

OKLAHOMA COUNTY
**CRIMINAL
JUSTICE**
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice
Advisory Council
Midyear Report to Interlocal Partners

For the Second Quarter of FY 2024
February 2024



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Background

4 A tribute to Bob Ravitz

6 CO-OP program expands with new staff

7 DOC intake from Oklahoma County continues to drop

8 Oklahoma County jail population hits historic 27-year low

9 Conclusion



MEMBERS OF THE OKLAHOMA COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Clay Bennett, Chairperson

Tony Tyler, Vice-Chairperson (First Community Representative)

MEMBERS:

Sue Ann Arnall, Second Community Representative

Judge Richard Ogden, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma County District Court

Vicki Behenna, District Attorney of Oklahoma County

Craig Freeman, City Manager of Oklahoma City

Brandi Garner, CEO of the Oklahoma County Detention Center

Christy Gillenwater, President and CEO of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber

Wade Gourley, Chief of Police of Oklahoma City

Judge Philippa James, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma City Municipal Court

Tommie Johnson III, Oklahoma County Sheriff

Rev. Theodis Manning Sr., Fourth Community Representative

Brian Maughan, Commissioner, Board of Oklahoma County Commissioners

Brigitte Biffle, Interim Oklahoma County Public Defender

Scot Rigby, City Manager of Edmond

Vacant, Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Dan Straughan, Third Community Representative

LaShawn Thompson, Court Administrator of Oklahoma City Municipal Court

Rick Warren, Court Clerk of Oklahoma County

Amy K. Simpson, Secretary

Cole Marshall, General Counsel, McAfee & Taft

BACKGROUND

In response to the growing concerns about chronic overcrowding in Oklahoma County's jail facility, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber announced the creation of a special task force to evaluate Oklahoma County's criminal justice system in December 2015. With collaboration and input from a diverse group of community members, the Chamber contracted with the Vera Institute of Justice to complete an initial analysis and make recommendations for reform of the Oklahoma County criminal justice system. Vera released their recommendations in December 2016. As a central recommendation of the report, an inter-local agreement between Oklahoma County, the City of Oklahoma City, the City of Edmond and the City of Midwest City created the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC) in November 2017. The Advisory Council continued to evolve with the hiring of a full-time executive director in February 2018 to provide support to the CJAC's efforts. The creation of this permanent oversight body is key to implementing the proposed criminal justice reforms which can be summarized in these six key recommendations:

- Create oversight and accountability mechanisms for the local justice system.
- Reduce jail admissions for municipal violations and low-level misdemeanors.
- Create a fair and efficient pretrial release process that safely reduces unnecessary pretrial incarceration.
- Identify and address district court case processing delays that increase jail admissions and length of stay.
- Expand meaningful diversion program options, focusing on those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders.
- Reduce the impact of justice system fines and fees as a driver of jail growth and recidivism.

Although each of the six recommendations carries numerous challenges and barriers to improvement, the good news is that because of the cooperative effort of the Advisory Council's stakeholders, progress continues to be made on all six recommendations.



WE'VE LOST A LOT

Oklahoma County's Chief Public Defender, and CJAC founding board member, Robert "Bob" Ravitz made his closing arguments on January 23, 2024. The accolades he received in his passing were extensive and amazing. As the depth of love and respect for Bob from county and state leaders poured in, the impact of his legendary life and career began to come into overwhelming focus. At Bob's funeral, Scott Rowland, Presiding Judge of the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, and a long-time friend and humble adversary to Bob from his time in the Oklahoma County District Attorney's office, regaled the audience with tales of Bob's legal acumen. Yet, Judge Rowland turned the page to focus on Bob's accomplishments outside of the courtroom driven by Bob's humanity, tireless dedication to public service and zealous advocacy for the less fortunate in Oklahoma, not just in Oklahoma County. Judge Rowland quietly summed up his tribute by frankly assessing the situation: "We've lost a lot."

Then Judge Rowland shifted back into attorney mode and made this argument: "Because of what I've told you here, the impact that Bob Ravitz has had on law students, young lawyers, on clients of his, on our laws, on our county government, on our state government... Bob Ravitz is one of the most significant figures in the history of Oklahoma County so far, and therefore, in the history of the state of Oklahoma."

Prior to Judge Rowland making his case, a more personal tribute was given by his oldest daughter Rachel.

