

Shelby County 2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- Though jail bookings have declined since July 2014, the average length of stay continues to increase. As of August 2017, the average length of stay has increased by 43 percent compared to 2014.
- The Shelby County Jail is a pretrial detention facility. The jail population was 2,656 in August 2017; of that, 396 (15 percent) were long-term inmates – those in jail over 500 days.
- Despite making up 60.2 percent of Shelby County's population, African Americans and Hispanics, on average, make up 86 percent of the total jail population.
- African Americans comprise 54.1 percent of the total Shelby County population, but in 2015/2016 made up 83 percent of all persons entering jail: 87 percent of jail entries-warrant and 79 percent of jail entries-probable cause
- Case processing times continue to increase; delays in the held-to-state/grand jury process and lengthy time intervals associated with continuances have been identified as two main factors contributing to this increase.
- In 2015, roughly 24 percent of the jail population has been identified as having a behavioral health issue.
- Among the 53 metropolitan areas in the U.S. with populations of at least one million, Memphis has the second highest poverty rate at 18.4 percent (2015 Census Bureau American Community Survey).
- Poverty has been linked with involvement in the criminal justice system. Overuse of detention causes disruption in the stability of arrestees' families and communities, leads to higher re-arrest rates, and produces worse case outcomes with more back-end incarceration.

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

- Supported with \$350,000 from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Shelby County will implement forward-looking, smart solutions to address the misuse and overuse of the jail and reduce the jail population by 24 percent over the next two years.
- To safely reduce the jail population, the county will implement five strategies aimed at addressing system inefficiencies and disparities:
 - 1) **Reduce case processing times** using data to develop solutions that will resolve system processing delays.
 - 2) **Enhance Pretrial Services' Jail Intake Unit** with a focus on enhancing the pretrial risk assessment and release decision-making framework.
 - 3) **Expand Pretrial Services' Behavioral Health Unit**, including implementing a new jail-based behavioral health screening tool and increasing staffing within the Behavioral Health Unit.
 - 4) **Consolidate the Misdemeanor Citation processing and court appearance dates**
 - 5) **Develop a tool to expedite the appointment of counsel**, which will include a comprehensive indigency assessment to be given by Pretrial Services' Jail Intake Unit.
- Using a data-driven approach the county will identify ways to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.
- Strategies will impact multiple points of the criminal justice system from Jail Intake to final case outcome; these data-driven solutions were developed by a multi-agency collaborative team. The strategies will reduce jail bed usage while ensuring the county advances its commitment to having only those who pose a risk to the community remain in jail.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the Shelby County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Office of the District Attorney General, Shelby County Public Defender, Shelby County Pretrial Services, Memphis Police Department, Shelby County Health Department, Judges and Clerks of General Sessions Criminal Court, Judges and Clerks of Criminal Court, and Mid-South Peace and Justice.
- This work is supported by the Shelby County Justice System Coordinating Committee which focuses on jail population, jail overcrowding, and justice system efficiencies.