



State Senator
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State Budget Committee Advances 24/7 Sobriety *Winnebago County recidivism program gets pilot*

MADISON – A new tool for fighting alcohol and drug abuse will be piloted in Wisconsin after the state’s budget committee approved a pilot program on Thursday.

The legislative Joint Committee on Finance approved a motion Thursday creating a 5-county pilot, that will both invite counties to introduce the 24/7 Sobriety program and track the program’s success. 24/7 Sobriety is a program that has already shown value in significantly reducing recidivism in other states and in one Wisconsin county.

“The idea is to make people test for alcohol or drugs as frequently as you can,” said Sen. Rick Gudex (R-Fond du Lac), who requested the budget motion. “If somebody’s got a problem with alcohol, then a couple times a week won’t cut it. Sometimes you really need to give people incentive to make the right decisions, and the 24/7 program does exactly that.”

The program requires twice daily testing for alcohol use for its participants with immediate sanctions, including arrest and re-incarceration, for failure. This constant threat of consequences has helped to significantly lower recidivism rates in South Dakota, among other states. Winnebago County began using the program in 2011 and has also reported significantly lower recidivism rates among participants.

Under the budget motion, the Department of Justice will begin a pilot program to expand use of 24/7 among counties and to gather data related to the program. Gudex noted that the Department of Transportation will also offer federal grant money to a small number of counties to help them start 24/7 programs as well.

“But we’re hoping this pilot will show counties that this is a successful way to go,” Gudex said. “Winnebago County started theirs on their own with only a few thousand dollars, and today they’re an example for the entire state.”

Under the budget motion, DOJ will begin reporting annually on results in 2017, and the program will sunset in 2021 without further legislative action.

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