

## **Los Angeles County 2019 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet**

### ***We have a problem to fix:***

- Individuals with mental health needs are overrepresented in Los Angeles County jails and are in need of alternative services and community-based options. In 2016, 25 percent of the inmate population was receiving some level of mental health treatment.
- Despite being ill-equipped to do so, the Los Angeles county jail system has therefore become, *de facto*, the largest mental health facility in the United States.
- Los Angeles County jails are critically overcrowded and inmates with mental health issues are often too ill to be safely housed in a multi-person cell, causing further crowding in general population housing areas.
- Approximately 40 percent of the inmate population is comprised of pre-trial inmates, those awaiting trial or sentencing. The partially sentenced population, which includes those who were sentenced on one or more cases and maintained open charges in another case or cases, makes up approximately 20 percent of the overall population. This leaves very little jail capacity to hold people convicted of criminal activity and hampers in-custody rehabilitative efforts.

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

- Supported with a new two-year, \$1.2 million grant from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Los Angeles County will implement forward-looking, smart solutions to provide alternatives to incarceration and reduce the risk of recidivism.
- The county plans to implement strategies aimed at diverting defendants whose offense was a product of mental illness from the criminal justice system into treatment.
- The county will create a pilot program in which mental health professionals will be embedded in high volume arraignment courts and tasked with assessing detainees who may suffer from a mental disorder, identifying an appropriate treatment program, and diverting the defendant into that program and/or transitional housing, where consistent with public safety.
- The expansion of the collaborative Mental Evaluation Teams (MET) will divert individuals with mental health needs into community treatment programs.

### ***Who is helping to affect change?***

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are led by the Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office and Los Angeles City Attorney's Office in partnership with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Department, the Alternate Public Defender, the Superior Court, the Probation Department, and the county's health agency departments.
- This work is supported by the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee, which is supporting Safety and Justice Challenge efforts in Los Angeles through a dedicated



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subcommittee and is comprised of various representatives from the legal system, law enforcement, community-based organizations and advocacy groups.