"Loud. If you ever talked to my dad, you know he had a loud, boisterous, passionate voice. Loud was my dad's voice to right the wrongs and stand up for the every day man. He was not afraid to speak loud for those voices that could not be heard," Rachel shared.

CJAC knew that loud Bob very well, and his passion and determination is self-evident in the various improvements mentioned in other parts of this report.

From his work as a founding board member of CJAC, other tributes came in.

From the Crime and Justice Institute:

"We met Bob in 2015 when Gov. Fallin invited CJI to Oklahoma to assess the state's readiness for an intensive examination of the state's corrections system. Thus began, for CJI, a nine-year relationship with Oklahoma that endures today. Bob was at the center of every task force, commission, study group and the like, fully giving of his time and experience. His commitment to improving the justice system in Oklahoma, at the local and state level, was relentless. His experience

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and stories brought humanity to dry discussions of data trends and performance measures. He also understood the size and weight of the rock that he continually pushed up the steep hill of reform, yet always seeing opportunities to make progress and to break down barriers. He made his allies hopeful and proud. And for those who had a different perspective, he advocated in a way that didn't demonize them and never made their differences personal. Oklahoma is a fairer and more just state thanks to Bob's efforts. We will miss him."

From a local data analyst:

"I'm so saddened to hear about Bob. I didn't get to work with him all that closely, but I remember from the first time I met him and heard him speak at a CJAC meeting, I was very quickly able to tell that he was one of the people who truly "got" it. When I was first dipping my toes into these issues back then, listening to him talk at those meetings was one of the first things that gave me some real hope and reassurance that things could get better."

From a fellow CJAC board member:

"My heart is saddened by the news of his passing but when I think about his character, his steady work ethic, the wisdom he brought to the CJAC table, and my personal memories of Bob, it causes me to smile! He served hard and he certainly made a lasting impact in the world of law and justice!"

CJAC moves into this new future with the daunting task to carry on our work in a way that honors his life, passion and service...and in a way that extends his loud voice against injustice.

Below is Bob's obituary commemorating his incredible life and legacy.

Obituary

Bob was born on July 15, 1952 in Miami, Florida to Bill and Toba Ravitz. He spent his childhood misbehaving, most notably getting kicked out of Hebrew school for disagreeing with the teacher. Luckily, that passion for arguing didn't land him in dire trouble; instead, he turned it into a passion. Bob went to the University

of Colorado for undergrad, and then to law school at Oklahoma City University. From there, he landed in the Oklahoma County Public Defender's Office – where he would become Chief Public Defender and stay for the remainder of his career. Bob was a passionate and outspoken advocate for criminal justice reform, staunchly anti-death penalty, and likely a thorn in the side of anybody who disagreed with him. He successfully argued *Cooper v. Oklahoma* before the United States Supreme Court where the Court unanimously concluded the Oklahoma standard for determining competency to stand trial was unconstitutional. He's been recognized with many prestigious awards and served on many boards – but those are all things you can Google. What the internet will not tell you is that when his kids were little, he used to chase his daughter, Rachel, around the house pretending to be one of the Winkie Guards from *The Wizard of Oz*. The internet will also not tell you that he drove through flooded streets and pouring rain to rescue his marooned daughter, Jenny, whose car was stuck in over two feet of water. Nor would the internet tell you that his granddaughter, Abby, gave him the affectionate nickname "Bob Bob" (likely because his wife, Diane, would always have to call his name twice. "Bob?... Bob!"). He chatted weekly on the phone with his sister, Tina, who shared his dedication to social justice causes. He loved sports, particularly the Oklahoma City Thunder, and was known to shake the walls with a robust and ear-splitting "LUUUUUUUUUUU!" when Luguentz Dort made a steal or scored a three. He was known to give both his sons-in-law, Josh and Alex, directions to places they definitely knew how to get to. He was married to Diane for almost forty years, the result of a successful blind date. Bob arrived late, but thankfully Diane didn't hold it against him. He was loyal, thoughtful, empathetic, loved to hike and travel, and had a warm and welcoming core. His family, friends, and colleagues will miss him terribly. He is survived by his wife, Diane, daughters Rachel Sievers and Jenny Ravitz Brightman, granddaughter Abby Sievers, sister Tina Ravitz, sons-in-law Josh Sievers and Alex Brightman, and Josh's parents Frankie and Bruce Sievers. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to TEEM - The Education and Employment Ministry or Diversion Hub.

