

Cook County

2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- Low-level and nonviolent offenders are overrepresented in Cook County jails, and law enforcement policy must be amended to allow officers options in deflecting offenders from arrest.
- People of color continue to be disproportionately arrested and incarcerated at higher rates than their white counterparts in Cook County. Despite making up 45 percent of the county's adult population, African Americans and Hispanics make up 85 percent of the jail population, on average.
- Pretrial release and length of stay are main drivers of the jail population. The jail pretrial population alone was 90 percent in 2016. In 2016, 36,180 pretrial defendants were detained in jail, spending an average of 62 days in jail.
- Overuse of detention causes disruption in the stability of arrestees' families and communities; it leads to higher re-arrest rates and produces worse case outcomes with more subsequent incarceration.

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

- Create and implement an Automated Court Reminder System to reduce arrests due to failure to appear in court.
- Implement, via judicial Order, new bail procedures to minimize detention on monetary bail.
- Implement agreements between prosecutors and defense attorneys to ask judges to release certain misdemeanor defendants on individual-recognizance bonds.
- Launch a multi-agency coordinated effort to seek community input on and participation in criminal justice reform.
- Implement a police deflection and diversion strategy to provide law enforcement options to deflect non-violent offenders at the point of arrest and increase access to behavioral health treatment.
- Outreach efforts to hold forums with community members and treatment providers to discuss diversion programs.
- Implicit bias training for prosecutors, public defenders, and police officers.
- Data analysts to study how the County's efforts are affecting the number of people in jail and the makeup of the jail population.
- Additional staff to support and oversee these efforts, including a project director, community outreach coordinator, and support staff.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The stakeholder group consists of Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans, President Toni Preckwinkle, Circuit Clerk Dorothy Brown, Public Defender Amy Campanelli, Sheriff Tom Dart and State's Attorney Kim Foxx. Chief Judge Evans and the Office of the Chief Judge serve as the lead stakeholder in the partnership with the MacArthur Foundation. For this initiative, the Chicago Police Department and the Cook County Health & Hospitals System have joined the stakeholder group.