

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/a-look-inside-the-new-york-city-correction-budget>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in May 2020, nationwide calls for reallocation of law enforcement budgets forced elected leaders to consider the values underlying their budgetary choices. But discussions largely remained limited to policing. Few major U.S. cities took a hard look at the billions invested in their increasingly vacant jails. New York City spends far more than any other city to incarcerate its citizens, despite tremendous strides to safely shrink its jail population. Vera's initial 2021 policy brief shows how the New York City can reign in and reallocate the DOC budget, right size and transition jail staff, and close and repurpose the Rikers Island jail complex. The 2022 update revisits the DOC budget in the context of Mayor Eric Adams' budget proposal for FY 2023 as well as deteriorating jail conditions and DOC's crisis of absenteeism.

New York City spends more than any other big city in the country to incarcerate far fewer people. If the city truly cares about creating a fair, equitable, and effective justice system for the people impacted by it, it must reign in and reallocate the Department of Correction budget.

NYC's enormous corrections budget is driven not by programming, rehabilitation, and services for incarcerated people, but by a jail staff that far eclipses the jail population.

To realize cost savings and fulfill the city's pledge to close Rikers Island, the city must reduce staff and shutter facilities.

New York City should use cost savings from staffing reductions and facility closures to retrain and divert DOC staff to other jobs and careers within and outside of city government.

PUBLICATION

PROJECT

WHAT JAILS COST LANDING

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