



COUNTY NEWS

Maine County Commissioners Association Newsletter

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April is National County Government Month!

National County Government Month (NCGM) is celebrated each April by the nation's counties to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of county government. The 2014 NCGM theme is "Ready and Resilient Counties: Prepare. Respond. Thrive."

Counties may focus on how they prepare and respond to natural disasters and emergencies or any situation that the counties face, such as economic recovery or public health and safety challenges. Counties participate in NCGM by hosting a variety of community outreach events and activities. These include tours of county facilities, recognition ceremonies for county employees and volunteers, distribution of information about county programs and services, sponsoring student essay or art contests, meetings with business and community leaders and adoption of resolutions.



LD 1824 Additional Authority for the BOC

Last week the Maine Legislature passed to be enacted LD 1824 – An Act To Provide Additional Authority to the State Board of Corrections. Since it was an emergency bill in the 126th Legislature, it required a 2/3 favorable vote to be approved. It is yet to be determined if Governor LePage will veto the bill.

This legislation was born from work done last fall by a commission appointed by the Legislature to look at operations of the State Board of Corrections and the county correctional system. The commission worked diligently to evaluate problems associated with the unified corrections system and developed a set of recommendations that ultimately morphed into LD 1824. Further complicating the issue in the Legislature, however, was that a supplemental corrections system funding appropriation request for the 2014 budget year was tied to the passage of legislation that would address problems with the current system.

In order for Maine counties to develop a policy position on the proposed legislation it was necessary to hold several meetings of stakeholders that included county commissioners, county sheriffs, county managers and administrators, MCCA and MSA staff, and others. All points of the proposed legislation were evaluated and discussed, and those present voted on position statements associated with each point. After reaching a consensus on an overall policy position for the Maine County Commissioners Association and the Maine Sheriffs Association that everyone involved could support, MCCA representatives prepared and brought testimony before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee (CJPS).

[~Read more here.](#)



Penobscot ReFinement Program

Thanks to a progressive jail diversion program, these gentlemen will be able to pay off their court ordered fines in a fraction of the amount of time it would take them to do so on their own. The Penobscot County Sheriff's Department in association with Volunteers of America maintain this "ReFinement Program" which offers a viable alternative to incarceration. Last year the Legislature passed a law that allows judges to let people who qualify for the ReFinement program work off their fines through volunteer work. Offenders who meet predefined criteria can opt to perform community service at a conversion rate of \$10.00 per hour up to \$50 per day in lieu of making monetary fine payments and/or serving a jail sentence. This is a win-win system for everyone, reducing overcrowding in the County Jail, providing relief to taxpayers in Penobscot County, and promoting positive behavior that could last far beyond the repayment.

The Volunteers of America organization (VOA) provides supervision to participants and community service sites as needed, and coordinates completion records with Penobscot Court. They have even increased their number of employees to be able to handle more people who would like to take advantage of the program. The VOA also helps law offenders connect with other programs such as anger management treatment and substance abuse outreaches to help with the problems that led to their crimes. Ultimately this will reduce recidivism in the jail system. This adult community corrections program is also being offered in Lincoln, Sagadahoc and Waldo Counties.

Benefits of the NACo Health Discount Program

The National Association of Counties is providing a BRAND NEW health discount card exclusively for NACo member counties to offer to their residents. The program, which is marketed by CVS Caremark, includes discounts on vision care, vision procedures, hearing aids and screenings, prepaid lab work, prepaid diagnostic imaging, diabetic supplies and prescriptions for residents who are uninsured, underinsured, seniors and pet owners in the county. Memberships are available on a monthly or annual subscription basis for both individuals and families and discounts are available immediately upon enrollment. Counties benefit from the program by being able to offer their residents an affordable alternative to paying full price for health care. To read more about the many advantages of this program [click here.](#)



Continued Success for the Maine Coastal Reentry Center

Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center (MCRRC) enjoyed another successful year in 2013 serving 57 inmates, significantly reducing the likelihood of their return to incarceration. In addition to committing themselves to the effective and innovated programming offered at MCRRC, these men gave over 5,000 hours of community service to our many local partners in Waldo County, paid over \$22,000 in restitution to their victims and fines to the courts, and contributed over \$27,000 in room and board.

Other Highlights:

- 57 inmates were served by the reentry center last year. 33 of those inmates were Waldo and Knox County residents. All 57 were habitually impacting our populations and our budgets prior to their entry into our program.
- MCRRC employs a validated risk/needs assessment tool that accurately measures the risk to reoffend and identifies the dynamic risk factors driving criminogenic behavior. MCRRC brings in individuals that have a moderate to high risk of reoffending, and targets their criminogenic risk factors during their stay, ensuring that upon their release, their risk of reoffending is substantially reduced.
- MCRRC successfully utilizes the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model in assessing, addressing, and effectively reducing criminogenic behavior.
- MCRRC uses the latest in evidenced based programming, cognitive behavioral therapy, innovative, risk reduction strategies, and a team of responsive staff that successfully implement and support evidenced based principles ensuring positive treatment outcomes.
- All MCRRC residents become employed and/or enrolled in postsecondary education during their stay, and this employment carries through and beyond their release.

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