

JAIL POPULATION REDUCTION STRATEGIES

An Examination of Five Jurisdictions' Responses to Jail Crowding

a project of the
American Jail Association

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BACKGROUND

In 1994, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) awarded a grant to the American Jail Association (AJA) to prepare a report on successful jail crowding remedies. As stated in the proposal submitted to NIC, the specific purpose of the project was “...to study local criminal justice systems which have reduced or significantly slowed the number of inmates incarcerated in the county jail and to determine the processes and methods utilized to unite and focus the criminal justice system in accomplishing this outcome.”

By stating that the focus of the examination would be the local system of justice rather than the jail alone, the proposal began with a key assumption born from AJA’s experience: solutions to jail crowding (as with the causes) are for the most part systemic. Each criminal justice system participant--police, prosecutor, defense, judges, pretrial services, probation, treatment providers, local elected officials, and corrections--must be involved in addressing the problem of a crowded jail. In fact it is anomalous that the individual most often targeted when crowding occurs--the jail administrator--is the single actor with the least control over the number incarcerated, or as one of the sites eloquently stated in their county Population Management Plan,

”An interesting paradox to the jail crowding problem is the fact that the Department of Adult Detention can unilaterally implement very few changes to alleviate crowding since it does not enact penal codes, prescribe sentence conditions, or determine release dates. In fact, jails actually have little or no control over the two determinants of the jail population--the number of bookings and the average length of stay.”

While recognizing that solutions to crowding involve systemwide involvement, the jail administrator is nonetheless in a crucial position: the jail often has the most accurate and complete data about how the system uses the scarce resource of jail beds. Also, the administrator is often the catalyst in bringing together the various actors to focus on the issue. Finally, and most dramatically, crowding that results in a lawsuit usually names the administrator of the jail as one of the lead defendants.

There are other reasons that a jail administrator will want to relieve crowding. A crowded facility is, by any measurement, more difficult to manage; incident reports escalate involving both inmate/inmate and inmate/staff incidents. There also appears to be a correlation between increased use of leave by staff and increased crowding. Administrators also report a spiraling effect that occurs when crowding takes place. Programs are cut back as space must be made available for beds. This in turn raises the level of tension, since inmates are provided less frequent opportunities to get out of their cells resulting in increased incidents, both serious and minor, leaving the administrator little option but to increase security through lock-downs. The very nature of the jail and the transient nature of the population make lock-downs difficult to achieve. The result is continual frustration.

It is precisely because of this crucial positioning of the jail administrator that AJA undertook this project with NIC's support.

The first step in the project was to identify from the thousands of jail systems in the U.S. those that had been successful in their efforts to address crowding. To select and identify sites that have shown such success, AJA mailed a detailed questionnaire to large jail systems throughout the United States; fifty sites responded. From this review five sites were selected to participate in the project. The sites were: Ring County, Washington; Pinellas County, Florida; Fairfax County, Virginia; Multnomah County, Oregon; and Volusia County, Florida.. The next task was to bring representatives of the five sites together to discuss their experiences and to summarize their discussions.

Representatives from the five sites, together with NIC representatives and AJA project staff, participated in this discussion September 30 through October 2, 1994, in Seattle, Washington. The purpose of the meeting was stated in the letter of invitation from the Executive Director of AJA to the site participants.

“The goals of the meeting are to leave Seattle with a clear understanding of the programs and strategies implemented in your jurisdiction that have resulted in significant reductions in the jail population; to identify any cost savings/cost avoidance that resulted; and to discuss successful implementation strategies as well as obstacles or problems that you have had to overcome.”

Based on the discussions during the meeting and supporting materials provided by the sites, the following findings were generated. Before listing the specific findings reflecting programs and procedural changes that were introduced in the sites, a brief

demographic description of each site is provided. For additional details about the individual sites, readers are encouraged to contact the sites directly, through the contacts listed in Appendix A.

