

Lawrence County allocates \$175 thousand from grant for drug woes

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BEDFORD — People in court with substance abuse problems will get more help soon.

The Indiana Judicial Center received \$2 million from the Indiana Legislature to use in grants for courts. The money is intended for drug and alcohol programs and problem-solving courts, such as the drug court that operates within Lawrence Superior Court I.

Superior Court II Judge William Sleva told the county council Tuesday local programs received a grant for \$175,000.

Thirty-two courts in the state applied for funding.

“We were one of 12 (chosen), which I think is an impressive statement on their thoughts about Lawrence County and its programs,” Sleva said.

The county has already received about \$30,000, he said.

Council members asked if the state expected or anticipated that local money would be used to extend the programs. Sleva said there was not.

“If the money runs out, it runs out,” Sleva said. “There is a hope they will renew this.”

For 2015, the grant money will be built into the county budget. Those figures will come before the council later. On Tuesday evening, Sleva came to the council to seek permission to spend the money for specific items during the rest of this year. He went through each of those during his presentation.

For the rest of this year, the council approved:

- \$11,473 to hire a part-time probation officer. Sleva said the person would help do drug and alcohol screenings for the ADAPT program, monitor compliance and take care of other details. Sleva said the position is needed — one officer, for example, has 211 people on his caseload. “Trust me, he’s overwhelmed,” Sleva said.
- \$10,000 to cover the costs of individual counseling and evaluations for people who cannot pay the fees at Centerstone or other facilities. Sleva said Centerstone charges “bargain rates,” but has few scholarships available for indigents. “Some people aren’t getting treatment who really can’t afford it,” the judge said.
- \$5,745 to help pay the salary of Jim Crane, case manager for Pathways. Sleva said Crane’s job, in part, is to help counsel jail inmates who have drug or alcohol problems.

- \$2,652 to hire a facilitator who will do “interactive journaling” with drug court participants. “We’ve not had that benefit before,” Sleva said. He called it an “evidence-based program” that has been “shown to be helpful.”

Council president Jason Mullis asked if the new part-time probation officer would help drug court reduce the number of inmates at the jail. The jail has been pressed to near capacity, particularly the section for women.

Sleva said he had just ordered a woman released from jail earlier that day. The woman is seven months pregnant, he said, and one of the conditions of her release is that she avoid drugs and alcohol.

“I wasn’t about to release her without working with ADAPT,” the judge said.

In the end, the council voted unanimously to approve the appropriations. Attending Tuesday’s meeting were Mullis, Keith Dillman, James Edwards, Gene McCracken, Craig Turpen and Mike Wright. Mark Mathis was absent.