



DATA-DRIVEN JUSTICE: DISRUPTING THE CYCLE OF INCARCERATION

Every year, more than **11 million people** move through America's **3,100 local jails**, many on low-level, non-violent misdemeanors, **costing local governments approximately \$22 billion a year**. In local jails, **64 percent of people suffer from mental illness**, **68 percent have a substance abuse disorder**, and **44 percent suffer from chronic health problems**. With studies showing that **7-10% of all law enforcement calls for service involve people with mental illness**, police chiefs and sheriffs across the country face challenges in responding to a relatively small number of highly vulnerable people -- often suffering from mental illness, chronic illness, poverty, and substance abuse -- who cycle repeatedly through local jails, hospital emergency rooms, shelters, and other public systems, receiving fragmented and uncoordinated care at great cost to taxpayers, with poor outcomes.

To break this cycle of incarceration, **the Administration launched the Data-Driven Justice (DDJ) Initiative** with a bipartisan coalition of city, county, and state governments who, with the support of a broad range of non-profit, private sector, philanthropies and universities, commit to:

- (1) **Equip law enforcement with the tools**, including training first responders, to respond safely and effectively to people in mental health crisis and divert people with high needs to identified service providers instead of arrest;
- (2) **Combine data** from across criminal justice and health systems to identify the individuals with the highest number of contacts with police, ambulance, emergency departments, and other services, and, leverage existing resources to link them to health, behavioral health, and social services in the community; and
- (3) **Expand preventative services** like objective, data-driven, validated risk assessment tools proven to inform the safe release of low-risk defendants from jails in order to reduce the jail population held pretrial.

Miami-Dade, Florida found that **97 people** with serious mental illness accounted for **\$13.7 million in services** over four years, spending more than **39,000 days in either jail, emergency rooms, state hospitals or psychiatric facilities** in their county. In response, the county provided key mental health de-escalation training to their police officers and 911 dispatchers and, over the past five years, Miami-Dade police have responded to nearly 50,000 calls for service for people in mental health crisis, but have **made only 109 arrests, diverting more than 10,000 people** to services or safely stabilizing situations without arrest. The jail population fell from over 7,000 to just over 4,700, and the county was able to **close an entire jail facility, saving nearly \$12 million a year**.

On any given day, more than 450,000 people, nearly 63 percent of the local jail population, are held in jail before trial, even though they have not been convicted of a crime. To tackle the challenges of bail, in 2014 **Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC** began using a data-based risk assessment tool to identify low risk people in jail and find ways to release them safely. Since they began using the tool, the **jail population has decreased by 40 percent**; significantly more low-risk individuals have been released from jail, and there has been no increase in reported crime.

These innovative strategies, which have measurably reduced jail populations in several communities, help stabilize individuals and families, better serve communities, and, often save money in the process.

By joining the DDJ community, jurisdictions:

- Gain access to technologies that facilitate data exchange across industries, including health care, to help identify the people with the highest number of encounters with 911, police, and emergency rooms;
- Learn and share best practices for diversions and coordination with community-based services; and
- Access research to know what works and continually improve outcomes.

STEPS TO JOIN DDJ

- ✓ Signed commitment letter by your jurisdiction's chief executive
- ✓ Identified point of contact who will be responsible for carrying out the commitments and regularly joins DDJ community of practice calls
- ✓ Email innovation@who.eop.gov for more information