SITE ENVIRONMENT

The following is information about the local jail system and demographics of each of the five sites. The size of the jail(s), population estimates, and lengths of stay are reported, as well as other factors that the sites felt were relevant.

VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

Volusia County has a population of approximately 350,000, although there are dramatic changes annually in that population; during both “Biker Week” and “Spring Break” the population may reach 1 million. The county has been a charter county since 1970, the same year that the sheriff turned over the administration of the jail to a jail administrator. The jail administrator is appointed by the county manager who serves at the pleasure of a seven-member county board.

The economy of the county is service-based with relatively low unemployment. There is a large retirement community and a steady influx of tourists which together promote a predominantly service-based employment. The county population is described as fairly conservative and, on average, older. It’s estimated that the minority population of the

county is less than 20 percent. There are 17 separate jurisdictions in the county, Daytona Beach being the largest.

The jail system constitutes two facilities and has an average daily population of about 1,300 with approximately 45 percent of the commitments coming from the Daytona Beach Police. The jail staff totals 370, approximately 270 in uniform, 20 medical staff, 20 case managers, 3 mental health officers, and the balance administrative. The average length of stay in the jail system is 35 days, but this figure excludes those that stay less than 5 days. The jail administrator estimates that better than 50 percent of the arrests in the county involve alcohol or drugs, and a major portion of the intake population involves traffic cases.

Of the five sites, Volusia County could point to the most dramatic change in its jail population: in 1988, the jail system was 11 percent over capacity, by 1991 it was 31 percent under capacity, due largely to the changes in court processing and expanded programming that resulted from the system-wide effort to address crowding.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Multnomah County's population exceeds 600,000. The principal city in the county is Portland. The city is expanding, taking law enforcement patrol jurisdictional authority from the county. One result of this expansion caused the county Sheriffs Office to

lose deputies, as the responsibility for law enforcement shifts from the county to the city police. The county has a minority population of approximately 30 percent with a steadily growing Hispanic population. Gangs are becoming a significant factor in the city crime level; the county jail population reflects this change. The city situated on U.S. Interstate I-5, the main north-south artery for the west coast running from the Canadian border to Mexico, provides easy access in and out of Portland for persons involved in criminal activity. The county is administered by a county executive and has a four-person county board. The population remains fairly stable, similar to the economy. Like California, Oregon has recently enacted "tax-revolt" legislation (Prop 6) that establishes well-defined property tax limits. Thus, the State now delegates more and more fiscal responsibilities to the counties.

The Multnomah County Jail System, operated by the Sheriffs Office, includes five facilities with a total capacity of 1,361 beds. All five have population limits imposed; interestingly, three of them by local officials. One of the facilities operates entirely through funding from a special levy. The jail functions under restricted intake procedures. Misdemeanors, traffic, and some C-class felonies are now regularly cited by the Sheriffs Office or by the police. There are also strict sentencing guidelines in place in the State; the average length of stay for sentenced inmates is 50 days (the overall average length of stay for pretrial and sentenced inmates is 17 days). The county criminal justice agencies make heavy use of intermediate sanctions. In Multnomah County and with

supervisory approval, Community Correction Probation Officers (not under the Sheriffs responsibility) have the authority to book into the jail persons who have violated a condition of probation, and can order the person held up to thirty days for the violation on their own authority. This sanctioning by the probation officer can be refused by the offender and the matter then goes before a judge.

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Fairfax County's population approaches 860,000 in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area. The county comprises unincorporated areas, one city, and three towns. It is characterized by low unemployment, a relatively high educational level, and high cost of living. The minority population is roughly 8 percent African American and 8 percent hispanic and oriental. Less than two decades ago, the county was primarily rural, but it has become increasingly suburban/urban. A very influential military presence has decreased substantially in recent years.

