
CHARLESTON COUNTY
2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet***We've got problems to fix:***

- The main drivers of Charleston County's jail population are bookings for low-level offenses such as simple possession of marijuana, misdemeanor shoplifting, and public intoxication; individuals who repeatedly cycle in and out of the jail; limited pretrial risk information at bond setting; and court processing delays.
- Many of these drivers also have a disproportionate impact on African Americans, who are brought to jail nearly three times as often as Caucasians in Charleston County. The disproportionality is even greater for African Americans charged with some low-level offenses—such as simple possession of marijuana—with African Americans arrested nearly seven times as often as Caucasians.
- People suffering from mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness are among the most frequent users of the jail, often cycling through multiple times for low-level offenses.

Strategies are underway to create a fairer, more effective local justice system:

- Charleston County is implementing comprehensive reform strategies with a common purpose of improving public safety and community well-being. Through the combination of these strategies, we are rethinking jail use and aim to lower the average daily population of the jail by 25 percent over three years. Since 2016, the average daily jail population has declined by 7 percent.
- To transform how our community uses jail in Charleston County, the CJCC is refining policing practices, increasing alternatives to jail for people suffering from mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness, enhancing the bond setting process to be more risk-based, expediting access to counsel, and improving case processing efficiency.
- In June of 2017, the Tri-County Crisis Stabilization Center (TCSC) re-opened with a new triage service to give law enforcement 24x7 access to jail alternatives for individuals suffering from mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness. By the end of 2017, a sober center will also join the options available with TCSC.
- From 2014-2016, bookings for five targeted, low-level charges that drive Charleston County's jail population decreased 43 percent. During that same period, disproportionality at booking decreased 32 percent. To continue this trend, Charleston County is implementing a risk-assessment for law enforcement officers that enables greater uniformity in arrest decisions for low-level charges. Since many of the target charges also have high rates of disproportionality, data provided from the tool will support further efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and/or disparity.
- For the first time, Charleston County has a centralized CJCC database that regularly brings together data from across the local criminal justice system helping to guide efforts to rethink jail use and improve public safety. To date, 14 independent databases across our criminal justice system contribute to the centralized database. The amount of time it takes to complete comprehensive analysis of our system now takes a quarter of the time it did less than a year ago.

Who is helping to effect change?

- While the Charleston County Sheriff's Office serves as the administrative lead, the reforms outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being implemented by the Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, a collaboration of elected and senior officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, victim advocates, behavioral health professionals, various community leaders and many more.