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Blaine County  
Fiscal Year 2023  
Budget Template

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Prepared by:  
Blaine County Administrator's Office  
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## **FY23 Budget Coversheet**

### **General Information**

**Office/Department:** Probation

**Budget Contact Person:** Teresa Espedal

**Budget Team Members:** Teresa Espedal, Jodi Brown, Jodie Fuller, Eric Thomas, Carolyn Longhurst and Alfredo Ojeda

**BCC Presentation Date:** Wednesday, June 15, 2022

### **Office/Department Profile**

#### **Operational Description**

The Blaine County Probation Department is responsible for supervising adult clients placed on probation as the result of a misdemeanor offense, and juveniles that are placed on probation. Additionally, the Blaine County Probation Department provides accountability and supervision through an informal program called Diversion. This program is designed to hold young people accountable when they have committed a criminal or status (an offense that is only a crime because of the age of the individual) offense and allows them to take responsibility for their actions through a contract with a probation officer. It ordinarily involves a process to avoid formal court filings and formal court actions. It is currently used more frequently and more effectively than the formal court process for juveniles. The program has demonstrated low percentages of recidivism and better outcomes.

Our department also monitors random drug and alcohol testing ordered as a condition of release from jail for misdemeanor and felony offenders. The order for testing requires probation staff to meet with the client, reviewing the testing agreement, providing information about testing and alternatives (inside and outside the county and state), monitoring and reporting compliance with the requirements, and regularly communicating with the prosecutor and defense attorney regarding client testing and results. The workload in this area increases to the point that we needed another staff member and now have a dedicated staff member to coordinate random testing for conditions of release and probation clients. violation, communicating with stakeholders regarding progress and areas of concern.

Our department is committed to making efforts to explore and utilize strategies that can reduce the likelihood of individuals having further involvement with the criminal justice system. These strategies include focusing on risk assessments to assist with addressing criminogenic risk factors and needs. Criminogenic needs are factors that significantly contribute to whether an individual may continue with high risk and criminal behavior. The risk assessment can also identify protective factors, which are areas that increase the likelihood that an individual will be a successful, productive member of the community. Supervision includes administering a risk assessment tool provide to information and assist in supervision strategies, monitoring compliance with court ordered probation terms and conditions and using incentives and graduated sanctions to promote positive behavior changes. The intake interview, collateral contacts and ongoing supervision contacts provide us with information that can assist a client in being successful. It is important to note that sometimes our strategies include helping an individual get their basic needs met. It is difficult to be successful when you are struggling with food, shelter, medical needs (including prescriptions), employment and transportation. It is not uncommon for a probation officer to “walk” a client through the steps they need to take to get their needs met (role playing, practicing, making appointments, getting additional information regarding resources, taking them to appointments or classes, introducing them to someone that can help with a resource). This work plays an important role in helping improve a client’s likelihood of success. We believe that it can increase community safety and reduce recidivism.

Finally, our department engages in community-based partnerships and initiatives to attempt to prevent individuals from having formal contact with the criminal justice system. These collaborative efforts include long and short-term partnerships.

Probation services in Blaine County are provided in accordance with two separate Idaho Code Sections, specifically: **Adult Misdemeanor Probation Services – Idaho Code Title 31, Chapter 8 (31-878)**, which states “The County Commissioners shall provide for misdemeanor probation services to supervise misdemeanor offenders, in those cases where such probation supervision has been ordered by the sentencing court, and perform such functions as prescribed by the administrative judge in each judicial district; and **Appointment of County Probation Officer (Juvenile Probation Officers Under the Juvenile Corrections Act) – Idaho Code Title 20, Chapter 5 (20-529)**, which states “The Courts in the several counties of the state shall enter into a contract or agreement for probation services in the counties, or if the court deems local probation services are preferable, may appoint one (1) or more persons to serve at the expense of the county with the concurrence of the county commissioners.”

## **Department Mission**

To increase public health and safety through improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

## **Organizational Structure**

The Blaine County Probation Department consists of six (6) full-time staff. The Director of the Blaine County Probation Department directly supervises three (3) probation officers, a probation services technician and an office manager. The office manager assists all staff and customers. We work as a team to make decisions about our department and continue to focus on new projects, initiatives and strategies that relate to our philosophy, vision, mission and values.

## **FY22 Fiscal Year Review**

### **FY22 Performance Metrics**

*(Provide a bulleted list of at least 3 performance metrics - Note – going forward these should be reported on year-over-year)*

- Utilize Diversion as the primary tool for accountability for juvenile offenders – specifically used for first time and low risk offenders
  - 79% of juvenile cases diverted with 21% formal juvenile court process – probation during the time frame from 10/1/21 to 06/07/2022 (current fiscal year)
  - 31% of the juvenile probation clients were placed on probation for DUI offenses
  - 75% of the juvenile probation clients were repeat offenders (previously had diversion and/or formal placement on probation for a prior case or cases)
- Monitor impact of increase in adult misdemeanor probation supervision time frames on case management and supervision. Adjust supervision strategies based on need. Data includes the number of intakes and case completion monthly. We are using Odyssey to manage adult misdemeanor probation contacts and information and began measuring intakes and case closures consistently at the beginning of the year. The data may be skewed because we spent time closing cases where clients had multiple cases/related cases and types of cases that remained open after case expiration. Our data for the current fiscal year includes:
  - 177 Open Cases during the time frame from 10/1/2021 and 5/31/2022
  - 159 Cases Closed during the time frame from 10/1/2021 and 5/31/2022