The jail has a rated capacity of 589; the average daily population has on occasion reached 1,000 (including electronic monitoring cases). A new 750-bed jail addition has been designed, with ground-breaking scheduled to take place soon. The jail is operated by the Sheriff and the jail population is reported to be 45 - 55 percent sentenced inmates with an average length of stay estimated at 60 days. Inmates include approximately 20 federal prisoners under contract and a large number of drunk driving cases. Judges can impose jail

sentences of up to two years. Funding for jail operations is split between the state and the county, and like many Virginia counties, the crowding, in part, is caused by state inmates who belong to the Virginia Department of Corrections.

PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Pinellas County is located on the gulf coast of Florida with a population of about 840,000. Some 22 different law enforcement agencies operate in the county, the largest being the St. Petersburg Police, which contributes the largest number of bookings into the jail. The County abuts the city of Tampa, but has a higher economic base and reports a lower crime rate. Like Volusia County much of the economy is service-based reflecting the importance of the tourist trade. The county is governed by a five-member elected county board, with day-to-day administration in the hands of a county manager appointed by the board. Approximately 30 percent of the population is minority, largely African American.

The jail system in the county includes five facilities with a combined average daily population of approximately 1,600. Administrators estimate approximately 55,000 bookings yearly with an average length of stay of 12 days. The system is described as very staff intensive--total staff of approximately 740--with an annual budget of approximately \$40 million. The county currently contracts with the Federal government to reserve 25 beds for Federal prisoners and a new facility is planned to open in 1997. Legislative changes expanded the number of juveniles that can be waived to adult court and therefore, held in

the adult facility. Juveniles in the past had taken up, on average, about 10 beds, but now average approximately 45 to 50 beds.

KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

The population of King County is approximately 1.5 million, with over a third living within the Seattle city limits. There are 31 other incorporated cities in the county. Minorities account for approximately 17 percent of the county population, with more than half of that number Asian/Pacific Islanders. The county is governed by a thirteen-member elected county council and an elected county executive who serves as the chief executive officer of the County. Like Portland to the south, the county anticipates a steady, but small population growth (projected at 1.7 million by the year 2000) and a stable economy.

The jail system in the county is operated by the County Department of Adult Detention. The average daily population hovers just below 2,200, with an average length of stay of 13 days. The Department provides detention services for twenty-six of the cities in the county and six governmental agencies. The Department has perhaps the widest array of alternatives available to address crowding of the five sites, either directly under the auspices of the Department or through cooperative agreements with private contractors in the county. This may partially explain why King County has a very low incarceration rate for such a large jurisdiction.

FINDINGS

Besides describing the programs and procedures that each of the participating sites had implemented to reduce crowding, AJA also wanted to identify and describe the factors that had allowed the changes to take place, that is, those factors that were associated with the successful implementation of the identified programs and procedures.

Over the two days of meetings, site participants identified six factors. They were the establishment of a justice system advisory group, the accessibility of data related to crowding, judicial leadership, the use of consultants, community buy-in, and crowding lawsuits. Others were considered and discarded either because they were considered to be unique to a particular site's situation or because there was disagreement as to whether or not the factor had in fact reduced the jail population level.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUCCESSFUL POPULATION REDUCTION EFFORTS

I. Justice System Advisory Group

Participants from the sites were unanimous in identifying a justice system advisory group as probably the key factor associated with jail population reduction. First, such an advisory group allows local system participants to share the credit when reduction methods are successful and, just as important politically, the advisory group allows for the sharing of blame if unexpected results occur. A collective sense of responsibility allows policy-makers, especially elected officials, to make decisions that may not be very popular, such as

building additional jail beds (too expensive) or funding for nonincarceration alternatives (too lenient). Second, it creates a mindset that is manifest, in the words of a Portland jail administrator, by "...nobody mak[ing] a decision without thinking about the impact on the jail."

Site participants were adamant about certain characteristics for such advisory groups. First, advisory groups should be inclusive with representatives from the judiciary, prosecutor, public defender, local corrections, pretrial services, and probation as well as community groups that have an impact on the jail and appropriate county officials. Second, the rank of agency representatives must be at the highest level. The power of the group will disintegrate if delegates without policy-making authority are substituted. Third, the group must meet regularly. The King County advisory group holds meetings on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 A.M.; other participants echoed the importance of such fixed scheduled meetings.