CO-OP PROGRAM EXPANDS WITH NEW STAFF

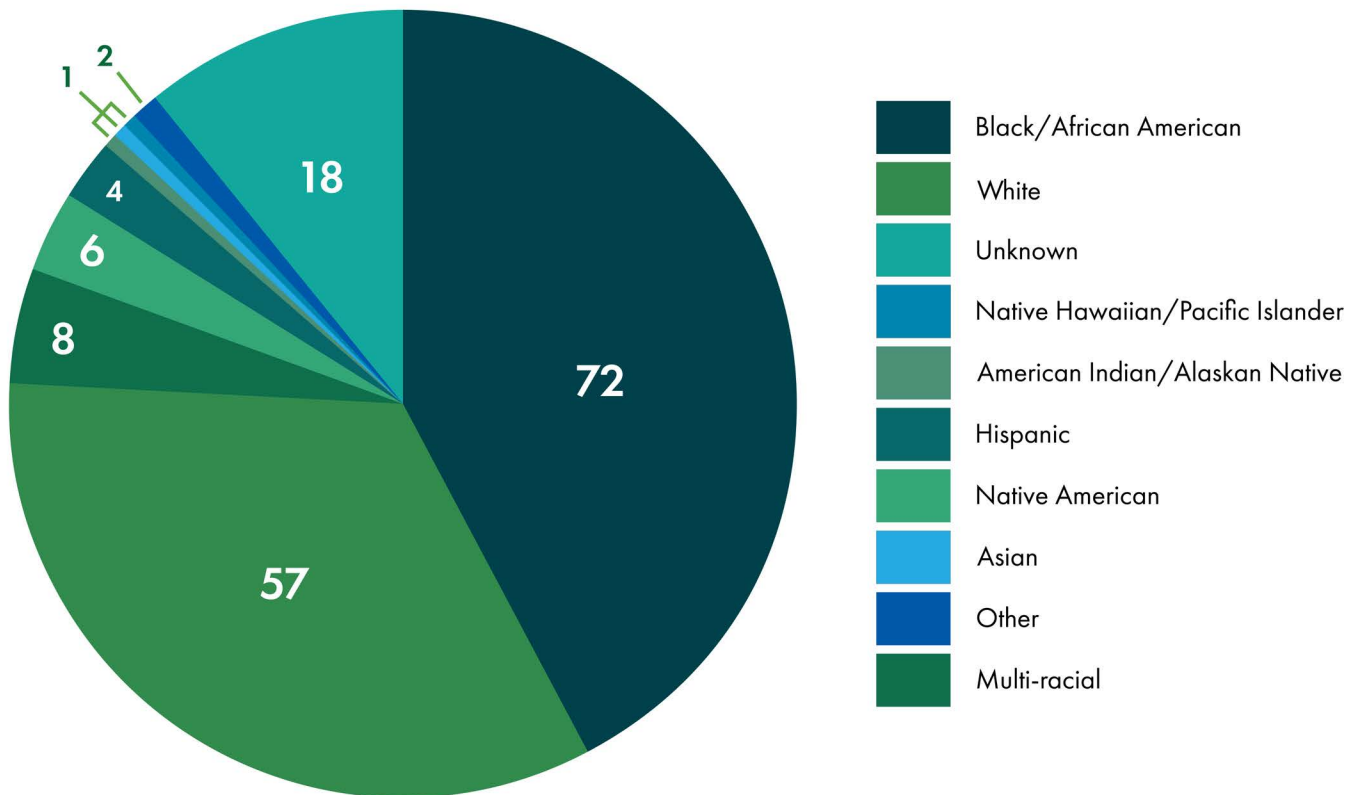
In less than one year, the new Court Ordered Out-patient (CO-OP) mental health diversion program has expanded to more than 160 participants. The program is likely to continue growing as the Oklahoma County Diversion Hub recently hired three recovery navigators who are embedded in the CO-OP Diversion Program. These recovery navigators are all Peer Recovery Support Specialists and graduates of the Oklahoma County Treatment Court Programs. The role of the recovery navigator is to assist clients with stabilizing needs such as housing, employment, applying for benefits and obtaining identification documents, as well as helping them maintain compliance with their outpatient services.

