

Quarterly Report

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice
Advisory Council
Quarterly Report to Interlocal Partners



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MEMBERS

- Tony Tyler**, Chairperson, First Community Representative
- Sanford Coats**, Vice-Chairperson, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Representative
- Vicki Behenna**, District Attorney of Oklahoma County
- Brigitte Biffle**, Chief Public Defender of Oklahoma County
- Sue Ann Arnall**, Second Community Representative
- Ron Bacy**, Chief of Police of Oklahoma City
- Craig Freeman**, City Manager of Oklahoma City
- Christy Gillenwater**, President & CEO of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber
- Mankinta Holloway**, Court Administrator of Oklahoma City
- Judge Donald Kiffin**, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma City Municipal Court
- Sheriff Tommie Johnson III**, Oklahoma County
- Rev. Theodis Manning**, Fourth Community Representative
- Brian Maughan**, Oklahoma County Commissioner
- Judge Sheila Stinson**, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma County District Court
- Retired Rear Admiral Gregory Slavonic**, Interim Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Dan Straughan**, Third Community Representative
- Rick Warren**, Court Clerk of Oklahoma County
- AJ Krieger**, Edmond City Manager
- Melissa Walton**, Executive Director
- Amy K. Simpson**, City Clerk for OKC, Secretary
- Simon Bright**, General Council
- Jim Holman**, Fifth Community Representative

ABOUT US

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to independently assess our community's criminal justice system by analyzing the processes that lead to jail population, understanding how the decisions in the process are made, identifying the costs associated with processes and decisions, recommending priorities to responsibly reduce jail population with associated costs, and outlining long-term sustainability options.

OUR VISION

- An economical, efficient, and smart local justice system that reflects our values of fairness, compassion and good governance.
- A system of pre-trial detention that effectively prioritizes public safety through data-informed and evidence-based practices.
- Detention facilities that are safe and humane for both staff and detainees.
- Community oversight that is sustainable and continually strives for efficiency.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I want to take a moment to reflect on both the progress we've made and the challenges that we have recently overcome, as a community.

In the early months of 2026, the Oklahoma County Detention Center faced a significant funding shortfall. We're grateful to county officials for working together to maintain adequate funding for safe operations inside the county detention center. More than simply a budget issue, this is a matter of overcoming complicated circumstances to prioritize safety and human life.

CJAC continues to engage in efforts that strengthen our system. This quarter, I participated in the annual Point-in-Time Count. This initiative provides valuable insight into homelessness in our community, but it is important to recognize that individuals who are incarcerated for extended periods are not included under federal guidelines, highlighting the complex intersection between housing instability and justice involvement.

I also had the opportunity to participate in a Citizens Advisory Board listening session at the detention center this quarter. These sessions provide a channel for people in custody to share their experiences and for community members to better understand facility conditions. These sessions are highly effective in facilitating transparency.

Together, this work underscores CJAC's commitment to a justice system that is not only effective, but responsive to the people it serves.

OUR SIX-FOLD PLAN.

In 2015, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber created a justice reform task force with support from the Vera Institute of Justice, which identified six key areas for improvement now guiding CJAC's work. While some reforms are limited by state law, most can be implemented locally through collaboration across law enforcement, the jail, and the courts. These efforts aim to create a justice system that is safer, fairer, and more efficient, with meaningful progress already underway in Oklahoma County.

1 Justice System Transparency

The Criminal Justice Advisory Council fulfills this role by fostering coordination. It unites leaders from the justice system, the business sector, and nonprofits to drive lasting reform. The council uses data to design and implement countywide justice solutions.

2 Preventing Jail for Low-Level Offenses

Low-level arrests make up a quarter of jail bookings, slowing operations with little impact on safety. Keeping these individuals out of jail saves time and resources.

3 Evidence-Based Pretrial Decisions

Most people in county jail are pretrial, held only for an inability to pay bail. Risk-based strategies would improve fairness and reduce unnecessary detention.

4 Court Process Efficiency

Delays keep people jailed for months without improving safety. CJAC works with judges and attorneys to move cases efficiently from arrest to resolution.

5 Alternatives for Mental Health & Addiction

People who suffer from mental health or substance use disorders are overrepresented in jail. CJAC advocates for community partnerships to provide holistic solutions such as treatment, housing, and jobs instead of incarceration.

6 End Fines-Based Incarceration

Excessive fines trap people in a cycle of debt and jail, eventually costing taxpayers more. Smarter, compassionate approaches can resolve cases without punishing poverty.





