was established to help mitigate the impacts of AB 109 on the Butte County Jail, while at the same time serving the interests of public safety. Correctional Deputies and Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the ACS program oversee offenders removed from the jail and placed on home detention. Prior to being placed on the ACS program, offenders are assessed to determine the level of risk they would pose to public safety if placed on home detention. If the risk is determined to be reasonable, and the offender meets other program requirements he or she may be accepted into the program. Offenders in the program are required to wear electronic ankle bracelets that help deputies monitor the location of the offenders. The offenders are not allowed to leave their homes without permission and are only allowed to go to locations authorized by the deputies in advance. Offenders in the program are required to attend classes designed to reduce recidivism, which are held at the Sheriff's Day Reporting Center. The deputies conduct regular unannounced home visits to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the program. The Sheriff's Office is able to supervise the offenders in the ACS program for approximately \$20 per day, as opposed to the approximately \$90 a day it costs to keep an offender incarcerated in the jail.

Currently, there are 107 offenders in the ACS program. Since its inception, a total of 261 offenders have been placed on the program. Of that total, 88 offenders have successfully completed their sentences and have been discharged, 66 offenders were returned to the jail for program violations. Of the 66 offenders who were returned to the jail, 13 of them removed their ankle bracelet and left their homes without permission. All 13 of those offenders who left their homes without permission were recaptured and returned to the jail, to face escape charges. Upon conviction, those offenders are eligible for a commitment to State prison.

Sheriff Jerry W. Smith said, “I am encouraged by the initial finding in this report. It demonstrates that our approach is valid and gives us recommendations which we will use to improve the program. I want to thank the other members of the Community Corrections Partnership for their support and my staff for their diligent efforts in building this program from the ground up. I also wish to express my gratitude to the professors and students of Chico State who are working with my office on this project.”

The Chico State report entitled “Breaking Ground: Preliminary Report of Butte County Sheriff’s Alternative Custody Program” can be viewed on the Butte County Sheriff’s Office website – (www.buttecounty.net/SheriffCoroner). The media release issued by Chico State is reprinted below for convenience:

CSU, CHICO MEDIA RELEASE

Kathleen McPartland
Public Affairs
530-898-4260
Jon Caudill
Political Science
530-898-4951

Professors Complete Report on Butte County’s Alternative Custody Supervision Program

A team of California State University, Chico State political science professors and criminal justice interns released a preliminary report this week with results that suggest that the Butte County Sheriff’s Alternative Custody Supervision (ACS) program shows several promising trends for public safety and rehabilitation. The Butte County Sheriff’s Office (BCSO) developed and implemented the ACS program to manage the massive influx of county prisoners generated by California’s 2011 Realignment Legislation Addressing Public Safety Act (AB109).

The report, written by Jon Caudill, Ryan Patten, Sally Parker, and Matt Thomas of the political science department, also provided the Sheriff’s Office with several evidence-based recommendations in concert with their findings.

The CSU, Chico team’s report revealed that the BCSO’s response to AB109 has produced lower recidivism rates than the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s (CDCR) most recent recidivism estimates. Caudill, a criminologist and criminal justice assistant

professor, explained their recidivism findings as “great news for public safety and rehabilitation.” “Given the well-publicized CDCR problems, we’re glad to see promise at the county level,” said Caudill. “The Sheriff’s Office really is breaking ground with the ACS program.”

Patten, an associate professor of criminal justice and an expert in law enforcement, echoed Caudill’s sentiments regarding the ACS program. “This is an historic moment in how we think about law enforcement roles and public safety,” said Patten. “The ACS program gives deputies the discretion to deal with program participants on an individual basis, thus promoting participant success.” He followed up by highlighting the fact that the vast majority of officer-program participant interactions were service-oriented.

The CSU, Chico experts also discovered an area of concern for managing the county prisoner population. Namely, the report suggested that this transfer of supervision responsibility from the CDCR to local agencies (a product of AB109) places additional service burdens on the Sheriff’s Office. A majority of county prisoners indicated a desire for additional programming and services, but receiving certain services may be difficult for this population.

Caudill expressed concern about service accessibility for this group. “The [AB109] legislation created conflicts with certain service program requirements,” he explained. “For example, AB109 recommended that counties use alternatives to custody, such as ‘home detention,’ in lieu of institutional incarceration; however, this classification of ‘inmate’ precludes access to support services. Until these policy conflicts are resolved, the jail will be forced to house people that could be supervised in the community.”

In addition to the findings, this project gave the research team the opportunity to include students in their research. Criminal justice interns played paramount roles during this project, according to Caudill. “To be honest, our project would be months behind its current progress if we didn’t have such great students working with us,” he said.

Patten, who coordinated a large portion of the student work, also expressed his appreciation for this work. “I’m constantly impressed with the quality of work and dedication to this project,” he said. “The interns were invaluable.”

“This sort of collaboration is a reflection of the deep commitment that both the university and college have to serve the community,” said Gayle Hutchinson, dean of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. “In doing so, they provide unique opportunities for our faculty and students. It’s really a win-win situation.”

Caudill concluded: “We’re fortunate to have such strong support from the University, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences and the political science department for faculty development, professional service, and student learning. We designed this project to be a nexus of scholarship, service and student learning.

Lauren Crane, a criminal justice undergraduate who worked on this project, gave her perspective: “It’s such a unique opportunity to work on this project as an undergrad student.

Seeing how it works in the field really complements what we learn in the classroom. It's exciting."

Sheriff Jerry W. Smith said he is encouraged by the initial findings in this report. "It demonstrates that our approach is valid and gives us recommendations that we will use to improve the program. I want to thank the other members of the Community Corrections Partnership for their support and my staff for their diligent efforts in building this program from the ground up. I also wish to express my gratitude to the professors and students of Chico State who are working with my office on this project."