While regularity is important, how often the meetings occur may well depend on the urgency of the crowding problem. For example, in Fairfax, Pinellas, and Volusia Counties, the advisory groups meet less frequently today--up to quarterly--than when crowding was first being addressed.

Finally, there must be a clear, substantive agenda for the meetings.

II. *Data*

The participants were unanimous in their recognition of the importance of having accurate data readily available. They spoke of how, when jail crowding was first being addressed in their jurisdiction, no one was able to say why the jail had become crowded. In some instances, no one could answer the most basic questions: “Who is, in our jail?” “How long do they stay?” “Who decides?” “Does everyone in there need to be?” Without data, it was impossible to respond to basic questions posed by the advisory group members. Initially, the advisory groups need jail-based data that generally can be obtained from the local corrections department. As the group begins to focus more on the causes of and solutions to crowding, data needs expand, requiring the assistance of the courts, police, prosecutor’s offices, or other local sources. The advisory group’s ability to trust the data and the source of the data was another key for confidence in the programs designed to reduce jail crowding.

Finally, the participants made it clear that the data that was gathered should not be limited to what was available; rather, the Advisory group should dictate, through its discussions and questioning of assumptions, the data that should be collected. This sometimes leads to surprising results. In Pinellas County, for example, a commonly held belief that “transients” or “outsiders” were the primary cause of crowding in the jail was contradicted when an analysis of the population showed the majority to be county residents.

(See Appendix B for more information on establishing a Justice System Advisory Group)

III. *Judicial Leadership*

The participants agreed that when addressing the issue of jail crowding from a systemic view, it was crucial that the local judiciary be very involved. Even when political and economic support were provided, the need for judicial involvement to be successful in making any long-term changes that would reduce the population--excluding. construction--was necessary.

IV. *Consultants*

The participants agreed that in some cases the use of consultants could help reduce the jail population. Their usefulness depended on the quality of their reports and the receptivity of the local system “actors” to their findings and recommendations. Some of the sites used consultants primarily to validate ideas that had already surfaced from system participants; others used them for identifying new programs and/or processes that might be introduced to the county. In at least one site--Volusia County--consultants were used to do both.

V. *Jail Crowding: A Community Issue*

The five participants agreed that by bringing crowding (and the work of advisory groups) to the forefront of community discussions, the likelihood of successfully implementing advisory group ideas increased. In Volusia County, this community buy-in was demonstrated when the police department sought recognition, in a well-attended public

forum, for changing procedures that resulted in decreasing the jail population. **Other** participants pointed out that achieving community support in addressing the crowding problem made achieving financial support for specific alternative programs much easier.

VI. *Lawsuits*

An assumption held by many jail administrators--that a lawsuit would spur action to relieve crowding in their jurisdiction--was challenged by site representatives during the meeting. Examples were discussed of jurisdictions that had been operating under a suit for years (in some instances, decades) without relief being achieved. Therefore, while recognizing that a suit, or even the threat of a suit, could be catalytic in addressing crowding, they emphasized that by itself such action would not relieve crowding. It is incumbent on the jail administrator to use the lawsuit as an opportunity to provide accurate data as well as viable options for county officials, since a lawsuit can serve as an opportunity for all concerned to seek long-term, systemic solutions to the crowding problem.

SUCCESSFUL CHANGES INTRODUCED TO ALLEVIATE CROWDING

The specific changes reported by site participants as successful in reducing their jail population could be divided into two categories: those changes that affected the way persons or cases were processed through the system, and new or modified programs that

were introduced to relieve crowding. In most of the sites, both types of change were implemented.

The participants' experiences validated an assumption of both AJA and NIC, that it is unlikely that a particular program or process change will immediately relieve crowding. For most systems, the problem and its solutions take on more complexity. What appears to be more likely is that a number of changes are necessary, which if taken together, can achieve success. It was also clear from the site participants' experience that a particular combination that works in one site did not work in others. The causes of crowding (from which reduction strategies were developed) are not only complex but unique.

