

OKLAHOMA COUNTY  
**CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE**  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice  
Advisory Council  
Quarterly Report to Interlocal Partners

For the Third Quarter of FY 2024  
April 2024



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## 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.



## 3Q HIGHLIGHT: MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES EXPAND WITH EDMOND URGENT RECOVERY CENTER

The City of Edmond, a CJAC partner, celebrated the grand opening of a new behavioral health Urgent Recovery Center (URC) in March. One of the well-known needs for the community is an expansion of behavioral health resources. This expansion is expected to help deflect and divert county residents from the justice system and jail. The grand opening was a hallmark to the success of public-private partnerships as several organizations supported the effort including funding from Oklahoma County Commissioners, private philanthropy and the City of Edmond. The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services also contributed to the URC through a \$4 million federal grant which will be allocated over the next four years.

CJAC Partner NorthCare was selected as the operator to provide an array of services related to

behavioral health and substance abuse services. The URC also includes much-needed youth and family services, including outpatient services.

Edmond Police Chief JD Younger heralded the new URC as a critical step to improving care in the community by helping residents know the access point for both crisis and non-crisis services. He went on to explain how the Edmond Police Department will utilize these services, "Instead of a resident being in a police car, they're in their own car. Instead of being in handcuffs, they're in a room getting treatment from certified treatment providers."

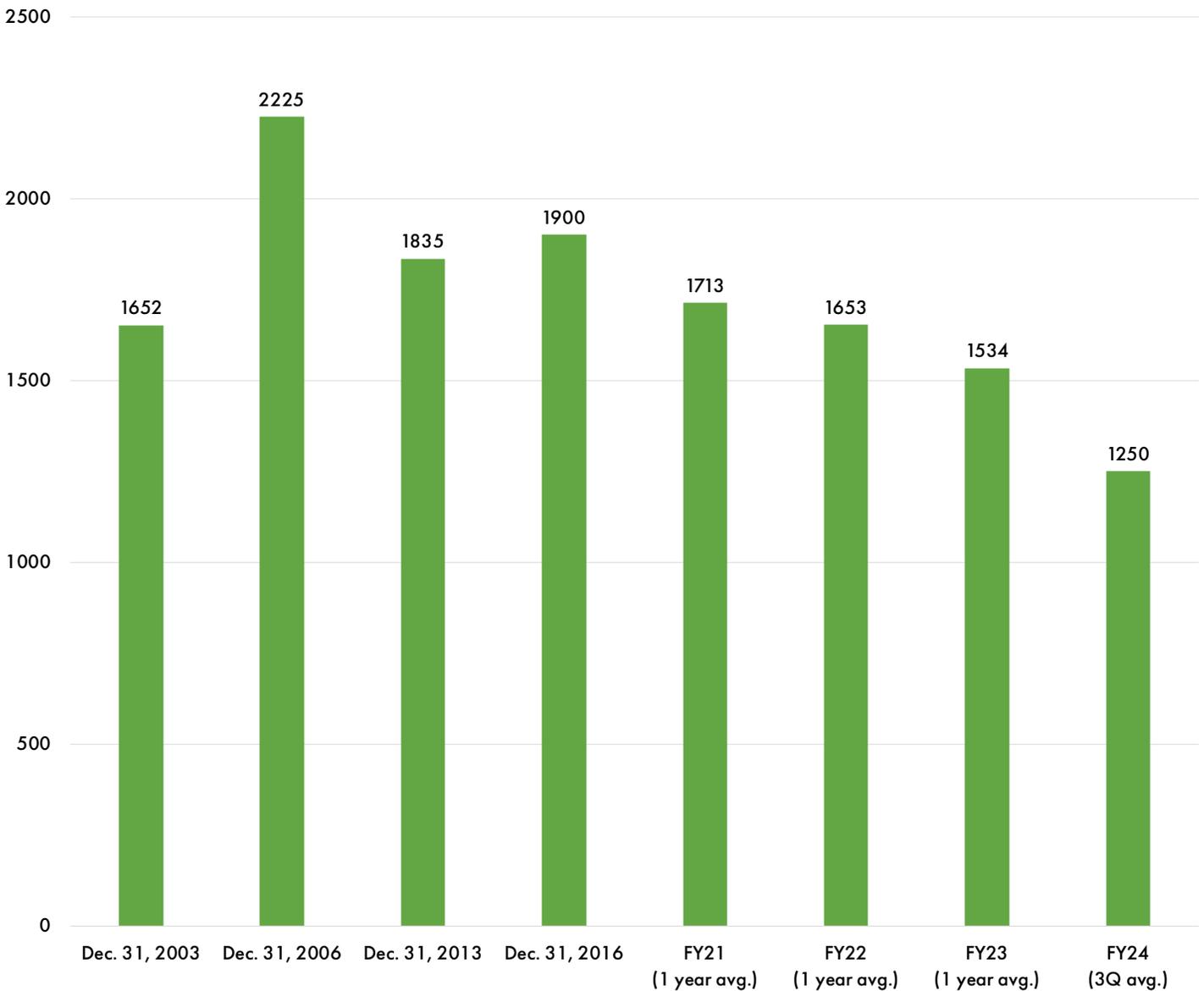
CJAC applauds Edmond for their attention to this critical community issue and stands ready to provide further assistance as needed.

