

Pima County

2016 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- With Pima County's jail population averaging 2,136 inmates a day in 2014, very close to its full capacity of 2,377 inmates, the county is not immune to the overuse and misuse of jails in America. With local jail expenditures amounting to roughly \$66 million a year, this crisis has a direct impact on taxpayers.
- Snapshots of Pima County's jail population in 2011-2014 show that more than 80 percent of inmates in the jail are typically in pretrial status. The main drivers of the pretrial jail population, based on 2014 data, include warrants for failures to appear in court (93 percent of which relate to underlying misdemeanor charges), misdemeanor charges like shoplifting and DUIs, and lower-level felony charges, such as possession/use of a dangerous or narcotic drug, possession of drug paraphernalia and aggravated criminal damage.
- Of the inmates in jail in pretrial status, 2014 data show 9.6 percent were African American, compared with 3.3 percent of the county's total population; and 40.7 percent were Hispanic, compared with 35 percent of the county's total population.
- Mental illness and substance abuse affect an estimated 60 percent of the jail population in Pima County.
- A heavy toll is also felt by the county's tribal communities. Native Americans make up only 2.4 percent of the county's total population, but they represent 6.75 percent of the pretrial population, and 8 percent of those held in jail on failure to appear charges.

There are proposed solutions to create a fairer, more effective local justice system:

- To address the misuse and overuse of jails in Pima County, the county will be investing \$3.1 million over the next three years. This investment will include \$1.5 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge.
- In order to achieve this goal, the county will be employing a number of innovative and common sense strategies such as expanding risk screening to all misdemeanor defendants in order to increase post-booking releases from jail; adding substance abuse and mental health screening before the initial court appearance to provide the judge safe options for release to treatment instead of jail; an enhanced automated call, text and email court-date reminder system that is expected to reduce failure to appear rates; and detention alternatives made possible through electronic monitoring technology.
- The county aims to reduce its jail population by 18 percent. A reduction of this size would allow the jail to close six 64-person pods and save an estimated \$2.7 million a year.

Who is helping to affect change?

- Leaders in the criminal justice system across the County have come together to develop the reforms. These include Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos, Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall, Public Defense Services Director Lori Lefferts, Pima County Adult Detention Center Administrator India Davis, and Regional Behavioral Health Authority organization Cenpatico.
- Pima County plans to impanel a Collaborative Working Group of justice system actors and community representatives to review data, study the progress of reforms, and propose strategic changes as needed.