



# Case Study



## Ravalli County Jail Diversion Program is Reducing Recidivism and Creating Community

### HIGHLIGHTS OF SUCCESS

- In a one year review, the Ravalli County Jail Diversion Program had monitored 8,100 days of program participation with an 85.7% compliance rate.
- Building a supportive community has been an important part of this program—working closely with treatment providers and employment services programs has affected long-term behavior change in program participants.
- The Diversion Program is self-funded and has significantly lower costs per offender than incarceration in county facilities.

### LOCATION

Ravalli County, Montana

### CATEGORIES

Sheriff  
Jail Alternative  
Pretrial and Probation

### MONITORING SOLUTIONS



SCRAM Continuous Alcohol Monitoring®



SCRAM Remote Breath®



SCRAM GPS®

### Program Overview

Ravalli County, located in southwestern Montana, is seated deep in a mountain valley bordered by the jeweled Sapphire Mountains on the east and the majestic Bitterroot Mountains to the west. This rural county is sparsely populated with 40,212 citizens working in the high mountain west in an economy based around the agriculture, timber, and tourism trades.

According to the Montana Department of Transportation, the state had [419 alcohol-involved traffic fatalities and serious injuries in 2016](#), with an occurrence of DUIs that is 1.68 times the national average. The Ravalli County Jail Diversion Program within the [Sheriff's Office](#), is working to lower drinking and driving statistics in their county, as well as the recurrence of aggravated and violent crime through pretrial and probation monitoring of offenders. Incorporating state-of-the-art electronic monitoring technology is a key part of the program's solution.

Pretrial offenders charged with misdemeanors and felonies are court-ordered by district judges into monitoring programs. Lower courts leave alcohol and

drug monitoring to the discretion of the Diversion Program, where most offenders are placed on alcohol monitoring for one to two years contingent on the 24/7 program sentence. Ravalli County Sheriff Steve Holton and Jail Diversion Program Administrator Christina Ellsworth oversee a diversion program that utilizes SCRAM Continuous Alcohol Monitoring® (SCRAM CAM®), SCRAM Remote Breath®, and SCRAM GPS® in conjunction with a 24/7 sobriety program.

### SCRAM Technology in the County

The Diversion Program, in alignment with the 24/7 program parameters, assigns SCRAM CAM and SCRAM Remote Breath to offenders pre-adjudication. When sentencing takes place, any offenders assigned to SCRAM Remote Breath—where they are monitored through breath testing three to four times per day on a set or random schedule—are moved to SCRAM CAM with its continuous transdermal monitoring via ankle bracelet.

Of participants in the 24/7 program, 47% of those assigned to SCRAM CAM and 39% of those assigned to SCRAM Remote



Breath are repeat offenders with a DUI 2, DUI 3, or higher DUI offense. Domestic violence, assault, and DUI 1 are also common alcohol-involved offenses in the county. "They have started to send anything alcohol related to the 24/7 program. A large majority of our crime, alcohol is a component," notes Sheriff Steve Holton. Ravalli County has assigned 63 SCRAM CAM bracelets in the last year with 8,100 monitored days recorded.

Ravalli County also utilizes the SCRAM GPS device for electronic monitoring of offenders who have been charged with violent crimes or have violated a protection order.

The county saw multiple instances of school violence threats in 2018. Those involved were considered GPS high-risk monitoring—offenders at this level spend an average of 80 days being monitored. Monitoring offenders who are not incarcerated brings accountability to offenders and a sense of safety to the citizens of the county. "We were able to tell the community, 'yes they may be out of jail, but we are able to track them,'" says Sheriff Holton. "That gave peace of mind to parents, teachers, and staff. This was a great GPS success story for us."

Monitoring is a 24 -hour-a-day process and Ravalli County's Diversion Program was overwhelmed with only a two-person staff. SCRAM Customer Service representatives have assisted Director Ellsworth in tracking compliance and violations. "The SCRAM support staff are very friendly people," states Ellsworth. "They dive in and give me detailed info and answer any questions I have." Ravalli County, with a low staff-to-client ratio, needed extra support in tracking their monitored offenders. Tailored monitoring services such as off-hours support and live phone calls to clients were essential to the program's success. "When they call clients directly and leave messages about non-emergency actions like charging and maintenance alerts, it saves me so much time," Ellsworth says.

The Diversion program has been fully self-funded since its inception, receiving no county funding or monetary support. One of the main reasons Sheriff Holton began the program was to save the county money on the high cost of incarceration. With the use of electronic monitoring, the program is able to track offenders and

hold them accountable at a significantly lower cost than county incarceration.

## Outcomes

"Montana is known for its drinking culture," states Program Administrator Christina Ellsworth. "We are trying to change that. We are creating outcomes that show a positive impact to the community." One year into this successful program, Ellsworth has seen recidivism drop while community partnerships and support has grown. Monitoring directly through the office has inspired trust and confidence. "Our community of employment services and treatment providers has grown quite large," Ellsworth notes. "Providers like communicating with government officials and getting information on a timely basis." The community of county citizens has also noticed that the diversion program and its staff are making offenders accountable and prepared for re-entry when their sentences are complete.

With 19,949 scheduled tests passed, and a 93% compliance rate for those monitored with SCRAM Remote Breath, offenders are successfully completing their sentences, and the program is continuing to grow.

"Our biggest problem is trying to keep up with the demand because we have grown so much," states Sheriff Holton. The Ravalli County Diversion Program is strongly supported by the county commissioners who have encouraged Ellsworth and Holton to take their



Steve Holton, Ravalli County Sheriff

message and their results to other Montana counties. Ellsworth wants to share the success of the program and says: "Several law-enforcement agencies have wanted to take a look at our program as an example to follow."

The next phase of the program includes gathering and aggregating all the data on their SCRAM CAM, SCRAM Remote Breath, and SCRAM GPS clients. Diversion Program staff believe the data will show a significant decline in recidivism across types of offense and level of offender, for all types of monitoring device used. Until the data is compiled to display statistically the success of the Diversion Program, Ellsworth and Holton share stories about clients they have worked with who have broken the cycle of offending and returned as productive members of the community.

## SUCCESS STORY

*One pre-trial client charged with a DUI 5 offense was a successful professional but had a record of DUI arrests and drinking problems. She asked to be placed on SCRAM CAM prior to entering treatment and continuing to serve her sentence in prison. When she completed her sentence, she paid a visit to Program Administrator Ellsworth to thank her for changing her life. "If it weren't for SCRAM CAM, I would have been able to drink like I did on my other DUIs. Thank you." She has been out of prison and successfully sober for several months.*