

# ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



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## EDITORIALS

### A Worthy Second Chance

They may have stolen money or stereos to feed their habits, been sentenced for their crimes and put in state lockups with a harder-core prison population.

But the prison system is ill-equipped to handle, let alone rehabilitate, them, according to Barri Roberts, director of the Metropolitan Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and a criminal justice consultant to the Legislature.

New Mexico is embarking on a long-term treatment program — the first of its kind in the U.S. — that would allow judges to sentence some nonviolent chronic drug offenders to Second Chance, a secure residential treatment facility where reading, detoxing and healthy diet are the plan and long-term rehab is the desired outcome.

Skepticism and caution are in order. But the program should get the opportunity to prove itself, under the watchful eyes of the University of New Mexico, which plans to do an extensive, peer-reviewed study of its methods and results.

"I'd bet on it doing better than what we're doing now with drug offenders," says Dr. Bill Miller, a UNM professor who specializes in substance abuse. "But I can't say yet that it's a great program and we should be doing it all over the United States." He suggests a try-out.

New Mexico's judges should be willing to give Second Chance a first chance to succeed.