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INFORMATION RELEASE
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Juneau has a shoplifting problem; CBJ Law came up with a possible solution
Pilot project focuses on problem-solving techniques to stop chronic petty theft

Shoplifting in Juneau has increased dramatically over the past couple of years. Research has shown that incarceration for petty theft doesn't stop people from offending again. So the City and Borough of Juneau Law Department, which prosecutes these crimes, has come up with an alternative – a program that uses motivational interviewing, one-on-one support services and behavioral therapy to end the cycle of repeat petty theft.

“As criminal reform has gotten underway in Alaska, we as prosecutors have had to rethink how we approach certain cases, especially misdemeanor property crimes. There is very little data on how to best address this population of offenders in a way that reduces the risk of recidivism, but preliminary findings suggest that motivational interviewing and moral recognition therapy may be beneficial. We are hopeful that this pilot project will serve as a model for other communities struggling with the same issues,” said CBJ Municipal Attorney Amy Mead.

The one-year program – Juneau Avert Chronic Shoplifting Pilot Project – is a collaboration between CBJ Law, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribe of Alaska's Second Chance Reentry Program and Juneau Alliance for Mental Health, Inc. Program participants will go through motivational interviews with Second Chance case managers in order to identify a small, measurable goal that they commit to achieving. The goal could be any number of things, from securing housing to filling out job applications. Participants will also go through an 8-hour shoplifting treatment therapy program through JAMHI.

The pilot program is estimated to cost \$100,000. Funding comes from a federal grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The program hopes to start taking participants in October.

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