# THIRD QUARTER JAIL POPULATION AVERAGE CONTINUES ONGOING DOWNWARD TREND

The third quarter of fiscal year 2024 is continuing the downward trend of the population average at the Oklahoma County jail. As the chart below shows, the total average for the jail population was 1,250. The third quarter average is lower than the previous two quarters and lower than the fiscal year 2023 average population of 1,534. As with

all of fiscal year 2024, if the new detention center opened today, the average population would meet compliance and be under capacity. This ongoing downward trend stands in stark contrast to the chronic and troubling overcrowding over the last two decades as represented by the left side of the chart.

## Oklahoma County Jail Totals Total Average Population



# CONSTRUCTION SET TO BEGIN IN 2024 ON MAPS 4 DIVERSION HUB FACILITY

As we continue to meet the human needs of our community, MAPS 4 included several projects that address behavioral health, justice reform and homelessness. In fact, nearly \$45 million was allocated for mental health and addiction facilities and services including transitional housing as unhoused residents leave the treatment facilities, and more than \$50 million was allocated to reduce homelessness. Additionally, another project to fund youth centers will provide prevention efforts that assists youth in healthy lifestyle choices and redirects them away from incarceration. One of the justice-related projects included \$19 million for the Diversion Hub and is on track to begin construction later this year.

The Diversion Hub, operating out of a temporary location since 2020, provides justice navigators and case managers to guide clients through the justice system to keep them out of incarceration. A justice navigator's focus is keeping a client in compliance with pre-trial release conditions and/or probation requirements. A case manager works with the justice navigator to identify what other life needs the client has to move them toward stability and self-sufficiency.



The new building, set to start construction in summer 2024, will provide a permanent home to the Diversion Hub to facilitate an expansion of services and give them more ability to handle the case volume that continues to grow. Meagan Taylor, executive director of Oklahoma County Diversion Hub, said the extra space can't come soon enough.

"In 2022, we served around 2,500 people. In 2023, we served almost 3,700 people. That is a significant volume for about a 12,000-square-foot facility. So, this new space will allow us to bring on more partner agencies and help more community members exit the criminal legal system and improve their lives," said Taylor.





## **CJAC WELCOMES NEWLY APPOINTED ODMHSAS COMMISSIONER ALLIE FRIESEN**

Since most CJAC members are appointed or elected officials, the makeup of the 19 members fluctuates from year to year. One of those appointed officials is the Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS). Recently, state law changed to make the position appointed by the Governor instead of by the ODMHSAS governing board. Governor Stitt appointed Allie Friesen in February of this year.

Prior to her appointment as Commissioner, Friesen was Director of Clinical Programs in Behavioral Health at INTEGRIS. During her tenure, she focused on developing cost-effective, evidence-based practices across the INTEGRIS healthcare system. Her responsibilities included improving access to care, enhancing patient safety and elevating the overall quality of care.

Friesen is a licensed mental health professional who specializes in working with individuals facing neurological disorders and other chronic medical

conditions. Additionally, she actively collaborates with community leaders to provide critical access to behavioral health services. In her first few weeks as Commissioner she has jumped right in on her community collaboration role. Friesen helped to open both the Edmond NorthCare Urgent Recovery Center and led the groundbreaking of the state's new flagship behavioral health hospital, the Donohue Behavioral Health Center, located on the campus of OSU-OKC. Both facilities will further enhance jail diversion options for those struggling with behavioral health instability.

Friesen's academic background includes studies at Texas Christian University and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, where she earned a bachelor's in psychology and master's in clinical rehabilitation counseling.

CJAC welcomes Commissioner Friesen and looks forward to working alongside her to extend her community collaboration efforts.

# \$2.4 MILLION IN SQ781 FUNDING BEING UTILIZED TO EXPAND TREATMENT AND DIVERSION OPTIONS

Funding approved by voters in State Question 781 is being deployed in Oklahoma County to address the much-needed expansion of diversion and treatment options. In 2016, voters approved a pair of criminal justice reform ballot measures known as State Questions 780 and 781. The first, SQ780, redefined some nonviolent and drug offenses from felonies to misdemeanors to reduce the state’s prison population. As the prison population declines from the SQ780 reforms, SQ781 redirects state budget cost savings to Oklahoma counties to support and implement diversion programs to keep the jail and prison population from increasing. In 2023, the Governor and Oklahoma Legislature allocated \$12.5 million through Senate Bill 844 to be allocated to counties based on population. Oklahoma County’s portion of that \$12.5 million was \$2.45 million.