Recovery navigators assist in getting clients out of the custody of the Oklahoma County Detention Center and connect clients with their outpatient treatment providers to ensure they begin receiving services as efficiently

as possible. After connecting them to their outpatient providers, the navigators continue to provide clients support and access to stabilizing services while making sure they continue to make their appointments with their providers. The recovery navigators work closely with the courts, providing regular updates on clients' current situations and being an available resource for the CO-OP court staff and providers. Combining their lived experiences with the training they have received, the recovery navigators work tirelessly to provide a safe space for clients to go to when they are in need and help them in the process of becoming healthy, stable and independent versions of themselves.

Initial funding for these new staff members was through the Arnall Family Foundation but will transition to being funded through Oklahoma County as part of its \$2.5 million state allocation from SQ 781 proceeds.

Racial Demographics of CO-OP Participants



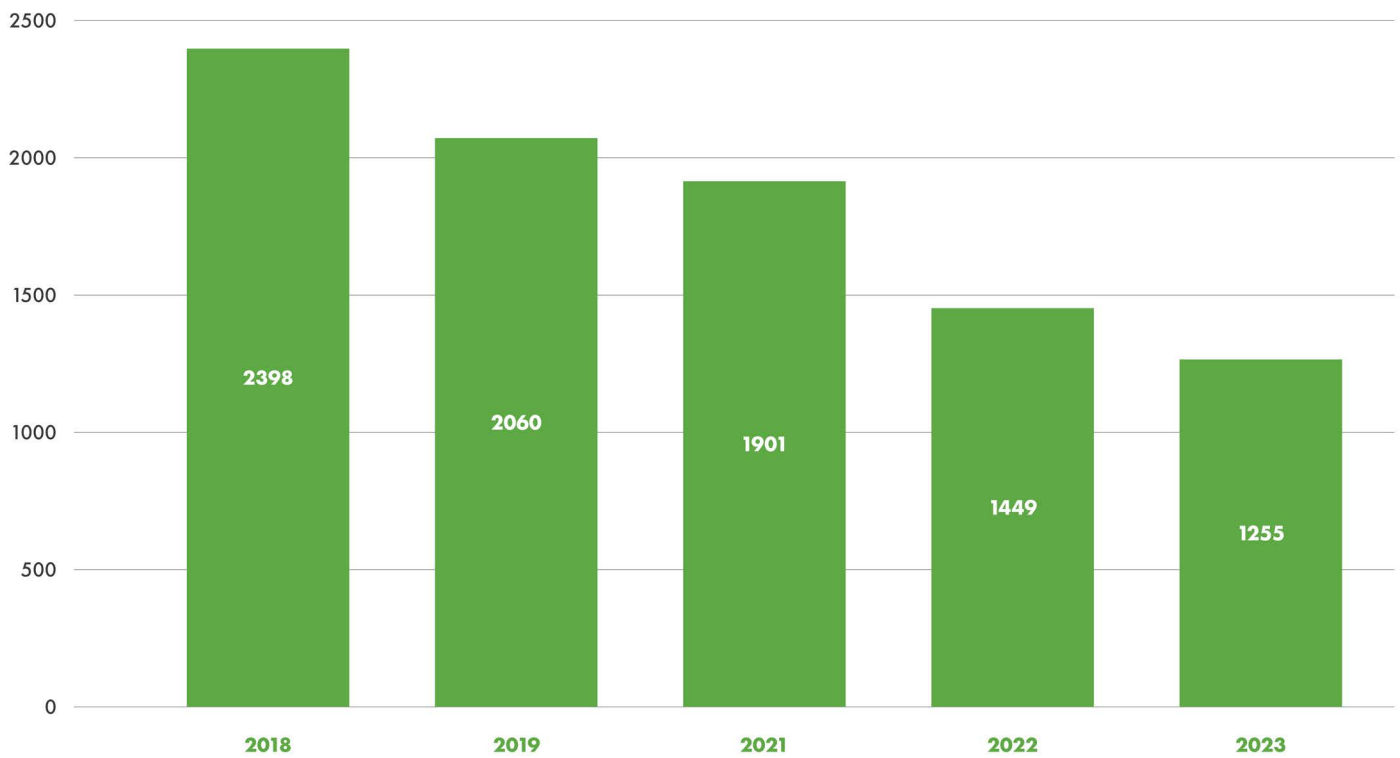
DOC INTAKE FROM OKLAHOMA COUNTY CONTINUES TO DROP

One result of the consistently declining Oklahoma County Detention Center population is a notable reduction in the number of people from Oklahoma County ending up in prison at the Department of Corrections. As the chart below shows, since 2018, the number of people from Oklahoma County who end their court process with a prison sentence in the DOC dropped by 1,143, nearly 48%.

