

Cook County

2020 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- We have lowered the Cook County jail population by 30 percent since 2016 – but we must continue this positive progress and are working to further safely reduce the jail population by addressing barriers to pretrial release.
- People of color are disproportionately arrested and incarcerated at higher rates than their white counterparts in Cook County. Despite making up 50% of the county's adult population, African Americans and Hispanics make up nearly 90% of the jail population, on average.
- Siloed criminal justice data systems have made it difficult for data to be analyzed across agencies in a timely fashion.
- A subset of the jail population is comprised of individuals who cycle through the system due to unaddressed mental health and/or substance use needs.
- Barriers to living wage employment can lead individuals to engage in narcotic distribution and subsequent criminal justice involvement.
- There is a backlog of warrants in Cook County that not only burdens the system but does not advance justice as these cases are not adjudicated until a warrant is executed. Active warrants for cases associated with minor offenses invoke fear in community members and can disrupt a person's ability to seek employment, secure housing, and participate in other aspects of life.
- Overuse of detention causes disruption in the stability of the families and communities of those arrested; it leads to higher re-arrest rates and produces worse case outcomes with more subsequent incarceration.

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

- With an additional \$2.5 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Cook County will continue to implement forward-looking, smart solutions to further safely reduce the local jail population by an additional 4.8% over the next two years. These solutions will include:
 - Implement a Jail Population Review Team that can identify barriers to pretrial release for detainees and seek solutions.
 - Develop a racial equity workgroup to ensure jail reduction strategies address current disparities.
 - Enhance data exchanges across criminal justice agencies.
 - Identify individuals with frequent justice system contact and connect them with Peer Supports who can support engagement in services and pretrial success.
 - Offer comprehensive services to help individuals engaged in narcotic distribution seek living wage employment and avoid actions that harm communities.
 - Expand efforts to address old warrants and provide opportunities to resolve existing warrants.
 - Engage communities most impacted by the justice system in dialogue about reform and solution focused action planning.



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Who is helping to affect change?

The Safety and Justice Challenge stakeholders include Chief Judge Timothy C. Evans, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Circuit Clerk Dorothy Brown, Public Defender Amy Campanelli, Sheriff Tom Dart and State's Attorney Kim Foxx, the Chicago Police Department, and Cook County Health. Chief Judge Evans and the Office of the Chief Judge serve as the lead stakeholder in the partnership with the MacArthur Foundation.