

Amnesty program may help probationers avoid jail

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Jackson County District Court probationers who fail to pay mandated fines or skip required counseling sessions may be able to avoid jail.

The court has launched an amnesty program that will invalidate arrest warrants for some people who contact the court and work out plans to successfully complete probation.

Court officials will send nearly 700 letters Tuesday to eligible individuals.

That's up from the 563 letters the court sent in 2005, the last year it tried the program, said Chad Surque, chief probation officer.

"With the economy the way it is, a lot of them are failures to pay. We just want to reconnect with everybody," Surque said.

Probationers have two weeks from the time they get the letter to contact the court.

In 2005, 112 defendants responded. As a result, 62 people were discharged from probation and 30 had probation extended, Surque said.

Anyone who gets a court notice or has questions can call District Court at 788-4260 or Surque at 768-6894.

-- Danielle Quisenberry