Court Process Efficiencies

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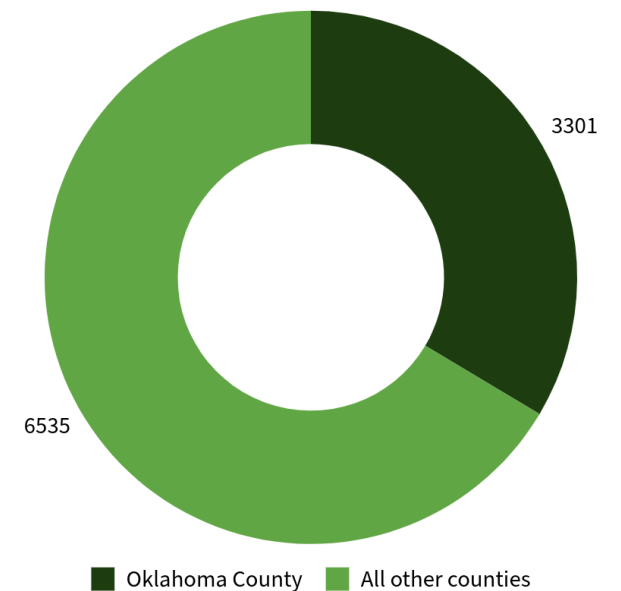
Text Reminder Implementation Improves Court Appearance Rates

Court text reminders continue a successful rollout. This simple and inexpensive tool has already proved highly effective in improving court appearance rates, thereby reducing unnecessary warrants in Oklahoma County.

Through the Oklahoma State Courts Network (OSCN), individuals can now opt in to receive automated text reminders 48 hours before their scheduled court date, helping ensure they do not miss critical hearings and face avoidable legal consequences.

CJAC has played an important role in advancing awareness and utilization of this tool as part of its commitment to addressing inefficiencies and improving outcomes for justice-involved people. Research consistently shows that missed court dates are often the result of logistical challenges, not intentional noncompliance. Simple interventions like text reminders can significantly reduce failure-to-appear rates and, in turn, decrease bench warrants to prevent avoidable jail bookings.

A key driver of this effort has been the marketing support of the Arnall Family Foundation, whose investment in promotional materials for print and media has helped expand outreach and education around the program. You can find these materials across our community partners and in the Oklahoma County Courthouse. In partnership with the Arnall Family Foundation and the Oklahoma Supreme Court, CJAC conducted targeted trainings for the Oklahoma County public defenders, ensuring attorneys are equipped to enroll clients in text reminders. This proactive approach embeds the tool at a critical point of contact within the justice system process.



Participation and Impact

Text reminders were launched as a pilot program prior to November 2025 across 14 counties, not including Oklahoma county. By December 1, 2025, Oklahoma County was able to begin offering court date reminder texts and on March 30, 2026 3,301 individuals were following at least one case. Across the state, 9,836 individuals have opted in, with subscribers in Oklahoma County making up about one third of all those enrolled.

As Oklahoma County continues to prioritize smart, cost-effective reforms, court text reminders represent a scalable solution that promotes accountability while removing barriers.

Two options to sign up

1. Visit [OSCN.net](https://oscn.net) and click "Court Dockets." Search by name or use your case number and county. Select "Get Text Reminders" under the events section.
2. Text "subscribe" and your case number and county code to 1-877-849-0889. Receive a text and reply "yes" to confirm.



Justice System Transparency

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The Cycle of Housing Instability & Justice Involvement

The annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count remains a critical tool for understanding and addressing homelessness in Oklahoma City, providing a federally required snapshot of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night. This data plays an essential role in shaping policy, directing resources, and ensuring transparency in how communities respond to housing needs. Housing instability and justice system involvement are deeply intertwined, making the data from PIT Counts important to CJAC's work.

This year, CJAC Executive Director Melissa Walton participated alongside many other local partners, reinforcing CJAC's commitment to cross-system collaboration and data-informed decision making.

Research consistently shows that housing instability and justice involvement are cyclical. Individuals experiencing homelessness are more likely to encounter law enforcement for low-level offenses, while even brief incarceration can make securing housing significantly more difficult. This cycle perpetuates both homelessness and recidivism.

The PIT Count is a vital step toward transparency, but it also highlights the limitations of current data. For CJAC, this underscores the importance of continued efforts to integrate data across agencies and better understand the full continuum of housing insecurity.

