



Mayor Ben McAdams
News Conference
Operation Rio Grande Treatment Phase Two
September 7, 2017

Today, Salt Lake County is bringing on 37 new residential treatment beds for eligible individuals who have been arrested during Operation Rio Grande.

As we speak, a team of more than 40 professionals, including lawyers, social workers and criminal justice employees is at work in the county jail, identifying and assessing some of the people incarcerated there.

The goal is to determine who is eligible for the new specialty drug court, which will meet for the first time next week.

These are the first new treatment beds since Salt Lake County came forward a year ago with 63 residential treatment beds for Operation Diversion.

Those 63 beds remain fully utilized, with many individuals remaining in, and completing treatment.

I'm sure that these 37 new beds will be filled with eligible individuals in a matter of days and so will the additional beds we bring online in a few weeks.

Public safety in the Rio Grande area, including less crime and fewer victims of crime, is the reason for this remarkable partnership between city, county and state leaders.

Results are obvious; much of the chaos, lawlessness and danger is subsiding.

However, everything we have learned, after years of trying to address these problems, tells us that we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. The short term gain of locking nonviolent people up, brings long term pain, as the fallout from merely arresting and jailing these individuals plays out in our community.

The emotional and financial burden of substance use disorders can fall heavily on families and friends of those who battle addictions.

Society pays through increased crime and increased cost to taxpayers to prosecute and incarcerate those individuals.

We know from many studies that treatment programs can reduce costs – both human and economic.

As the county mayor, charged with delivering vital behavioral health and other services, I am responsible for understanding and getting to the root of the problem and then implementing solutions.

One thing we learned from Operation Diversion is that for many individuals who were offered diversion instead of jail, more structure was needed in order for them to succeed in the program.

That's why my team –collaborating with the state—has proposed the new specialty drug court.

Screening for the new court program is taking place in jail, which has never been done before.

In less than 14 days, eligible individuals will be connected to a structured treatment program. They'll be assigned a case manager, peer mentor, behavioral health treatment services and a specially trained officer to help them stay engaged and be held accountable.

We've had two judges volunteer their time and one who is willing to come out of retirement to help meet our aggressive timeline.

Those participating in the drug court program will be eligible for Medicaid, assuming the waiver is approved.

There have been legitimate questions about the costs associated with Operation Rio Grande.

Research shows us the path towards reducing costs must be a path that provides access to treatment.

For 20 years, we've known substance use and crime go hand in hand. Nationally, one-third of property offenders say they committed crimes while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Studies repeatedly show that more access to treatment for substance use disorders **reduces crime** in communities. In short, **for every dollar spent on treatment, up to three dollars are saved in crime reduction.**

I know Sheriff Rivera will speak more about what she expects this to mean in the jail; Shawn McMillen will speak about how access to treatment affects individuals' lives and outcomes.

I want to thank everyone who has helped make this possible. Today we are beginning to fulfill the promise of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. We're beginning to see the meaningful reinvestment in treatment that we know is critical to public safety, more efficient use of tax dollars, and measurably better lives for people who seek recovery and a return to self-reliance.