Six process changes were highlighted by the site participants and five programmatic changes.

PROCESS CHANGES

1. Establishing Timeframes for Case Disposition

One of the most successful means of reducing the jail population cited by the site representatives was the establishment of timeframes for case processing when none previously existed. The results that followed were fewer continuances, "fast tracking" incarcerated pretrial cases, and a systematic monitoring of court calendars that highlighted cases taking more than the average time to disposition.

Attendees cautioned that, while easy to describe, such changes involved a political process and had to be viewed as such. What might appear to be a good idea on its face--speeding up dispositions--might be viewed differently by various actors. Public defenders might not oppose having their clients' cases continued--even when incarcerated--since doing time in the local jail might be preferred to state prison time. Prosecutors might want to retain control of the calendar. Finally, judges might feel that if the parties in a case agreed to continue a case, then a continuance should be automatic. Still, participants agreed that the benefits that resulted from establishing case processing timeframes were long-lasting and worth targeting.

2. Probation Violation Hearings

Three of the sites cited changes in the way that probation violation hearings were scheduled which reduced the jail population. Standard practice tended to be that persons on probation, arrested for a probation violation or for a new charge, often waited in jail for an inordinate period of time until the sentencing judge could schedule a hearing. When a check of records in King County confirmed a complaint by the defense bar that persons charged with simple technical violations were held in jail for a long time, Department staff met with judges to discuss how such cases could be accelerated. It was decided that for certain violations, the case could be brought immediately before a sitting judge, with the sentencing judge being notified of the outcome of that hearing. In Multnomah County, it was agreed that probation violations would appear on the next arraignment calendar to be

dealt with, unless the probation officer in the case objected. In addition, the Probation Department was authorized to immediately sanction certain types of violations, including sentences of up to thirty days in jail. This eliminated a significant number of jail bed days that had been used up by persons simply waiting for a violation hearing to occur.

3. Deferred Sentencing

One of the sites--Pinellas County--talked about its use of deferred sentencing as an option that allowed the Sheriffs Office to have some control over population fluctuations. Basically, the Sheriffs Office was given the authority, in certain prescribed cases, to schedule when an inmate would be required to come to jail to serve his sentence. Officials pointed out that this gave them the flexibility to prevent severe crowding that often occurred on weekends before they were given such authority.

4. Reducing Presentence Investigation Time

In their attempts to reduce the jail population, sites targeted the time between adjudication and sentencing. In Volusia County, concerted efforts by key actors decreased the number of inmates held awaiting sentence in the jail from an average of 114 to 10. In Ring County, the Department, working with the judiciary developed an abbreviated Presentence Investigation form that not only cut down on the time required to prepare for sentencing, but also freed up probation staff time for more supervision. In Multnomah

County, a short form was similarly developed, resulting in a decrease in the average presentence investigation time by approximately two weeks.

5. Establishing a Drug Court

In 1991, Multnomah County began a drug court program, similar to the model first established in Miami, Florida. The program, titled Sanctions, Treatment, Opportunity, Progress (STOP), basically sets up a separate court track with diversion potential for drug involved defendants. Selected defendants are given immediate access to drug treatment, acupuncture, and counseling. In addition, at regularly scheduled hearings, the defendants talk with the judge about how they are doing. The results have been very promising, particularly when compared with the recidivism rates of nonparticipating addicts or program drop-outs. Data from 1993 shows that program dropouts had a 54 percent recidivism rate, compared to a 15 percent rate over a twelve-month follow-up for those who completed the program. Since a significant portion of the cases admitted to STOP would have otherwise been detained, either pre-adjudication or after revocation, the impact on the jail population is significant.

