

# REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

## *Second Substitute House Bill 2627*

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*New Section. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that the large number of individuals involved in the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems with substance abuse challenges is of significant concern. Access to effective treatment is critical to the successful treatment of individuals in the early stages of their contact with the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems. Such access may prevent further involvement in the systems. The effective use of substance abuse treatment options can result not only in significant cost savings for the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems, but can benefit the lives of individuals who face substance abuse challenges.*

### **Bill Summary:**

The bill allows law enforcement to divert certain low level offenders (juvenile and adult) with a substance use disorder away from jail into an appropriate treatment program. Nothing prohibits the prosecutor from filing charges in these diversion cases. This is a pilot program to operate in Snohomish County only. The bill requires Snohomish County to evaluate the program including measuring any cost savings and recidivism reduction. Snohomish County is required to report results to the legislature every two years with reports due July 2015, July 2017 and July 2019. The bill became law June 12, 2014.

### **Status:**

Snohomish County, working with law enforcement, jail personnel, Fire District Emergency Medical Services (EMS), health plans, hospitals and chemical dependency treatment providers, has seen increasing demand for chemical dependency treatment. The County has created a mental health court and the city has created a mental health diversion program. A number of individuals participating in these programs have co-occurring substance use disorders. Snohomish County has also implemented a Therapeutic Alternatives to Prosecution (TAP) program that serves individuals with substance use disorders and/or mental health disorders. This increased demand has resulted in limited community detox and treatment capacity available for law enforcement diversions from the jail. Because of this the County is working with the State and local organizations to increase detox and treatment capacity by:

- Opening a second medical detox in south Snohomish County,
- Expanding outpatient treatment slots, particularly for persons with opiate addictions,
- Creating a new program called the Triple R: Rapid Recidivism Reduction program which offers housing and treatment for offender populations with substance use disorders.

Until the County has increased detox and treatment capacity available, we cannot implement the diversion law. The County continues to see the new law as a viable and necessary tool in ensuring low level offenders get appropriate treatment, avoid jail costs and reduce recidivism. We believe, however, it is prudent to hold off implementing the new law until we have the expanded treatment capacity in place (sometime in 2016). Snohomish County is hopeful that the July 2017 report will include data that reflects utilization of the law in 2016 as additional detox and treatment capacity is added.