

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/report-to-tulsa-county-stakeholders-jail-reduction-strategies>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Like many counties across the country, Tulsa County, Oklahoma has experienced a dramatic increase in its jail population over the past five decades, with the per capita jail incarceration rate growing nearly 200 percent between 1970 and 2016. In response to concerns about the continued growth of the jail population, its costs to taxpayers, and impact on the community, Tulsa County stakeholders sought the assistance of the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera). With support from the Tulsa County Board of County Commissioners, the Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation, and the George Kaiser Family Foundation, Vera began working with criminal justice leaders in Tulsa County in 2016. Together, they examined drivers of growth and overcrowding at the Tulsa County jail and devised strategies consistent with the county's public safety goals to reverse that growth. This report is the culmination of those efforts.

This report presents a wide range of strategies for Tulsa to chart a new course for its pretrial justice system. Decision makers in Tulsa possess the power to make these changes and should support each other to achieve a more just and equitable system.

Tulsa County's pretrial detention rate has risen more dramatically than the overall jail incarceration rate in the past three decades and has surpassed the state and national average for much of the last 20 years.

Many people are booked into the jail on municipal offenses and lower-level misdemeanor offenses. In most of these cases, there is no public safety priority necessitating their detention. Suggested alternatives include citation in lieu of arrest or book-and-release.

In the long term, Tulsa should aim to move from a cash-based system for making pretrial detention decisions to a risk-based one that provides for individualized release decisions informed by a validated risk-assessment tool and a range of pretrial release and supervision options.

PUBLICATION

STORY/CHAPTER

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