

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/proposals-for-new-orleans-criminal-justice-system-best-practices-to-advance-public-safety-and-justice>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans, destroying not only the city's infrastructure and the lives of many of its residents, but also its justice system. To identify practical steps New Orleans can take to make its criminal justice system more reliable, effective, and just, the Vera Institute of Justice interviewed key stakeholders including justice system leaders, representatives of nonprofit research and advocacy groups, and several members of the city council and reviewed data on how the system has been operating after flooding devastated the city. Specifically, Vera's investigation indicates that New Orleans can improve public safety by pursuing the following new policies or programs: early triage of cases and routine communication between police and prosecutors; a wider range of pretrial release options, community-service sentencing, and greater use of alternatives to prison; and more appropriate and cost-effective sanctions for municipal offenses. For each of these policy areas, this report identifies specific areas of need and proposes solutions that are based on effective practices used in other jurisdictions. Moreover, it focuses on practical steps that over the next six to 12 months promise the biggest bang for the buck.

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