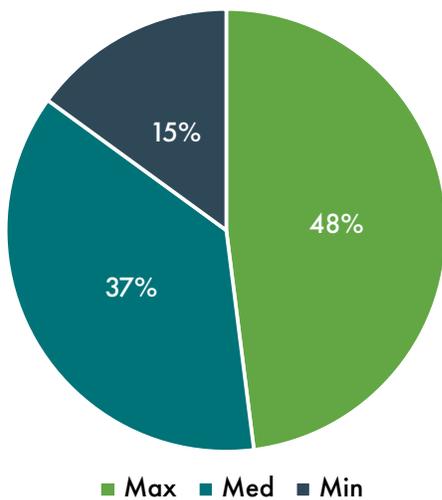
The Oklahoma County Commissioners partnered with the Oklahoma County District Attorney’s office, the Public Defender’s office and program providers to craft a plan on how to deploy that \$2.45 million. A portion of the funds will be used to expand the county’s pretrial diversion and alternative sentencing programs by hiring

additional attorneys in the District Attorney’s and Public Defender’s offices to ensure court cases keep moving towards the dismissal of charges. Additionally, the funding will go to hire new supervision engagement officers and recovery navigators. Finally, the funding will be allocated for transportation and housing services along with medication compliance services to make sure participants stay current with prescribed medication.

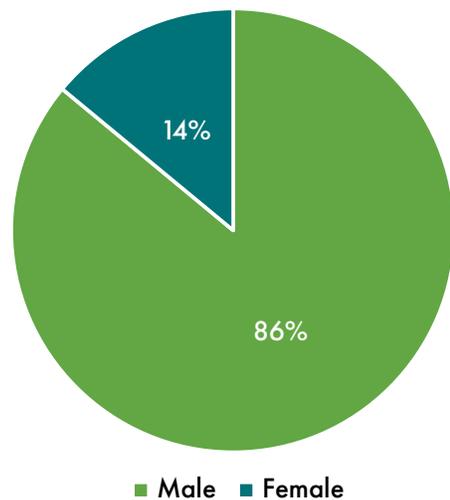
In the county’s funding application to ODMHSAS, they point out, “The goal is to enhance public safety by giving participants the foundation to maintain their recovery and reintegrate into their families and communities.” If not for these programs, there is little doubt that these participants would be in jail or prison.

The Governor, the Legislature and ODMHSAS should be commended for facilitating the will of the voters in SQ781. CJAC continues to work with legislators to expand the \$12.5 million in funding so these program expansions can become permanent.

**OCDL Security Classifications  
FY24 3Q Average**



**Gender Breakdown of Jail  
Population FY24 3Q Average**



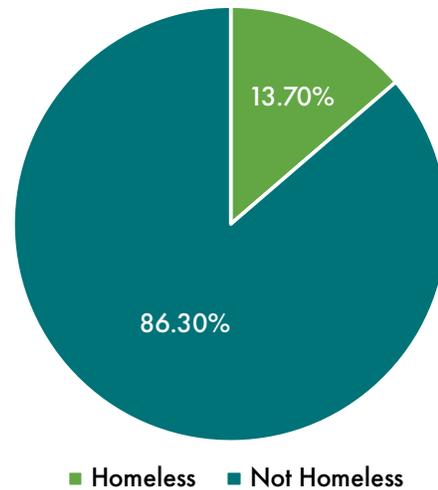
# JAIL POINT-IN-TIME COUNT RENEWED FOR SECOND YEAR

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates that all communities receiving federal funds through assistance grants conduct a Point-in-Time (PIT) count, which is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night. Each community is required to individually plan and carry out its PIT count on a single day during the last 10 days in January, at least every other year. Oklahoma City conducts the count annually, and this year, it took place on Jan. 25.

In previous years, the PIT count included numbers of homeless people who were in jail but when COVID hit, that count stopped. However, for 2023, the PIT count was renewed for the Oklahoma County Detention Center through a collaboration between CJAC data analysts, CJAC member Dan Straughan of the Homeless Alliance, and diversion liaisons imbedded in the jail. That effort continued for the 2024 PIT count.

The result of the collaborative effort discovered that there were 168 people in the jail on Jan. 25 who met the criteria of homeless at intake. The total jail population count on Jan. 25 was only 1,226, thus making the 2024 homeless count 13.7% of the jail's total population. This is a little higher than the 2023 homeless count of 11.1% due to the lower population of 1,226. The jail

## Homelessness Point-in-Time Count OCDC Jan 25, 2024 (Total 1226)



population for the 2023 PIT count was 1,463. The 2024 data also revealed that of those 168, only six were veterans. Oklahoma City has not yet revealed the total PIT count, but it is anticipated in the coming weeks.

As the City of Oklahoma City continues its great progress with the Key to Home program for the unhoused, and the Oklahoma County Veterans Treatment Court continues to grow, CJAC looks forward to working with government partners and community service providers to address this challenge.

## CONCLUSION

Each year, spring provides us the opportunity to observe new growth and renewal while also recognizing the areas where winter has taken its toll. This third quarter report bears similar markers of fresh growth with new, expanding behavioral health and justice system resources and an ongoing reduction in the jail population through diversion. However, this new growth and renewal is

tempered by the persistent problem of our unhoused neighbors facing incarceration. Yet, identifying justice system problems is the key to solving them and sets the task ahead for the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council as it pushes forward toward a more fair and effective county justice system.

# CONTACT



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