

Spokane County

2016 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got a problem to fix:

- In Spokane County, the jail's average daily population has increased significantly since 2000, operating at "critical status" almost on a daily basis. In 2015, the average daily population of the jail was 965.
- Pretrial release and length of stay drive the jail population. The jail pretrial population alone was 65 percent in 2014, up from 28 percent in 2012.
- Operating the jail uses more than a quarter of the county's budget, and totaled 28 percent in 2014.
- The misuse of the jail takes an especially heavy toll on people of color. In Spokane County, the average length of stay in 2014 was 15 days, and 13 days for pretrial population. Yet for African Americans, the average length of stay was 25 days; for Native Americans, 21 days; and for Latino and Hispanics, 22 days.
- Individuals with acute mental health illness who enter the county's jail spend an average of 60 days longer detained pretrial than other defendants.

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

- To address the misuse and overuse of jails in Spokane County, the city and county will be investing \$1.2 million over the next three years. This investment will include an additional \$1.75 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge.
- The long term vision behind the county's reform plan is to create a local justice system – starting at the point of arrest all the way through community supervision – that places a greater focus on risk and needs, rather than the offense. This will include: 1) an increased focus on risk assessment and treatment; 2) new prosecutor diversion alternatives, such as a post-plea, pre-conviction model, where cases will be diverted for no fee and the county clerk will collect restitution; 3) improved jail-based mental health intervention; and 4) measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.
- For example, the county will create and apply a Racial Equity Toolkit, which will be used by those leading reform in the county, to identify root causes and factors that result in racial or social inequities in the system, such as bias in process, lack of access, or barriers that result in disparate impacts. The Toolkit, which includes community involvement, will first be applied to all new proposed policy changes, and then applied to major existing policies.
- In addition, Spokane County's jail is the only jail in Washington that is licensed as a Mental Health Provider. However, current staffing allows only for triage of high-risk cases. Through the reform plan, the county will help reduce admissions and length of stay for people in jail who are affected by serious mental illness by adding three mental health professionals and support staff who will help coordinate services with the courts, provide quicker linkage to community services and housing, and note cases back before the court expeditiously for release review.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The reforms outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the Office of the Criminal Justice Administrator, which operates under the Board of County Commissioners, and carried out by the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council and seven supporting sub-

committees. The sub-committees, which focus on issues ranging from racial and ethnic disparities, to evidence-based practices and technology, are comprised of various representatives from the legal system, law enforcement, community-based organizations and advocacy groups, including Spokane Alliance, area churches, Smart Justice, and the NAACP.

- The reform effort also has participation and support from a strong coalition of high-level and elected officials from the City of Spokane and Spokane County.