While the PIT Count offers valuable insight, it does not necessarily capture the full scope of housing instability among justice-involved individuals. Under federal guidelines, individuals who are incarcerated for more than 90 days are considered "securely housed" and not counted as homeless. In practice, this classification can obscure reality. Even short periods of incarceration can disrupt housing stability, sever rental agreements, and render individuals ineligible for certain housing supports upon release.



Preventing Jail for Low-Level Offenses; Warrants

Low-level arrests make up a quarter of jail bookings, slowing operations with little impact on safety. Keeping these individuals out of jail saves time and resources.

Clearing Warrants Prevent Justice System Entanglement

The Warrant Clearing Event held on February 27, 2026, was the most recent in a years-long initiative to help folks resolve warrants and reduce entanglements in the justice system. Hosted through a collaboration between the Oklahoma City Municipal Court and the Oklahoma County District Court, the event served 457 people.

By meeting people where they are and offering clear pathways forward, warrant clearing events serve as an important tool in stabilizing lives, reducing court backlogs, and strengthening trust in the justice system.

Hosted through a collaboration between the Oklahoma City Municipal Court and the Oklahoma County District Court, the event served

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Designed with safety and accessibility in mind, the event allowed individuals to address outstanding warrants for traffic violations, misdemeanors, cost warrants, and probation violations without fear of arrest. Removing the immediate threat of detention encourages participation from individuals who might otherwise avoid court engagement.

Transportation support provided by Diversion Hub helped ensure broader access, particularly for those facing logistical challenges. Events like this reflect a growing commitment across agencies to prioritize practical, community-centered solutions that reduce unnecessary incarceration while improving compliance and accountability.



Preventing Jail for Low-Level Offenses; Diversion

Low-level arrests make up a quarter of jail bookings, slowing operations with little impact on safety. Keeping these individuals out of jail saves time and resources.

Diversion Program Remains Highly Effective at Two Year Mark

The recently completed two-year evaluation of the Misdemeanor Diversion Program (MDP), supported by the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC), highlights continued progress in reducing system involvement while strengthening participants' long-term stability. Funded through a federal Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) grant and implemented with Diversion Hub and Red Rock Behavioral Services, the program provides an alternative to traditional prosecution by addressing underlying needs like behavioral health, housing, and employment.

The evaluation showed that hundreds of individuals have been served through diversion, screening, case management, and treatment services. To date, the program has diverted 690 cases from traditional prosecution, screened more than 300 individuals for eligibility, and connected over 200 participants to treatment case management, demonstrating both scale and sustained impact.

Data on program outcomes reinforces the program's effectiveness. Among participants who completed the program, 71.3% successfully graduated, with significantly lower rates of reoffending compared to the general jail population. At the two-year mark, participants experienced 51% fewer new charges and nearly 71% fewer jail bookings.

The evaluation identified two persistent barriers: housing instability and unemployment. People without stable housing (particularly those experiencing street or shelter homelessness) were far less likely to complete the program. Similarly, unemployment remains widespread among those working through the justice system. Employment has consistently been one of the strongest predictors of success.

Looking ahead, the evaluation raises an important question about how success is measured. While recidivism remains a critical benchmark, it does not fully capture the gradual process of behavior change. CJAC and its partners are increasingly interested in "desistance"—the long-term reduction and eventual cessation of criminal behavior. Recommendations from the evaluation call for enhanced data collection to better measure this progression, recognizing that factors like employment, housing, social capital, and access to resources all contribute to sustained change. Overall, the evaluation showed MDP is a highly effective intervention and perhaps a model to strive for in future system reform.

Recidivism vs Desistance

Recidivism noun

(re-cid-i-vism)

a person's relapse into criminal behavior; often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime

Desistance noun

(de-sis-tance)

process of individuals long term reduction of engagement in criminal activities; eventual cessation

Mental Health Contacts and Observations

Based on available data from the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority, often referred to as the Jail Trust, we have insights into the high demand for mental healthcare among those booked in the Oklahoma County Detention Center.

Mental Health Contacts

3,080 in January **3,061** in February

In January and February of 2026, detainees had 3,080, and 3,061 mental health contacts, respectively, with medical staff. Over the same timespan the average number of individuals who were under the special housing classification of Mental Health Observation each day was 315. For context, the average daily population of the jail over those same months was 1,484. These reports show the high demand for care. The development of the future Behavioral Care Center is a critical tool that can help meet the demand in a more sustainable and intentional way.