A major contributing factor to this remarkable reduction is the expansion of diversion programs in Oklahoma County, including pre-trial release programs and alternative sentencing programs. For the Governor and Legislature, this sends a strong signal that a critical way to reverse prison overcrowding is to move state resources to county diversion programs just as State Question 781

intended. To that end, in 2023 the Legislature and Governor released \$12.5 million to counties to fulfill the promise of SQ 781. Oklahoma County, as the largest county in the state, received nearly \$2.5 million of that funding to expand nine different diversion and treatment programs. Such an expansion will only be sustained by continued collaboration between the Governor and Legislature in the 2024 session.

DOC Receptions from Oklahoma County*



* 2020 numbers were skewed due to the pandemic.

OKLAHOMA COUNTY JAIL POPULATION HITS HISTORIC 27-YEAR LOW

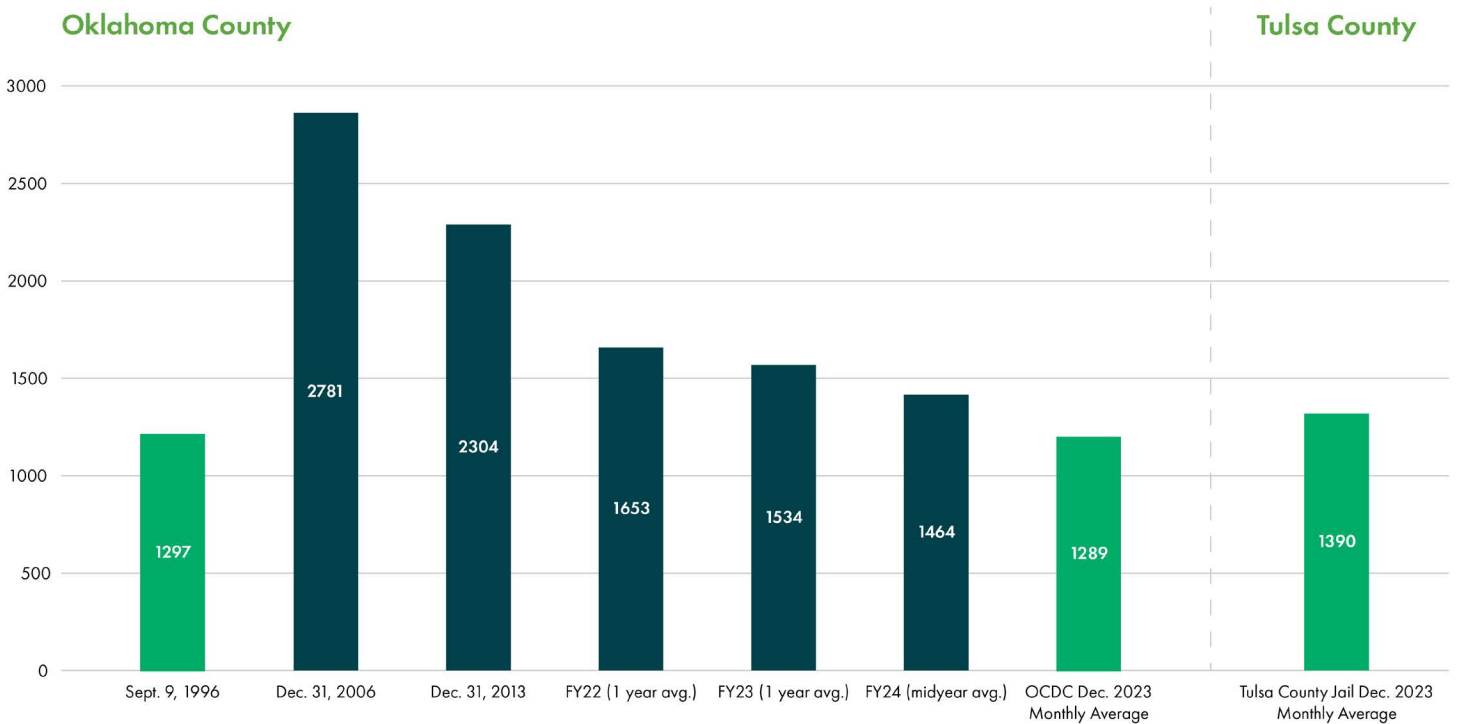
The end of the first half of fiscal year 2024 (FY24) resulted in two historic lows for the jail population in Oklahoma County. As the accompanying chart shows, since the pandemic, the Oklahoma County Detention Center (OCDC) population has steadily dropped and towards the end of 2023 reached historic lows. First, the December 2023 monthly average population of 1,289 reached a 27-year low. On September 9, 1996, the jail population was 1,297, higher than the December 2023 monthly average.

