



Snohomish County
Office of the Executive
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County program assists jailed veterans

Snohomish County is reaching out to incarcerated veterans with the hope of helping them successfully re-enter the community upon their release.

As of Thursday, members of the county's Human Services Department have begun hosting a monthly class for veterans in the Snohomish County Jail. The classes are geared toward assisting veterans with access to drug and alcohol treatment, with acquiring food and housing assistance and with making their way back into the job market upon completing their sentence.

"These men and women honorably served our country and this is an opportunity to reach out and help them get their lives back on track," said County Executive Aaron Reardon. "They've made some unfortunate decisions, but they don't have to become habitual offenders."

In Snohomish County, the number of incarcerated veterans is steadily increasing. During the past two years, the number of veterans housed in the Snohomish County Jail on a daily basis has nearly doubled from about 35 inmates to nearly 60 people.

The long-term goals of this program are to reduce potential recidivism, lower the number and duration of incarceration periods, provide healthcare access and increase the number of veterans who become employed and obtain stable housing upon their release.

It also will provide positive impacts to veterans' families, many of whom don't know how to help their loved one.

According to federal statistics and the county's own snapshot, incarcerated veterans are at risk for homelessness, substance abuse, mental and chronic illnesses. They often need multiple services, including medical, psychiatric, substance abuse and domestic violence treatment.

Traditionally, the county's Human Services Department, which oversees the county's veterans' assistance programs, would wait until contacted by a veteran in the jail needing help.

Now, the county's Veteran Service employees will conduct monthly orientation classes on the first Thursday of the month, inviting representatives from various human, social and treatment services to speak with incarcerated veterans about the help available to

them. Snohomish County Jail staff also will assist the veterans in completing paperwork to enroll in these programs.

“This program is another example of the county’s commitment to providing creative and effective resources for helping the offender learn how to be successful and productive within the community,” said Steve Thompson, Snohomish County’s corrections director. “It’s especially gratifying that this program is dedicated to helping our county’s veterans turn their lives around.”

Thirty-five individuals have registered for the initial classes.

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