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Grant Will Complete Hamilton Crisis Center

RAVALLI COUNTY

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HAMILTON, Mont. -- Ravalli County has received a \$425-thousand grant to complete a crisis stabilization center in Hamilton. The money comes from the Montana Health Settlement Trust.

The Center will accept involuntarily committed patients who have suffered mental breaks. Mental health advocate Kathleen Driscoll says the trust money will save the county from taking out a loan to finish the center.

The former commissioner says until now, people suffering from mental breaks, or who were a danger to themselves or others, had few alternatives. They'd end up at the State Mental Hospital at Warm Springs, or in jail.

"They're not treated for what's really happening, which is a mental health crisis" Driscoll said. "They're treated for a criminal act which is not appropriate." Driscoll said that treatment is a lot more expensive.

Through the years, several mentally compromised jail inmates committed suicide in Ravalli County. "Now we've come to a much higher place," Driscoll said, "with better care and high quality care with respect and treatment for people with mental illness."

Professionals at the secured center will evaluate the patient's mental health, then determine what the next step should be. People living with mental illness attend an art class in Hamilton.

A woman is drawing a picture. Our TV story takes pictures of those hands. The woman didn't want to be on camera. But she wants people to know this new center will be a lifeline.

"It's going to help prevent overcrowding at the jails with people who don't belong there that are having a slip mentally and need to get in a secure place."

The new center should be completed by March.

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