The second record for OCDC came at the end of November when the trend for OCDC jail population remained under 1,300, with a total count of 1,298 on Nov. 30. For that same date in Tulsa County, their jail population was 1,446. For the whole month of December, OCDC averaged 1,289 while Tulsa County's average was 1,390. It is remarkable that

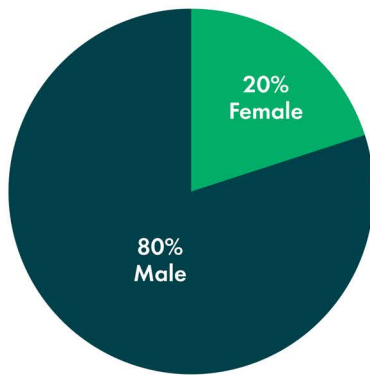
Oklahoma County's population is 125,000 higher than Tulsa County's, yet Oklahoma County's jail population is no longer the highest in the state. According to the Crime and Justice Institute's recent study, "Evaluating Oklahoma County's Progress on Reducing the Jail Population and Promoting Public Safety," they highlighted the decreasing Oklahoma County jail population as significant since Oklahoma County's population grew by 3.2% since the previous Vera Institute study in 2015.

It should be remembered that these historically low levels are in stark contrast to the incredible overcrowding that plagued OCDC for nearly all of this century and spurred the action toward sensible justice reform that CJAC and its community partners advance each day.

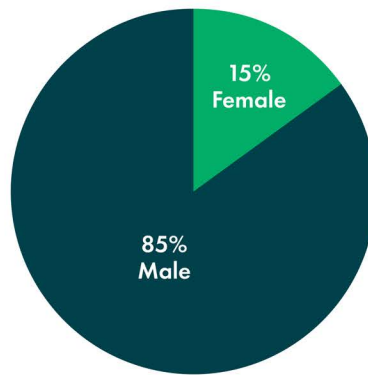
Total Average Population Jail Totals



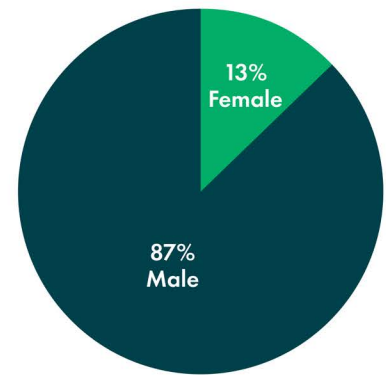
Gender Breakdown of Jail Population Comparison



Vera Report 2016

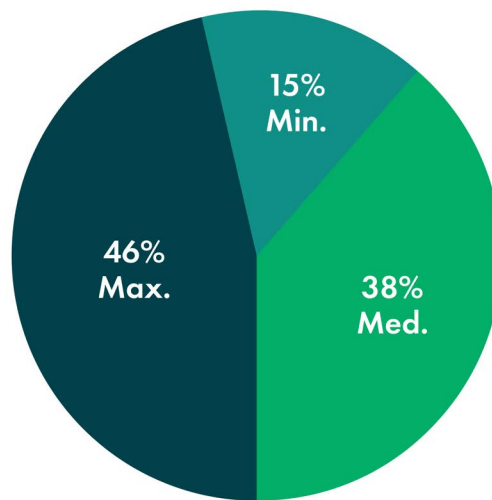


FY23



FY24 (midyear avg.)

Security Classification Midyear FY24




CONCLUSION

It's hard to imagine CJAC and the Oklahoma County justice system moving forward without a trailblazing pillar of a leader like Robert Ravitz. Yet, that is exactly CJAC's task. Oklahoma County justice system partners have much at stake to continue Bob's work to cement the positive reforms we've started, so they will endure for generations to come.

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