6. Mental Health Interventions

As in most jails, site representatives have had to contend with an increasing number of inmates who have mental disabilities, a population that local corrections is rarely qualified to deal with. In King County, the Jail Committee established a Mental Health

Work Group to analyze the problem and make recommendations. The Group recommended doubling the size of the mental health diversion program that currently existed, and making remodeling changes in the facility where such inmates were held. Both recommendations were accepted by the Committee and implemented. In Pinellas County, the Department established an In-House Forensic Program, a three-tiered program of varying levels of treatment that prepared detainees to go to trial on their charges, and allocated some 40 beds for the Program to help decrease the amount of time defendants were held in jail for competency hearings.

PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES

1. Pretrial Screening and Supervision

The largest identifiable population group in jails is pretrial defendants -- those persons charged and held pending disposition as a result of inability to make bail (or in some instances, held without bail). It was not surprising, therefore, that all of the site participants described efforts to reduce the number of pretrial detainees. All of the sites described proactive actions taken either to expand or to initiate pretrial services to decrease the jail population. Pinellas County estimates that their pretrial screening and supervision program in 1993 saved the jail 414,881 bed days, which translates into a \$15 million dollar savings to the county. Volusia County revamped its existing pretrial services, brought in a new director, and significantly expanded the pretrial options available to the court, resulting in a decrease in pretrial detention. Multnomah and King Counties both started programs

that screened persons who had not qualified for their existing Release on Recognizance (ROR) programs, ensuring that they would tap a population that otherwise would have remained in jail. Even with this- focus on more serious felonies, Ring and Multnomah Counties estimate that they average 155 defendants in their Supervised Release Program at any one time.

2. Forest Program

In Multnomah County, the Department of Community Corrections has developed a program for short-term sentences -- a substantial number, given the sentencing guidelines in Oregon -- and probation violation cases that involves week-long sentences to a forestry work camp outside of the city. Inmates are picked up on Sunday evening and transported to a work camp where they work for the week clearing brush and trees and are returned to Portland on Friday evening.

3. Day Reporting Program

Multnomah, Ring, and Fairfax Counties all discussed their jurisdictions' experiences with Day Reporting Programs. While each jurisdiction's program varied significantly as to the responsibilities of the client as well as program structure, all of them targeted sentenced prisoners and required reporting daily to a specific location. In Multnomah County where the program started approximately six months ago, the clientele come

primarily from probation violation cases. The probation department used the program as an alternative to the previous practice where violators were incarcerated.

4. Drug/Alcohol Programming

The sites reported a significant number of inmates that had drug and/or alcohol problems which resulted in the creation of a number of programs' to address this difficult target group. In Fairfax County, an Intensive Addiction Program was created. In Pinellas County, the ACTS program (Agency for Community Treatment Services, Inc.) takes people from jail for long-term, in-house treatment programs (minimum 180 days). In Ring County, a unique facility -- the North Rehabilitation Facility (NRF) -- is used for in-house alcohol and drug treatment, often treating persons transferred directly from the downtown jail. Primarily housing misdemeanants, the facility is used for detainees that would otherwise be in jail.

5. Electronic Monitoring (EM)/Home Detention

Most of the sites had begun to use some form of electronic monitoring, sometimes under the title of "Home Detention," although it was not clear whether in each instance it was being used in lieu of incarceration or was simply added to the existing probation conditions. In Ring County, however, the Department was able to show a clear savings of bed days attributed to the program by controlling program access. This was accomplished by convincing the local judiciary to grant administrative authority to the Department to

assign inmates to EM, within agreed upon criteria. King County's experience with EM was unique in one way. Staff in the Department, in examining cases that were terminated, found that the reasons for termination were never related to absconding; in every case the violation was for drug and/or alcohol violations. As a result, the County has discontinued the use of the EM "bracelet," and has substituted a voice recognition reporting system at a substantial cost savings.

CONCLUSION

After the five-site meeting, a number of conclusions about jail crowding remedies was evident. First, changes take time, usually measured in years. However, once the mechanisms are in place to accomplish the changes--specifically the jurisdiction-wide planning group--the pace that changes are implemented accelerates.

