

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/new-york-citys-pretrial-supervised-release-program>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Policymakers and practitioners are increasingly raising concerns about the large number of people being held in jails pretrial across the US. The supervised release program (SR) in NYC is an example of a new approach to handling cases pretrial. SR gives judges the option to release some defendants who would otherwise be detained due to their inability to make bail. The City of New York has contracted with MDRC and Vera to conduct an evaluation of the program. This brief gives an overview of the program, how it operates, and initial findings based on interviews with key courtroom stakeholders and program staff. Future reports will provide comprehensive evaluation results.

Despite relatively progressive bail practices in NYC, over 75% of the jail population are pretrial detainees, most of whom are incarcerated because they cannot pay their bail. Supervised Release, started citywide in March 2016, gives judges another option to release people who would otherwise be detained because they cannot make bail.

Being held in jail pretrial may have consequences on employment, housing, and on the outcome of a case, as defendants are more likely to plead guilty if detained pretrial

Instead of setting bail on certain defendants, judges can place them in SR where they will be supervised in the community, notified of future court dates, and linked to voluntary services.

Demonstrated by the programs high enrollment numbers in the first year, SR has been an overall success. Defense attorneys and prosecutors interviewed about the program shared their concerns, suggestions for improvement, and opportunities for growth.

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