

New Orleans

2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- Despite reducing overall incarceration rates by more than 75 percent since 2005, New Orleans still incarcerates more than one-and-a-half times as many people each year as the national average, placing it among the top ten most incarcerated urban jurisdictions in the nation¹.
- In New Orleans, most jail inmates (more than four out of five) are awaiting a disposition. In 2016, more than half (53 percent) of all low- and low-moderate-risk defendants remained detained beyond three days, spending an average of 79 days in jail.
- Blacks are arrested for felony offenses 2.5 times more frequently than Whites, resulting in a jail population that is 86% Black compared to 60% of the city's population.
- Overuse of detention causes disruption in the stability of arrestees' families and communities; it leads to higher re-arrest rates (especially among minorities); and produces worse case outcomes with more back-end incarceration than those cases allowed pretrial liberty.

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

- To address the misuse and overuse of jails in New Orleans, the city will be investing \$3.2 million over the next three years to reduce our average daily jail population by 21 percent. These reform efforts will be supported by an additional \$1.5 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge.
- In order to achieve this reduction goal, New Orleans has developed a jail reform plan that will attack the main drivers of local incarceration, including racial and ethnic disparities, through a set of collaborative, system-wide strategies that will help the city move away from a reflexive reliance on incarceration to a system that relies more on risk-based decision making that holds people accountable without trapping them in the local justice system.
- This plan includes a mix of innovative and common-sense solutions that will: focus arrest and release decisions on risk and not financial ability; divert people with mental health and substance abuse problems toward community-based services; provide more opportunities for release and diversion; increase defense advocacy for pretrial arrestees; and improve coordination among all agencies and at all decision points.
- For example, to help address the racial and ethnic disparities that exist in New Orleans' local justice system, the city will create tracking and accountability mechanisms focused on disparities, and continue to engage the community in developing solutions.
- The city will also strengthen pretrial release efforts through increased risk-based decision making that will help prevent defendants held on financial bonds from lingering in jail due to the inability to pay.
- Under this reform plan, the New Orleans Police Department will also develop an alternative to arrest to respond to people in crisis outside of the local justice system by directing them to community-based treatment.

¹ As of 2010, most recent figure available.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The reforms outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the City of New Orleans Mayor's Office and the Criminal Justice Council. The strategies included in the plan have been developed with, and are supported by, a diverse group of stakeholders and champions, including the local criminal justice agencies, State Department of Corrections, the city health department, the City Council, the Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, Baptist Community Ministries, community members, and many others.