

Multnomah County

2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- Despite reducing the Multnomah County jail population by 42 percent over the past 18 years, there is still an over-reliance on incarceration for low-risk, non-violent offenders.
- Individuals with behavioral health issues are overrepresented in Multnomah County jails and are in need of alternative services and community-based options.
- The misuse of the jail takes an especially heavy toll on people of color. Despite making up approximately six percent of the local population, African Americans make up 29 percent of the jail population (most recent statistic provided to the MacArthur Foundation on June 30, 2016).
- Over 40 percent of the jail population has been identified as having a mental health issue. Furthermore, individuals with acute behavioral health needs tend to get stuck in jail longer than intended while awaiting appropriate community-based treatment and services.

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

- Supported with \$2 million from the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge, Multnomah County will implement innovative and smart solutions to address the misuse and overuse of county jails.
- The county has identified 12 strategies that address system inefficiencies, expand efforts to address the needs of those with behavioral health issues, and divert lower-risk offenders from the criminal justice system. These strategies have the potential to safely reduce the jail population by 15 percent over the next two years.
- As a centerpiece of this effort, Multnomah County will roll out a comprehensive program for justice-involved women with mental health challenges, with a focus on women of color. The program will offer evidence-based residential and day programming that is culturally and gender-specific, as well as trauma-informed.
- The remaining strategies touch all points of the system, ranging from pre-jail diversion to prompt release for offenders awaiting treatment, and are enthusiastically embraced across public safety partners. 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.
- Over the next two years the county will employ: 1) an increased focus on offender risk, need, and responsiveness, 2) forensically-responsive treatment; 3) new prosecutor diversion alternatives; 4) improved jail-based mental health intervention; and 5) measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council, which includes the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the Multnomah County Health Department (Corrections Health and Mental Health and Addictions), the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, Metropolitan Public Defenders, Multnomah County Circuit Courts/the Oregon Judicial Department, the Police Bureaus of Portland and Gresham, and the Multnomah County Office of Diversity and Equity.

- Additional stakeholders involved in a number of the 12 strategies include: the Albina Ministerial Alliance, members of the downtown/old town neighborhood associations, community-based service organizations, and members of the local business community.