- Monitor the facilitation of a drug testing program for clients on conditions of release from jail, including administering tests. Utilize contacts with clients in this program to increase accountability, offer support and resources.
  - Currently 41 clients being monitored through Conditions of Release (separate from adult misdemeanor and juvenile probation clients).
  - 50% of clients are on high level testing.
  - 200+ contacts with clients monthly, including set up and review of expectations, testing based on the level assigned by the court, and follow up contact if there are concerns or issue with complying with conditions of release.
  - Most client contacts require two probation department staff. These contacts can improve outcomes and can make the transition to probation supervision easier for client and probation department staff.

### **FY22 Fiscal Year Highlights**

*(Provide a bulleted list of three to five highlights from FY22 – should tie directly to budget requests and approvals from current FY and how the budget approvals helped your department achieve your metrics)*

- Launching a new drug and alcohol testing program through the Blaine County Probation Department. Our program serves clients that are ordered to submit to drug and alcohol testing as a condition of bail or release from jail, adult misdemeanor probation, juvenile probation or diversion. Staff participated in a search for a company that could meet our needs including: providing a web-based platform and support, affordable testing supplies and confirmation of test results, and quick testing results. All staff have been trained on the drug and alcohol testing practices and provide support to each other to make the testing process more efficient. Staff regular communicate about clients' needs, testing changes, results and strategies to move forward. Random testing agreements and notifications are available in Spanish and English and every staff member has the ability to make changes to testing schedules, type of substances on the test panel, and see results. All staff engaging in this process continues to improve communication, cooperation, and consistency in our testing program/services.
- First Touch Approach – we continue to make strides in using a first touch approach in our office practices. We started this approach at the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Our office was shut down temporarily, we worked staggered schedules, and communicated with each other regularly through daily virtual meetings. First touch meant that you attempted to deal with anything that you “touched.” This could mean a phone call, a document, a court filing, a request for information, etc. The expectation was that you would follow through with whatever you touched, address the issue and

would share the information with the assigned probation officer or other staff member that was directly responsible for the information. It improved our customer service, made us more effective and efficient, and I believe that it provided a more satisfying work environment. The First Touch Approach is something that we value and is part of our daily practice in the office. Everyone is responsible for the success of our office and staff take that very seriously. We have three different types of populations that we serve in our office and we operate best when all staff have information and feel confident in all our operations.

We were fortunate to have access to financial resources to support our approach, including purchase of laptop computers for remote and field work, individual scanners for probation officers, and of course all the support we regularly receive from the IT Department to support all probation department staff.

- New Staff joined the Blaine County Probation Department. We were fortunate to have two new staff join us this fiscal year, Carolyn Longhurst as the Office Specialist in October 2021 and Alfredo Ojeda in April 2022. Our office has maintained the same staff for over 20 years and it has been refreshing to add new team members to our group. Both staff members have brought their unique skills that have already served to improve our effectiveness, efficiency and customer service. These staff changes meant one new position and the Office Specialist position increased from 35 to 40 hours per week. These additions have been invaluable to office operations.

### **FY22 Other Highlights**

*(Provide any other highlights and updates from FY22)*

- Office Remodel – this cannot be mentioned enough. It has been covered in updates to the board, but the probation department is grateful for the remodel to our office space. We have five (5) offices available for probation staff, separate waiting rooms for adults and juveniles, locked records room, a separate bathroom for drug and alcohol testing, a kitchen area, and plenty of storage. The space feels more secure and probation staff has worked on making it more comfortable for individual who enter. We continue to utilize our First Contact Approach to promote safety of staff. This needs to be more intentionally because of the plexiglass barrier between the office staff and clients or individuals entering the space.

The First Contact Approach is to Acknowledge, Greet (introduce or say hello if you have already met the person), Inform (give them information or allow them to ask questions), Thank/Close (thank you for coming or acknowledge that they are leaving).

- DUI Court – This program has completed its first full year of operation. It is a problem-solving court that serves clients that have received an excessive DUI, 2<sup>nd</sup> offense DUI or Felony DUI. It is a program for high risk/high needs offenders and is currently full. The program provides high levels of counseling, supervision and support needed to improve the chance that clients can be successful and reduce the likelihood of ongoing DUI offenses. The program continues to have full engagement from stakeholders and agencies in the community and is an important addition to programs available to high risk individuals on probation.

## **FY23 Fiscal Year Anticipated Highlights**

### **FY23 Anticipated Projects, Performance and Highlights**

- Cross Train new staff to have good working knowledge of office operations in juvenile probation, adult misdemeanor probation and conditions of release. Staff training opportunities will be available to all six (6) staff.
- Explore, select and manage a system to measure the impact of our department's core values and philosophy. Our philosophy and values include listening, asking questions, and doing whatever we can to support an individual and their family being successful in the community (and this impact success on probation).
- Review, edit and approve policy and practices for juvenile probation, adult misdemeanor probation and conditions of probation. Significant changes and improvements have been made in the past two years and all staff will play a role in these updates. The policy and practices will include, purpose, description and instructions/examples whenever possible.