

An Overview of the Pretrial Justice Collaborative

MDRC Center for Criminal Justice Research

Justice System Partners

Dane County Criminal Justice Council
Meeting

February 24, 2021



JUSTICE SYSTEM PARTNERS



What is MDRC?

- “Building Knowledge to Improve Social Policy”
- Non-profit, non-partisan, mission-driven research organization committed to finding solutions to some of the most difficult issues facing the nation, with the goal of improving the lives of individuals, families, children, and communities
- MDRC’s research portfolio is vast. It is grouped into the following policy areas:
 - Families and Children
 - K-12 Education
 - Postsecondary Education
 - Economic Mobility, Housing, and Communities
 - Youth Development, Criminal Justice, and Employment



MDRC Center for Criminal Justice Research

- **Objective:** To help build a more effective and equitable criminal justice system through clear, rigorous, and actionable research evidence.
- **We work with** national and local criminal justice agencies, policymakers, and community-based organizations to assess reforms, practices, and programs that seek to increase fairness, reduce unnecessary incarceration, support public safety, lessen racial and economic inequities, improve the lives of the people and communities impacted by the criminal justice system, and diminish the role of the system in perpetuating poverty.
- **Portfolio** of work spans the CJ system, from arrest and the pretrial period through the reentry process for returning citizens and parole
- Expertise in broad array of **research designs**, from randomized controlled trials to quasi-experimental methods to descriptive analyses



Pretrial Justice Collaborative (PJC)

- Supported by Arnold Ventures
- Led by MDRC's Center for Criminal Justice Research and Justice System Partners (JSP)
 - JSP offers criminal justice system technical assistance and expertise
- Eight partner jurisdictions that have implemented a range of reforms to their pretrial justice systems
 - New York, NY
 - Yakima County, WA
 - Santa Cruz County, CA
 - Dane County, WI
 - Lucas County, OH
 - Harris County, TX
 - City and County of Denver, CO
 - Mesa County, CO



Project Goals

PJC goals:

- 1) Help partner jurisdictions assess the performance of their pretrial release interventions, with a focus on court appearance outcomes
- 2) Identify the least burdensome pretrial supervision interventions necessary to maintain court appearance



Study Approach : Two Phases of Research

Phase 1: Process and Descriptive Analysis (all 8 sites)

- What are the practices and policies around pretrial release conditions and intervention strategies? How is pretrial supervision implemented?
- What are court appearance rates for defendants assigned to various release conditions and interventions?

Phase 2: Impact Studies (4 sites)

- Is a less restrictive pretrial supervision intervention as effective as a more restrictive intervention with respect to court appearance rates, new criminal charges, and other outcomes?



Phase 1 Research Activities

- Virtual interviews with pretrial services staff and other stakeholders

Virtual interviews



- Review of data documentation, codebooks, and data files from the courts and pretrial services.

Data assessment



- Mapping and documentation of pretrial case flow and release decision points

System and process mapping



- Policies and statutes related to pretrial release conditions and eligibility for specific interventions, risk assessments, and decision frameworks

Document review



- Analysis of recent trends in court appearance outcomes for defendants assigned to various release conditions and interventions.

Analysis of court appearance trends



- Determine interest, ability, process, and provide TA for participation in impact study

Assess feasibility for Tier 2



Data Elements Requested

Data provided by Dane County CJC and Circuit Court

- Arrest dates and charges
- Defendant demographics
- Risk assessment scores/information
- Pretrial release conditions and bail setting
- Hearings and hearing outcomes
- Court appearances and failures to appear
- Case outcomes/dispositions
- Pretrial services data: supervision levels, supervision start/end dates and end reasons, contact date and type, non-compliance, etc.



Phase 1: Deliverables

- Site-specific research report with results from Phase 1 data analysis (Summer 2021)
 - System and process map
 - Trends in court appearance rates over recent timeframe
 - Court appearance rates for:
 - All cases
 - By release condition (supervision level and special intervention)
- Feasibility assessment for Phase 2 RCT (Spring/Summer 2021)



What to Expect in 2021

- Additional virtual interviews possible (Spring-Summer)
- Monthly check-in calls (Ongoing)
- Data collection (February-March)
- Process and outcome reports (Summer)
- Phase 2 finalists determined (Summer or sooner)



Questions

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