

ADDITIONAL FACTS

Justice Reinvestment Initiative

- Across the United States, state, local, and federal agencies and other organizations are marshalling efforts to address the underlying forces that contribute to the United States having the highest incarceration rate in the world, resulting in billions of taxpayer dollars being spent that could otherwise be invested in other public outcomes.

Source: The International Centre for Prison Studies reported a 716 per 100,000 of the national population.

- Over the past ten years, Fulton County's justice system has implemented a series of reforms including improved case management, monitoring of inmates awaiting trial, competency restoration programs, and anti-recidivism efforts. These efforts have made a significant impact, helping to reduce the jail's average daily population by nearly 20% – from 3,097 inmates in 2005 to 2,505 inmates in 2014. Over the same period of time, both violent and property crime rates have dropped by 6.3% and 9.1% respectively.
- Although Fulton County has significantly reduced the Fulton County Jail population, the incarceration rate remains high (362 inmates per 100,000 county population), and it is estimated that 25% of the county's inmates suffer from mental illness. Additionally, County courts face major criminal and civil case backlogs, slowing the ability of the system to move cases to disposition in a timely, effective manner.

Sources: Fulton County Jail Staffing Analysis and Assessment 2014 (See forthcoming Morehouse Report for detailed mental health statistics)

Pre-Arrest Reform Ideas

Expand Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) Program and Mental Health First Aid Training

In order to enhance the County's capacity to effectively divert community members in need of behavioral health services prior to arrest, the County will expand the availability and elements of the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) program, provide Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety (MHFA) training to all new officers, and include MHFA as the first course in CIT training.

CIT programs are grounded in strategic partnerships with mental health providers and other community stakeholders who have the capacity to provide alternate destinations for crisis assessment and treatment, and can thereby divert individuals with mental illnesses who have committed non-violent misdemeanors from the jails. The 40-hour CIT course provides law enforcement officials with the skills they need to recognize the signs of mental illnesses, apply de-escalation techniques to prevent a potentially dangerous situation from evolving into a physical confrontation, and connect individuals who are mentally ill to appropriate local resources.

(more)

Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety (MHFA) is an 8-hour course that teaches officers and other first responders the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, teaches individuals how to help someone in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge and combats stigma. The course will be provided to all new officers, and will be integrated into CIT as the first component of the program. Both offerings will be taught by certified internal trainers.

Next Steps for Implementation

The following steps will be taken to enhance the CIT program:

- Review current CIT model and program curriculum to identify missing program elements
- Refresh the CIT model to include new training targets, updated courses, and the Mental Health First Aid training model
- Identify internal staff members who can serve as instructors for CIT and/or MHFA courses
- Provide instructor training and certification
- Deliver training to first group of the target population (i.e. officers who are most likely to come in contact with individuals with mental illnesses and/or more positively inclined to participate in the training)
- Monitor performance and make adjustments

Explore Expanded Use of Citations in Lieu of Arrest

The Steering Committee will collaborate with law enforcement agencies throughout the county to develop and adopt policies that enable officers to issue citations for motor vehicle violations that do not require an arrest by law, and typically do not result in jail sentences when the individual is convicted. The policy will clearly outline offenses that qualify for a “cite and release” as well as circumstances that would cause the same presumptive citation to qualify for an arrest.

Next Steps for Implementation

The Steering Committee will take the following actions to expand the use of citations in lieu of arrest across Fulton County:

- Analyze jail booking data within each jurisdiction to identify opportunities for expanding the use of citations in lieu of arrest
- Engage jurisdictional stakeholders (police and municipal courts) and help them to develop a plan to update their policies and training for frontline officers
- Train officers and implement policy
- Review performance of jurisdictions regarding their adherence to updated policy and share performance data with jurisdictions