

Improving Management of Jail Populations

Location:

Las Vegas (Clark County), Nevada

Organization:

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) and Clark County Detention Center (CCDC)

Description of the organization:

A joint city-county police force for the city of Las Vegas and Clark County, Nevada. LVMPD has more than 5,000 employees including 2,794 sworn officers and covers approximately 7,560 square miles with more than two million citizens. LVMPD is also responsible for the management and staffing of the Clark County Detention Facility.

Contact:

Richard Suey, Deputy Chief
 Email: R4284S@lvmpd.com
 Phone: (702) 682-9497

Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center

Phone: (855) 657-0411
 Email: contact@OJPDiagnosticCenter.com

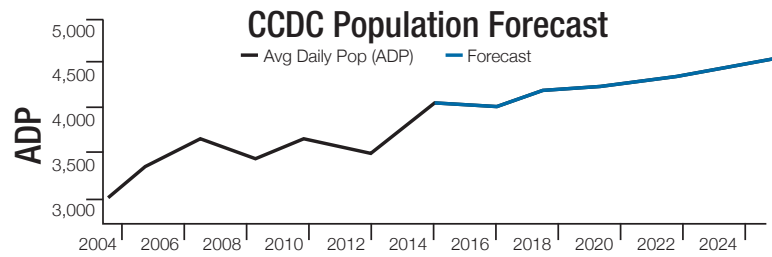
¹ http://www.lvmpd.com/Portals/0/pdf/Annual_Report_2015.pdf, Annual report pg. 13

Data-driven Programs and Practices Recommended to Address the Issue

- Adopt an evidence-based pretrial risk assessment to guide decision-making
- Establish a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to evaluate and implement ongoing justice reform efforts

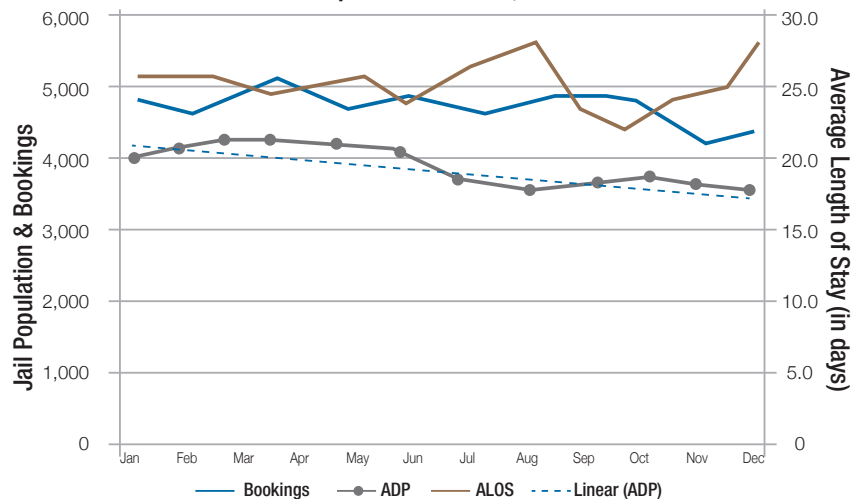
Overview

On July 1, 1973, Senate Bill 340 decommissioned the Las Vegas Police Department and the Clark County Sheriff's Department to establish the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, consolidating services previously performed by the local police agency and the county sheriff's department. These consolidated services include police services to the City of Las Vegas and the unincorporated areas of Clark County and the administration and management of the Clark County Detention Facility. As a result of the consolidation, the departments increased purchasing power, improved communication between departments and enhanced, overall efficiency delivering public safety services to the residents of Las Vegas and Clark County.²



Analysis predicts that CCDC's jail population will continue to increase at an approximate rate of 0.61 percent per year. CCDC is at 97 percent of capacity; national standards suggest capacity remain between 85 and 90 percent for proper classification and safety.

Clark County Detention Center Population Trends, 2015



Analysis concludes that detention center population length of stay trends are increasing—contributing to smaller decreases in daily population averages. Seventy three (73) percent of the detention center population awaiting trial in the month of December 2015, which is above national averages.

