



## **Jail Diversion**

### **Objective:**

Ensure offending individuals are appropriately detained or sanctioned

### **Strategy:**

Provide a continuum of jail diversion programs, such as education and treatment

### **Why is this strategy important?**

Many persons who are incarcerated have mental illness and substance abuse problems that contributed to their arrest and incarceration. By providing alternatives to arrest and jail through assessment-driven programs and services, these individuals are able to access evidence-based, recovery-oriented treatment, training, and employment. These programs lead to reduced jail bookings, jail days, and inmate health care costs. It also improves individuals' housing stability and employment readiness.

### **How is our performance?**

For youth, King County partners with police to provide diversion options and alternatives to detention for most juvenile offenders. This means that most youth are not booked into the juvenile detention facility if they are arrested. Other efforts led by the King County Prosecutor's Office (PAO) to divert youth from detention include:

1. The improved Truancy and Dropout Prevention program (launched in 2009) to divert truant youth out of the juvenile court system and into school-based workshops designed to facilitate coordination among the school representatives, parents, and youth so that each party takes concrete steps to reengage the youth in the education system.
2. A new juvenile pre-filing diversion program, piloted in 2011. The 180 Program is a PAO and community partnership designed to divert low-level juvenile offenders facing their first or second misdemeanor charge out of the court system and into a half-day community based workshop, where participating youth hear from community leaders about the importance of positive choices. This program was formally launched in January of 2012, and is on course to divert approximately 400 youth during 2012.

Through the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention Community Corrections Division (CCD), King County provides the court system and adults charged with crimes with alternatives to incarceration in appropriate cases. These alternatives can reduce the jail population, increase accountability for those charged with or convicted of crimes, offer programming that supports successful change in behavior and reduce the rate of re-offense. While we know that for adults, the number of individuals incarcerated has decreased in recent years See Justice and Safety Detain Offenders Appropriately

Objective we do not currently have documentation of the cause of that decrease. We also don't yet have studies that track the recidivism of individuals participating in pre-trial Community Correction programs or the percent of people in those programs that would otherwise have been sent to jail.

## **Moving forward**

Since 2002, CCD has been an essential resource that judges, prosecutors and public defenders rely on in addressing public safety and supporting successful changes in behavior. King County remains committed to providing alternatives to jail for offenders with chemical dependency and/or mental health issues, many of whom were experiencing homelessness prior to their incarceration.

A new King County program has filled a giant gap in our ability to divert persons experiencing crisis from jail and the hospital emergency department. The DESC's Crisis Solutions Center (CSC) opened in August 2012 and provides a new resource for police, medics, crisis mental health professionals, and other first responders to use for individuals who are in crisis and might otherwise receive no help, or be taken to jail or a hospital emergency department. The goal of the CSC is to reduce unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice and emergency medical systems.

When an individual is brought to the CSC, a team of mental health and chemical dependency professionals will help stabilize the current crisis in a voluntary secure residential setting. They will also immediately work to refer participants to long-term assistance and housing, tailored to each person's needs. As a result, the CSC will reduce overall admissions to jails, hospital emergency departments and psychiatric hospital inpatient units. The Crisis Solutions Center is not intended as a replacement for people who require jail or hospitalization for their own safety or for the safety of others. Only individuals who have committed minor, non-violent offenses will be eligible for jail diversion through the CSC. The program is intended to serve men and women who are in crisis due to mental or addictive illnesses and who are currently being sent to jails or hospitals because more appropriate, secure therapeutic options do not exist.

Services provided on-site will include mental health and chemical dependency assessment and treatment such as individual and group counseling and medication therapy. Services will also include referrals and linkage to ongoing community services and housing options.

## **Related Links**

[Downtown Emergency Service Center's Crisis Solution Center](#)

[LEAD Program, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion](#)