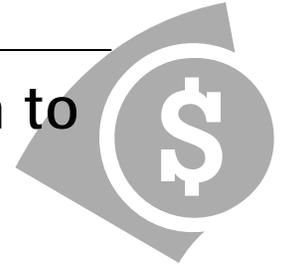


# Cost Savings of a Public Health Approach to Substance Abuse

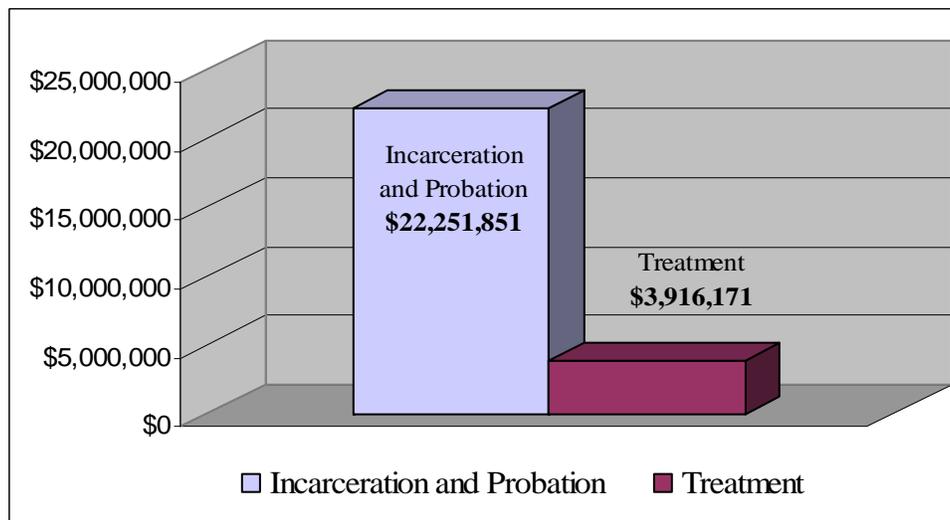


How much money would New Mexico save?

Treatment instead of incarceration for people with drug possession offenses or drug-related probation and parole violations will **save New Mexico's taxpayers up to \$18,335,680 each year**. In addition to saving money, this policy provides a more effective tool to address substance abuse in our communities.

The average cost of substance abuse treatment in New Mexico is \$1,295 per person per year.<sup>1</sup> The cost of incarcerating one person in either jail or prison is **over 20 times more**, averaging \$27,837 per year.

## Annual Cost in New Mexico for Drug Possession Offenders to Receive Treatment vs. Incarceration



How many people will this policy impact?

According to the Judicial Information Division of the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts, in fiscal year 2007 almost 8000 individuals were arrested for drug possession as their MOST SERIOUS offense. Of those 8000 people:

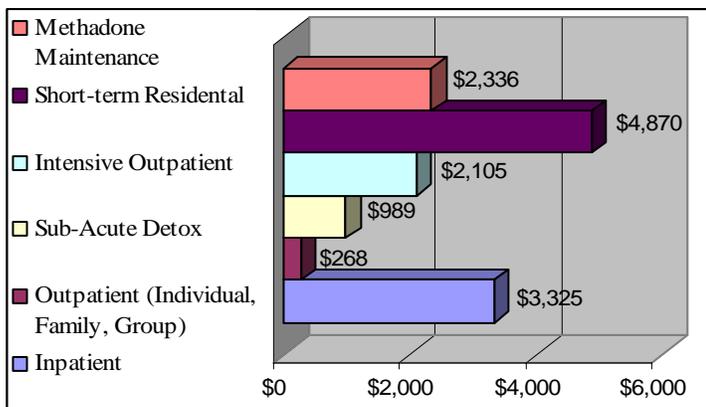
- **1087** people were sentenced to either JAIL or PRISON
- **1238** people were sentenced to PROBATION

This means that last year in New Mexico over 2000 people received sentences for nonviolent drug possession charges, with 493 of those nonviolent offenders being sent to prison to serve their time. An additional 699 people received drug-related probation or parole violations in FY07 in New Mexico.

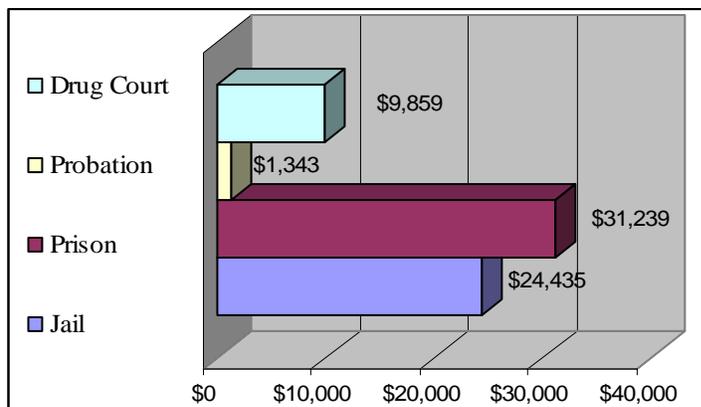
## What are the current costs of treatment and incarceration?

Different levels of treatment services cost different amounts – but even the most expensive treatment is less than a third of the cost of incarceration. Incarceration costs an average of \$30,000 per person per year in New Mexico.<sup>ii</sup> **This means that for each person who receives treatment instead of incarceration, New Mexico could save between \$24,000 and \$29,700 per person per year.**

Cost of Substance Abuse Treatment in NM  
Cost per Person per Year<sup>iii</sup>



Cost of the Criminal Justice System in NM  
Cost per Person per Year<sup>iv & v</sup>



People who receive appropriate treatment services are more likely to become productive members of their families and community, instead of committing future crimes.

Under this new policy, people who are arrested for drug possession offenses will be assessed to determine the best substance abuse treatment program to suit their individual needs. Some offenders may need a high-level of treatment, such as inpatient or intensive outpatient treatment services, other offenders may only need supervised detoxification followed by outpatient treatment. The assessment will be completed by a behavioral health treatment professional, and be approved by the presiding judge.

Regardless of which treatment modality is used, any form or combination of substance abuse treatment will be thousands of dollars cheaper than incarceration.

By offering drug possession arrestees treatment instead of incarceration, New Mexico's taxpayers will save up to \$18,335,680 every single year.

<sup>i</sup> ValueOptions New Mexico, "DOH-18 Services by Diagnostic Category Group, All DOH Funding Streams," July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007. (Information obtained through Public Records Request Act Request, August 22, 2008)

<sup>ii</sup> John Bigelow, "Increasing Public Safety in New Mexico Before, During and After Incarceration: New Directions for Reform in New Mexico Corrections," Governor Richardson's Task Force On Prison Reform. (June 2008). p.3.

<sup>iii</sup> ValueOptions New Mexico

<sup>iv</sup> John Bigelow, p.3. & p.124

<sup>v</sup> Paul Guerin, Ph.D. and Linda Freeman, M.A., "30-31-23. Controlled Substances; Possession Prohibited. Number and Estimated Cost of Housing Individuals Held in Six New Mexico Detention Facilities," New Mexico Sentencing Commission