



Blaine County
Fiscal Year 2024
Budget Narrative Template

Prepared by:
Blaine County Administrator's Office
May 1, 2023

FY24 Strategic Priorities

Each budget request for FY24 should directly correlate to at least one of the FY24 Strategic Priorities. All funding requests and approvals will be weighed against how they align with the Strategic Priorities.



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

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 bail or release from jail for misdemeanor and felony offenders. The order for testing requires probation staff to meet with the client, review the testing agreement, provide information about testing and alternatives (inside and outside the county and state), monitor and report compliance with the requirements, and regularly communicate with the prosecutor and defense attorney regarding client testing and results.

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.

FY23 Fiscal Year Review

FY23 Performance Metrics

- Utilize Diversion as the primary tool for accountability for juvenile offenders – specifically used for first time and low risk offenders. We have seen an increase in formal court filings in the current fiscal year, but these can be attributed to more serious crimes, crimes with restitution and individuals that are not first-time offenders.
 - 70% of juvenile cases were diverted and 30% through the formal court process.
 - 37% of Diversion clients had drug or alcohol offenses and 32% of Diversion cases were crimes against other people. The remaining cases were minor property offenses and status offenses (offenses that are crime based on your age).
 - Restorative Conferencing continues to be the approach used when juveniles engage in crimes against other people.
 - 45% of juveniles on diversion were in the 13-15-year-old age range.
- 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 utilize Odyssey to manage adult misdemeanor probation contacts and information and began measuring intakes and case closures consistently at the beginning of last fiscal year. This data will prove helpful moving forward with prioritizing supervision and staffing needs.
 - 166 Open Cases during the time frame from 10/1/2022 to 5/15/2023
 - 151 Closed Cases during the time frame from 10/1/2022 to 5/15/2023
 - This is comparable to information reported during the time frame from 10/1/2021-5/31/2022 from last fiscal year. This information would be helpful annually. Specifically, FY 2022 - 250 new intakes and 229 closures during that same time frame. We will have good comparative data during the next fiscal year.
 - Please note that this does not include how many people are being supervised on probation but does show that more people are being placed on probation during a time frame than are being released. We do see an increase in the number of clients on probation and how long they remain on probation.
- Monitor the progress of our drug testing programs for clients on conditions of release as well as those on probation, including administering testing for different groups of clients. Utilize contacts with clients in this program to increase accountability, offer support and resources.

- FY 2023 (October 2022 – May 2023) – we are currently monitoring 69 conditions of release clients (36 placed on monitoring for conditions of release in the last quarter)
- FY 2023 (October 2022 – May 2023) – nearly 50% of the conditions of release testing clients were on high level testing (averaging 8–9 times per month testing).
- Over 90 probation clients were on random testing – 25 % of these being medium to high level testing.
- Contact with clients during testing continues to require at least two (2) Blaine County Probation Department Staff.
- Dedicated testing times are 3 ½ hours each work day
- Two (2) to Four (4) times more contact with probation staff for clients that are placed on random testing based on their testing level. Staff utilize initial intake policy to offer support, answer questions and provide resources when needed.

FY23 Fiscal Year Highlights

(Provide a bulleted list of three to five highlights from FY23 – should tie directly to budget requests and approvals from current FY and how the budget approvals helped your department achieve your metrics)

- New Staff! It cannot be overstated. This ties to organizational development. The Blaine County Probation Department serves over 400 people. We were doing the best we could with our staff limits, but adding this position and having it available through the last fiscal year has proven invaluable to our department.
 - Our new Probation Services Technician position helped to bring the management of a program and delivery of services back into the Blaine County Probation Department. We were open and flexible to determining the best path forward and ended up with a hybrid model for managing our alcohol and drug testing program and an option for monitoring alcohol and drug testing for conditions of release clients. The Blaine County Probation Department currently administers tests for misdemeanor probation and juvenile probation clients, and testing for conditions of release clients has slowly migrated toward an outside provider. The large volume of individuals that are currently required to submit to random testing made this the only viable option. All other aspects of documentation and reporting information is completed by probation. We have a dedicated staff person managing this program, the data and reporting. Other

probation fill in as a back up when needed. The process is more consistent and effective.

- Data Management – this highlight is tied to organizational development. Our Office Specialist has been collecting data and created a simple data collection process for our adult misdemeanor probation caseload, including types of offenses, quarterly intakes, increases and decreases compare to the prior quarters, caseloads by probation officers, community service ordered and has a model to include additional information that we may find helpful. We are currently using a statewide court management system to collect data, but that will likely be changing. An in-house option for tracking data will be useful in planning, sharing information with our stakeholders and in identifying trends. We have already used this data in a discussion with the magistrate judge about our department and its workload.
- Diversion for juveniles continues to be an effective program aimed at serving low risk and first-time offenders. Diversion has been an effective way of holding juveniles accountable and does not weigh the court system down with first time and low risk offenders. It provides an opportunity to cut down on the time frame involvement with law enforcement to resolution of the case. We track diversion by county fiscal year. Juveniles that completed Diversion at least one year ago (completed May 2022) had a recidivism rate of 2.5% after one year. Over 88% of Diversion cases during the 7 ½ months of the county fiscal year have successfully completed diversion. There are still open cases for juveniles that have not completed their diversion time frame so I would expect the percentage of successful completion to be much higher at the end of the fiscal year. Juveniles on Diversion completed 260 hours of community service as a way of paying back the community for the harm that was done.

FY23 Other Highlights

- Adult Misdemeanor Probation is experiencing an increase in individuals being placed on supervised probation and each probation officer is seeing an average of 3-4 new clients each week, an average of 32 new clients each month. There are a total of three (3) certified adult misdemeanor probation officers and one that will attend POST in August, 2023. The new cases are primarily Driving Under the Influence offenses. Over 70% of the caseload in the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2023 were for DUI. Of the DUI offenses sentenced to adult misdemeanor supervised probation in the first two quarters of Fiscal Year 2023, 22% of them were DUI – Excessive or DUI – 2nd Offense. These cases need closer supervision, have longer supervision times, and supervision terms include random testing. The addition of our new full-time staff member in FY 2023 and his

interest in pursuing a certification in adult misdemeanor probation will help make this a reality.

- Roughly 1/3 of our supervised probation cases need assistance with interpretation services because they are not fluent in English. It is important that clients understand the court's orders and expectations and they feel comfortable asking for information and clarification. We utilize Worldwide Interpretation Services and have one bilingual staff member. Our budget has included funds for this area, but our need exceeds prior requests.

FY24 Fiscal Year Budget Request Highlights

Requested Resources and Associated Costs

- Increase in Professional Services
 - Request a total of \$6,000 for use of Worldwide Interpreters. Our costs for interpretation services to serve clients on probation and conditions of release has increased to an average of \$500 per month.
 - An increase in clients that are not competent in their understanding and use of English. This information as identified in our intake paperwork and the adult misdemeanor probation staff are average 30% of their clients needing interpretation services. We need access to interpretation services to effectively perform our job responsibilities.
 - This request will support the Strategic Priority of Community Well-Being.

FY24 Fiscal Year Anticipated Highlights

FY24 Anticipated Projects, Performance and Highlights

- Restorative Conferencing – work within our office and with outside stakeholders on bringing a Restorative Justice Training to Blaine County. The Blaine County Probation Department continues to be interested in other organizations using the model for many things including conflict management.
- Edits and completion of updated practices for adult misdemeanor probation, juvenile probation, diversion, conditions of release to reflect new approaches and internal changes.
- A staff completion of Idaho POST Certification for adult misdemeanor probation officer.

