
Palm Beach County 2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got some issues to fix:

- Despite having an incarceration rate 58 percent below the national average, there is still more room for reducing the Palm Beach County jail population.
- Studies prove that pretrial detention causes disruption in the stability of defendants, families, and communities. It leads to higher re-arrest rates and produces worse case outcomes with more back-end incarceration.
- Palm Beach County's jail cost taxpayers 14 cents of every county tax dollar.
- African Americans are significantly overrepresented in the county jail, making up 19 percent of the county population but 50 percent of the jail population. Hispanics represent 21 percent of the population and 17 percent of the jail population.
- African Americans (44 days) and Hispanics (40 days) have a much longer average length of stay as compared to whites (25 days).
- Some people frequent our systems with no clear path for ending their cycle. From July 2016 through June 2017, Palm Beach County had 108 individuals admitted to the jail three or more times who also accessed homeless services within the County. These individuals used 5,648 bed days in the county jail costing \$762,480 (bed days x \$135 per day).
- In 2016, 3,528 people were admitted to the Palm Beach County jail for a Failure To Appear representing 14 percent of all jail admissions. In all but two of those admissions, the underlying charges were non-violent felonies or low-level charges.

We've got solutions to these issues:

- Supported with \$2 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Palm Beach County will implement forward-looking, smart solutions to address these issues and reduce the jail population by 17 percent over the next two years.
- Strategies will touch major decision-points in the system, ranging from diversion to pretrial release to case processing, and are embraced across public safety and community partners. These data-driven innovations will reduce jail bed usage while ensuring the county prioritizes public safety and provides access to critically needed services for those most in need.
- Over the next two years the county will employ four strategies: an increased focus on risk assessment and smart release options for pretrial inmates; improved case processing efficiencies for pretrial inmates who are not released; quicker access for those inmates awaiting a treatment bed in the community; and measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, including implicit bias training for all criminal justice agencies.
- The county will roll out a text message-based court data notification system to reduce failures to appear and to prevent new warrants for low-level defendants.
- A new Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) project will break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness for frequent low-level defendants with behavioral health challenges.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission and its member organizations including the offices of the



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State Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff, Judiciary, Municipal Law Enforcement, and School District, along with other government and community organizations.

