

St. Louis County 2018 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

Background:

In 2015, St. Louis County Executive Steve Stenger brought together experts in justice services to develop a proposal to pursue a multi-million dollar grant through the Safety and Justice Challenge funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In 2016, St. Louis County was awarded \$2.25 million dollars to implement innovative programs to reduce the St. Louis County jail population. The County was awarded an additional \$2.25 million over two years in 2018 based on the promise and progress of work to date.

St. Louis County has used the resources and funding provided by the Challenge to implement bold reforms, including expanding the pretrial release program and developing an innovative model for addressing the needs of individuals who are returned to jail for a probation violation. As a result, the population of the jail has declined by 5.6 percent since 2015, and there has been significant progress in reducing racial disparities. The average length of stay for African-Americans has fallen to 82 days from 113 days, a 28 percent reduction. For white individuals, the average length of stay has fallen 15 percent, to 69 days from 81 days.

The team, led by St. Louis County Justice Services Acting Director Julia Childrey with support from County agencies as well as Professor Beth Huebner and her fellow top researchers at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, are implementing innovative approaches to reduce the jail population and improve public safety.

Strategy:

The Safety and Justice Challenge grant funds innovative approaches that aim to reduce the jail population by 15-19 percent over the next two years. The key elements of this approach include:

- Expanding a pretrial release program for carefully screened individuals
 - The program is based on best practices nationwide and uses data analyzed by the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
- Implementing a speedy hearing process for those with technical probation violations
 - The goal is to have a judge see selected individuals within 10 days of incarceration.
 - Case workers, probation officers, and community partners will support program participants.
 - Selected probationers will be monitored electronically.
- Expediting case processing for non-violent individuals awaiting trial.
 - The County has embraced systems reform. A population review team meets weekly to expedite cases and to develop strategies for larger systems reform.
 - The reform team has been working with the St. Louis County strategy and innovation team to enhance case processing with the goal of equitable and fair treatment across the criminal justice system.
- Working with community providers to secure mental health and substance abuse treatment.
 - The team is working with community service agencies to provide drug treatment and housing to individuals, particularly in light of the opioid epidemic in St. Louis County.
 - The team has employed a number of dedicated case managers who are responsible for



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facilitating wide-ranging transition services, including job skills and employment training as well as building links to social supports.

Summary:

St. Louis County intends to meet or exceed the target reduction of the jail population of 15-19 percent within two years. The County is taking significant steps to enhance the efficiency and equity of criminal justice processing with the support of County agencies, criminal justice stakeholders, and community partners. The innovative strategies being used in the County will result in evidence based, gender responsive practices that can serve as a nationwide model.