Jail Population Data

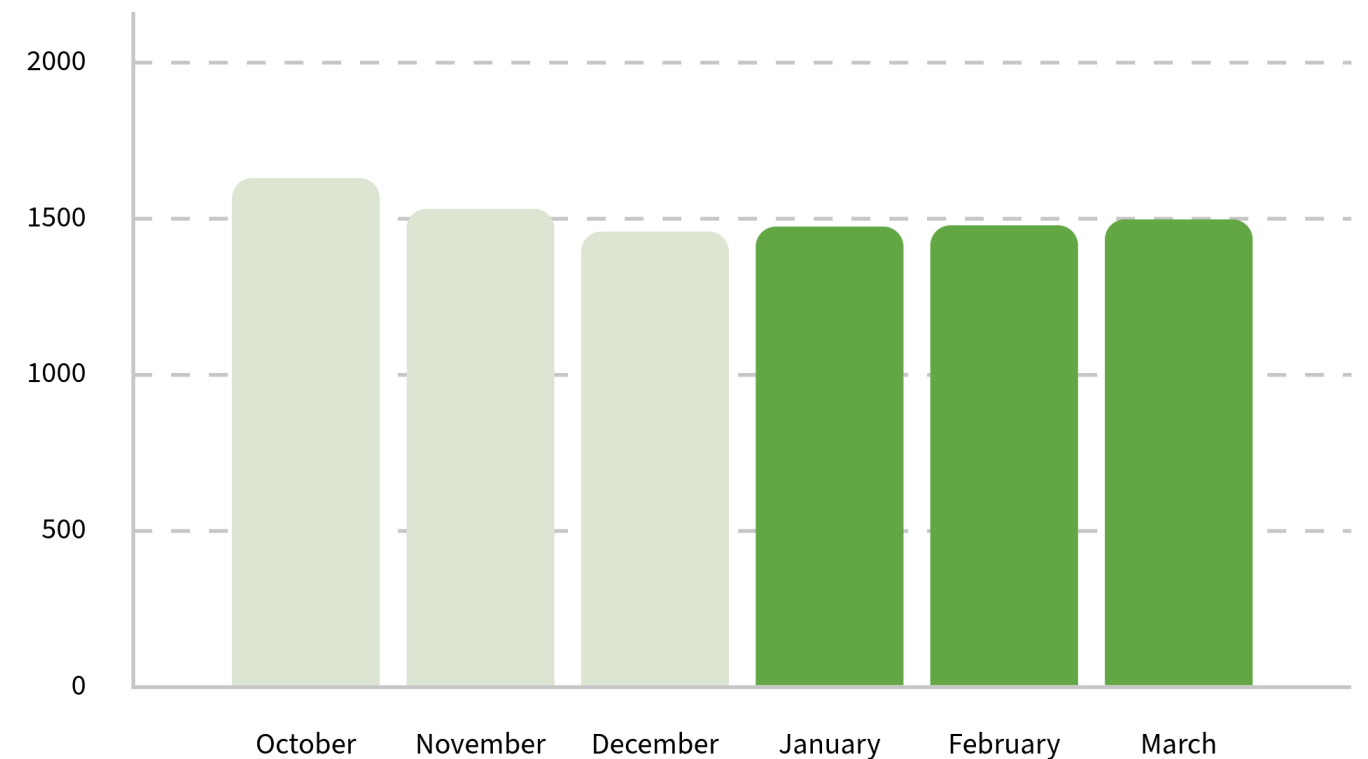
After a steady decline at the end of 2025, the Oklahoma County jail population held relatively stable in the first quarter of 2026, with a slight upward trend. The average daily population was 1,475 in January, 1,479 in February, and 1,498 in March. While this represents a modest increase over the previous quarter's low point in December, it remains well below the peak levels seen in mid-2025, when the population regularly exceeded 1,700 individuals.

This stabilization suggests that recent improvements in management and system coordination are continuing to have an effect. The slight increase is worth noting, but does not yet signal a reversal of broader progress. Continued attention to the factors that influence booking, release, and case processing, particularly for those with low-level charges and inability to pay bond, will be important to maintain and build on these gains.

The daily jail population breakdown remains publicly available on CJAC's website. It is intended as a tool for transparency, and as such it offers a nuanced look into demographics, charges, daily bookings and releases, among many other factors.



Visit the Detention Center Dashboard



OKLAHOMA COUNTY
**CRIMINAL
JUSTICE**
ADVISORY COUNCIL

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