



Community Service

An alternative to incarceration and legal fines

What is Community Service? Unpaid work, intended to be of social use, that an offender is required to do instead of going to jail.

What are Spokane City and County Doing Now?

Department of Corrections Community Service Crew: Participants include offenders sentenced in Municipal Court to up to 240 hours of community service, as well as other offenders under DOC jurisdiction who are ordered to do community service (e.g. Drug Court participants from Superior Court). One 8-hour day of community service is equivalent to one day in jail. Every day of the week, two to three supervisors pick up a maximum of 10 offenders each at various locations and transport them to non-profit and government work-sites. Supervisors work alongside the offenders, performing a variety of tasks at little or no cost to the work-site. Any compensation received goes directly back into the program. DOC pays for industrial insurance coverage for the participants.

Spokane County Sheriff's Labor & Community Service Program: The Sheriff operates a Labor Program out of Geiger Correctional Facility. Up to 7 crews of 8-10 in-custody and out-of-custody offenders meet at Geiger and get transported to government or non-profit work sites where they perform manual and semi-skilled labor such as litter clean-up, event preparation/tear down, graffiti removal, moving and hauling tasks, recycle sorting/distribution, and winter snow removal. Most worksites pay a fee for the labor and this money is used to operate the program. Spokane County Superior Court and District Court can refer non-violent offenders to the program as all or a part of their sentencing. There is no cost to the offender to participate. The Sheriff's Detention Services Department estimates that based on the current budget, it has the capacity to handle 50-70 offenders per workday. In 2011, the program got 23 out-of-custody referrals.

The Sheriff also runs a Community Service Program. This is a sentencing alternative that is designed for offenders who require a lower level of court imposed sanction and who do not require direct supervision. Offenders pay \$40, complete community service at a qualifying non-profit, and give the Sheriff's Detention Services a record of their completion. Detention Services then reports the offender's compliance to the court.

Friendship Diversion Services: Friendship Diversion is a statewide non-profit that provides alternative sentencing options for courts, one of which is supervision of community service hours. When Spokane County District Court and Superior Court order an offender to complete community service in lieu of incarceration or fines, the person is often sent to Friendship Diversion. The organization collects a fee from the offender, provides him/her with suggested

work sites, monitors compliance, and reports to the courts. Fees are as follows: 0-50 hours - \$50; 50-100 hours - \$100; 100-200 hours - \$200; more than \$200 hours - \$400. Any fee above \$50 can be collected through a payment plan. The participant bears the entire cost of the service – there is no cost to the County. Friendship Diversion estimates that in 2011, it saw approximately 2,500 defendants from District Court.

How Can Spokane City and County Improve?

- Increase the number of Community Service sentences issued in lieu of jail by Municipal, District and Superior Court judges.
- Increase the capacity of existing programs by employing more supervisors and engaging more work sites.
- Increase the accessibility of programs to people of limited resources.

How Will Spokane City and County Benefit by Implementing These Changes?

- Cost Savings: Community service sentences cost taxpayers less than housing an offender in jail. City Probation estimates that the City spends an average of \$16 per day per offender for DOC Community Service Crew, as opposed to about \$120 per day per offender in jail.
- Safer Communities - Reserves Jail Beds for High Risk Offenders: Providing a community service sentencing alternative for low-risk offenders opens up jail beds for offenders who actually pose a threat to the community's safety. Currently, when the Spokane County Jail exceeds capacity (reaches "critical status") offenders who are picked up for certain offenses are not even booked into the jail. Rather than managing jail population through reactionary charge exclusion, expanding community service programs would provide a reasoned, safe way to reduce jail population based on risk.
- Avoid the Disruption Caused by Jail to Employment, School, Housing, Medical Care, and Family Responsibilities: When people are in jail, jobs are lost, bills go unpaid, financial aid for school is terminated, evictions are served, and children and spouses lose a vital member of the family unit. Community service programs prevent these counter-productive, often irreversible disruptions in an offender's life while still providing a strict sanction for unlawful behavior.
- Reduce Recidivism: Community service, unlike jail, teaches offenders how to function in the real world without substance abuse and crime; it breaks unhealthy cycles and establishes new routines. At the end of a community service sentence, participants have job skills and an understanding of professionalism that can assist them in finding and maintaining employment. At the end of a jail sentence, conversely, offenders often find themselves homeless, unemployed, drowning in newly accrued debt, and forced to re-apply for financial aid and other assistance.
- Give Offenders Job Skills and Work Experience: Community service gives offenders skills, experiences and personal connections with potential employers that increase their opportunities for employment, and thereby decreases the likelihood of recidivism.
- Provide Valuable Services to the Community: Community service participants perform much needed services for non-profits and government agencies.

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**For more information on the Smart Justice Campaign go to www.smartjusticespokane.org,
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