

St. Louis County

2016 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. The grant would be used to implement innovative programs to reduce the St. Louis County jail population by 15-19 percent. The team, led by St. Louis County Justice Services Director Herb Bernsen with support from County agencies as well as Professor Beth Huebner and her fellow top researchers at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, identified some groundbreaking approaches to reduce the jail population and improve public safety. As a result of their strong work St. Louis County is one of 11 Safety and Justice Challenge grant winners nationwide. The county will receive \$2.25 million over two years to implement its strategy to reduce the jail population. The Foundation praised St. Louis County for demonstrating the motivation, collaboration, and commitment needed to make real change in the justice system.

Strategy:

The grant funds innovative approaches to reduce the jail population by 15-19 percent. The key elements of this unique approach are:

- 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.
- Helping municipal courts promote better understanding of procedures and easier access to court information for defendants
 - The County will have a website that will serve as a centralized information portal for individuals ticketed in a St. Louis County municipality.
 - A text-based reminder system will include basic court appointment reminders, information on online payment options, court addresses, and other pertinent court policies.
- Working with community providers to secure mental health and substance abuse treatment along with employment services
 - Each treatment provider has a dedicated outreach coordinator that streamlines the jail to community transition.
 - The outreach coordinator is responsible for 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 procedural justice and municipal court changes with the support of County agencies, criminal justice stakeholders, and community partners. The



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innovative strategies being used in the County will result in evidence based, gender responsive practices that can serve as a nationwide model.

