

Mecklenburg County **2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet**

We've got a problem to fix:

- Despite reducing the Mecklenburg County jail population by 11 percent over the past three years, there is still an over-reliance on incarceration for low-risk, non-violent defendants.
- Too often, a jail stay depends on an ability to pay. Under current bail policy, many low-income individuals spend more time in jail awaiting trial because they cannot afford bail or other fines and fees than they would serving the longest possible sentence for their alleged offense.
- Pretrial release and length of stay are main drivers of the jail population. The average pretrial jail population alone was 64 percent of the total average daily population in 2016.
- Despite making up approximately 33 percent of the local population, African Americans and Hispanics make up 76 percent of the jail population.
- In 2016, the County released 36 percent of booked defendants on financial bond. Automating the completion of the Public Safety Assessment (PSA) tool will help ensure that judicial officials can access each defendant's individualized assessment of risk when determining their conditions of release.

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

- Supported with \$2 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Mecklenburg County will implement forward-looking, smart solutions to further reduce the local jail population by 13 percent over the next two years.
- To continue reducing the jail population safely, the County plans to implement new strategies aimed at addressing system inefficiencies, enhancing existing services, providing non-jail alternatives for low-risk defendants, and increasing community engagement in local justice system reform.
- This will include enhancing services provided to defendants pretrial, improving current bail policy, and partnering with residents to identify and implement community-led programs and policy interventions.
- Strategies also include:
 1. **Exploring additional opportunities** to improve case processing and reducing time to disposition
 2. **Developing and implementing a workforce development curriculum** focused on implicit bias and its corresponding impact on disparate criminal justice outcomes among minority and majority populations.
- Strategies will touch all points of the system. These policy-driven innovations will reduce jail bed usage while ensuring the County advances its commitment to having the 'right' inmates remain in custody while ensuring access to critically needed services for all.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services in partnership with the County Manager's Office, Office of District Court Judges, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Chief Magistrate's Office, Clerk of Superior Court, Sheriff's Office, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police



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Department, and law enforcement agencies in the Towns of Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, Pineville, Mint Hill, and Matthews.

- This work is supported by seven sub-committees, which focus on issues ranging from racial and ethnic disparities, to evidence-based practices and technology, and are comprised of various representatives from the legal system, law enforcement, and community-based organizations.

