

Strategies and Initiatives

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Strategy 1: Reduce admissions for individuals charged with low level offenses and individuals with patterns of high reentry into the criminal justice system due to behavioral health needs.

Pre-booking deflection. Develop and implement a pre-booking deflection program focused on alternatives to arrest that connect high-need individuals with appropriate community-based services.

Increase summons through improved policy. Provide law enforcement officers with increased discretion about how to account for past criminal history when deciding whether to use options other than custodial arrest, such as the issuance of summons.

Reduce arrests for out of parish warrants. Identify areas of improvement for eliminating custodial arrests made by the New Orleans Police Department on individuals with only an out-of-parish warrant.

Strategy 2: Reduce the average length of stay of lower risk felony defendants detained during the pretrial stage by focusing resources on risk-based release decisions.

Public defenders at first appearance. Staff first appearances with public defenders who can represent defendants early in the process and help to secure appropriate pretrial releases by providing additional and relevant context above and beyond any pretrial risk assessment tool.

Institutionalize bond review. As part of the process of beginning public defender representation earlier in the process, system stakeholders will consider an appropriate policy for using bond reviews in accordance with the law as another mechanism to secure pretrial release early in the process to ensure defendants do not remain in jail due to inability to pay.

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Risk assessment tool. New Orleans has been selected by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation as a site to implement its Public Safety Assessment (PSA), which will potentially make pretrial release decisions across judicial officers more consistent and risk-driven. The introduction of the PSA necessitates ongoing training of all court personnel and ongoing quality assurance measures.

Pretrial release decision matrix. As part of the implementation of the PSA, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation will facilitate local stakeholders to create a Decision-Making Framework to guide release decisions.

Expand Criminal District Court's use of release on own recognizance. Increase the number of ROR-eligible defendants released on their own recognizance in Criminal District Court.

Strategy 3: Reduce average length of stay of felony defendants by reducing system inefficiencies in the processing of cases, increasing pretrial release for defendants with multiple pending matters, and ensuring the transportation of detainees according to standards set by the criminal justice system.

Jail facilitator. A senior staff person vested with the convening authority to bring together system stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, jail personnel, and probation officers, and review instances when defendants are not being transported in a timely fashion, when their cases are being processed too slowly, or otherwise when the time in detention exceeds what may be deemed reasonable for the risk level and offense type. This individual convenes these individuals in a problem-solving capacity around specific cases on a regular basis.

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Policy to resolve Municipal Court cases for defendants with felony sentences.

Coordinate the adjudication of cases across different courts to ensure that all of a defendant's cases are being heard and resolved on the same timeline. Lack of coordination has meant that defendants may have cases disposed in one court but are still held in the jail because of a pending case in another court. The Jail Facilitator role would support this strategy.

Expedited arrest to arraignment for victimless crimes. Reduce the length of time between arrest and arraignment by expediting completion of police reports, transfer of files to the district attorney's office, and the district attorney's screening of cases.

Arrest on capias docket policy. Establish a process with the Sheriff's Office and the Clerk of Court that will expedite the appearance of individuals in court after an arrest is made on a capias (warrant).

Multi-court case processing. Establish policies and procedures with all agencies to facilitate the simultaneous case processing of defendants across multiple courts.

Improve Sheriff's Office policies and procedures for transport to court. Establish policies and procedures with the Sheriff's Office that ensures all defendants on the jail list, particularly those who have open matters across courts, are transported consistently to all court dates.

Improve Sheriff's Office policies and procedures for transport to DOC. Establish a process with the Sheriff's Office, Clerk of Court, and Louisiana Department of Corrections (DOC) that will expedite the transport of state-sentenced inmates to DOC custody following sentencing.

Implementation of aiSmartBench in Criminal District Court and Municipal Court. Provide Criminal District Court and Municipal Court judges with greater access to defendant and case information to avoid delays in case processing of defendants who have matters open in multiple courts.

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Strategy 4: Reduce admissions and length of stay for alleged probation and parole violators by encouraging officers' and judges' discretion in using detention and ensuring the timely processing of cases to prevent extended, unnecessary stays.

Probation and parole detention guidelines. Create and implement guidelines for police officers regarding the arrest and detention of alleged violators of probation or parole. This strategy is aimed at avoidance of admission of these individuals into the jail all together by improving communication between law enforcement and probation/ parole.

Improve probation and parole process. For those who do end up in the jail, probation staff will work in conjunction with the Jail Facilitator to ensure that pre-adjudicated, alleged probation and parole violators move efficiently through the system and are not held for unnecessarily prolonged periods in detention.

Maximize use of administrative sanctions. Authorize probation officers to use sanctions and encourage use of sanctions instead of arrest for alleged technical violations, per the state-wide supervision violation grid.

Decrease impact of detainers on probation defendants. Decrease the number of probationers who are held on a detainer pending revocation proceedings by encouraging probation officers' discretion in filing detention paperwork when probationers are arrested on a new charge; establishing Sheriff's Office transportation procedures that ensure probationers are brought to court; and encouraging Criminal District Court judges to lift detainers when appropriate.

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Strategy 5: Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system.

Implicit bias training. Provide implicit bias training to key decision-makers in the criminal justice system and to a majority of agency staff.

Improve the capacity of the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office to collect race/ethnicity data. Improve the existing Jail Management System (JMS) to accurately record race and ethnicity data, especially as it pertains to Hispanic ethnicity and multi-racial individuals. The collection of these data should also be consistent with the methodologies used by other agencies in the criminal justice system.

Strategy 6: Regularly monitor progress according to pre-defined benchmarks and use those data to optimize strategies as needed.

JailSTAT. Develop and review regular, detailed reports of the progress of each strategy in meeting intermediate outputs and long term outcomes including reductions in the jail population and enhancements in equity for racial and ethnic minorities. These reviews will take place at least quarterly by an internal, collaborative leadership group. Key indicators and outcomes will be released through a public dashboard to enhance transparency and accountability to the community.

Community Engagement Forum. Establish a community advisory group that will participate in the monitoring of implementation efforts, communicating those impacts to the community, and soliciting feedback from the community. The advisory group will be part of a broader, coordinated effort to enhance transparency and to facilitate meaningful two-way communication between the community and the criminal justice system.

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Strategy 7: Reduce admissions for warrants by decreasing failure to appear (FTA) rates in Criminal District Court and Municipal Court.

Indigency assessment at sentencing to scale discretionary fees and fines based on ability to pay. Create a tool that assesses indigency and recommends how to scale discretionary fees and fines accordingly. The tool aims to reduce FTAs that are a result of individuals who avoid court because they have insufficient funds to pay fines and fees.

Fines and fees amnesty. Support Municipal and Traffic Court's participation in a program that brings judges, court staff, city attorneys, and public defenders to a prominent homeless shelter to resolve old cases, recall attachments, and connect individuals to services.

Implement court date notification/reminder system. Implement a system to text defendants in Municipal and Criminal District Courts to remind them of upcoming and recently missed court dates.

Redesign language on subpoena and summons forms to clarify time, date, and location of court appearances. Re-design forms to clarify time, date, and location of court so that defendants can better understand expectations from the court and consequences for failing to appear.