Second, while all of the sites had measurable success in reducing their jail population, it was noteworthy that none of the representatives at the meeting were satisfied; it was illustrative that each was more interested in learning about new ideas or projects from his/her peers at the meeting than discussing his/her own history.

Seattle, for example, was recently chosen as one of thirteen sites to take part in a national Intermediate Sanctions Project, jointly sponsored by the State Justice Institute and the National Institute of Corrections. The goal of the Project is to reassess the use and

level of sanctions, the consistency of sentencing practices, the factors influencing sentences imposed, and the impact of sentences on the jail population.

Third, the attendees felt that the most important lessons they had learned were not, in fact, about which program or process change could be implemented to reduce their population. Instead, it was the process -- sometimes a difficult one -- of getting all the key criminal justice and political actors to sit down and address the problem -- not just once, but on an ongoing basis that was key for them. Once these meetings began to occur, the specific solutions that each developed flowed quickly.

Finally, these experienced professionals assumed that jail population reduction efforts will not reduce crime, affect legislative changes, or affect political changes within a county -- just a few of the variables that they knew dramatically affect the number of beds a jurisdiction will require. But they also knew that they had a professional responsibility to do all in their official power to ensure that the scarce county resource of jail beds was used sparingly, and that the persons in jail were held there no longer than necessary. In the final analysis, that was the common purpose for their participation in this project.

APPENDIX A

AMERICAN JAIL ASSOCIATION/NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CORRECTIONS

JAIL POPULATION REDUCTION STRATEGIES

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APPENDIX B

Elements/Strategies for Developing a Successful

Criminal Justice Committee*

1. There must be an understanding among the key players in the local criminal justice system. Specifically, all parties must understand and accept that a burgeoning jail population is not a jail problem, rather, it is a community issue which requires shared responsibilities among all of the criminal justice agencies and local officials.
2. In selecting persons to represent the various criminal justice agencies and elected officials on the Committee, great care must be taken to ensure that those persons have: a) not only a willingness, but a desire to serve in that capacity; b) a schedule that will permit them to devote the necessary time to the Committee; and, c) the ability to be open to new ideas and accept change. A high office-holder may be the best person to establish the Committee and to select a Chair for the Committee. In addition, this person may also be the right individual to invite selected representatives to serve on the Committee.
3. There must be clear and concise statements illustrating the Committee's mission/purpose, goal(s), and objectives. The Committee members must know why the Committee exists, what it wants to do, and when it wants to have it done. The Committee Chair should set specific dates for when the Committee will meet, establish agendas for those meetings, and set requirements for when ideas, recommendations, suggestions, etc., are due and to whom they should be sent.

4. Before the Committee can begin addressing any issues, ample time must be given to a sharing of data and educating each party on how the other performs their functions within the criminal justice system. Recommendations for change, decision-making, policy implementation, etc., come after all parties understand how each agency operates, the issues that each agency faces, and the political realities that affect the criminal justice system and elected officials.

5. Once the Committee members are thoroughly informed about the other criminal justice agencies, the Committee can begin to address strategies for reducing or slowing the growth of the jail population. During this process, the Committee should make a list of all of the ideas and recommendations that are presented by members. It is important that the Committee not overlook any idea or recommendation that is made -- some of the most simplistic ideas, such as a minor paper processing change, can result in tremendous outcomes. It is also important that all recommendations be scrutinized and submitted for careful analysis to determine whether or not they will result in meeting your goal(s). For example: The recommendation is made that the county jail establish an electronic monitoring program. If this recommendation is followed, what will be the outcomes? Will it reduce the jail population and if so, by how much? Will it slow the growth of the jail population and if so, by how much? Will it actually increase the level of incarceration by widening the net? How much will it cost to implement and operate? How much will it save?

With proper attention paid to analyzing Committee recommendations, implementation of new ideas can be made and positive, measurable outcomes can be obtained.

* Based on King County's experience.