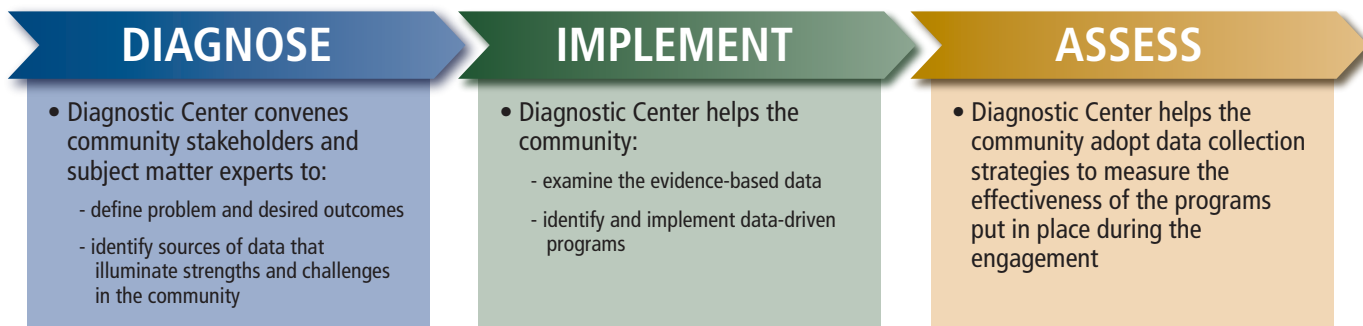
² <http://www.lvmpd.com/AboutLVMPD/HistoryoftheDepartment/Consolidation/tabid/158/Default.aspx>

Since 2013, CCDC experienced an increase in its average daily population and average length of stay, despite decreases in admissions. In 2014, the average daily population reached an all-time high of 3,907 per day and an average length of stay of 23.3 days, while the operating capacity was at 2,563 partially attributed to central CCDC facility renovations and unfunded bed space in a separate facility. This situation posed significant challenges for CCDC staffing efforts to deliver detention services in a safe and secure environment.

Former Deputy Chief, Charles Hank contacted the Diagnostic Center in August 2015 requesting training and technical assistance from the Diagnostic Center with the goal of improving management of CCDC's population to reduce overcrowding and enhance pretrial decision-making to minimize public safety risks and maximize resource utilization. The Diagnostic Center was tasked with identifying model practices to inform decision-making on how best to manage the CCDC population to enhance public safety.

The Diagnostic Center

The Diagnostic Center is a technical assistance resource provider designed to build community capacity to use data to make short- and long-term evidence-based decisions about criminal justice and public safety. Diagnostic Center engagements enhance the ability of public safety executives to collect and use local data to understand the jurisdiction's issues, make decisions about programs and practices and support efforts to integrate data and evidence into policies. The Diagnostic Center invests in what works by bridging the gap between data and criminal justice policy at the state, local and tribal levels.

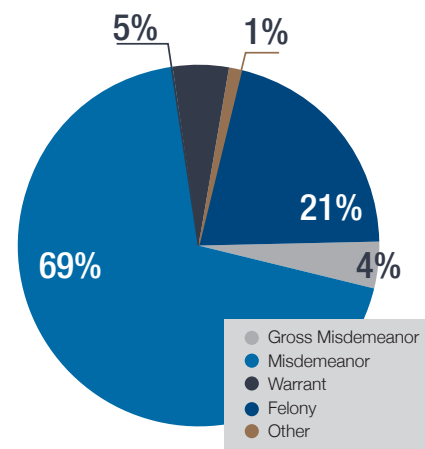


The Diagnostic Center Process

After being contacted by the LVMPD, the Diagnostic Center began its three step process to help the department better understand the factors contributing to increases in the jail population. During the Diagnose Phase, the Diagnostic Specialists collected and analyzed local data to assess the issue and then aligned findings to promising practices with demonstrated success in managing jail populations. That analysis identified six factors contributing to challenges in jail population management.

Factors Contributing to the Issue

- 1. No evidence-based decision-making practice for pretrial release.**
The vast majority of the jail population (73 percent as compared with a 62 percent national average) is comprised of pretrial defendants and there is no evidence-based decision-making process for pretrial release.
- 2. Lack of formal interagency coordination.**
No ongoing formalized structure to enhance interagency coordination and collaboration for the implementation of system-wide improvements.
- 3. Limited alternatives to incarceration to meet service demand.**
- 4. Insufficient data for pretrial and incarceration decisions.**
Current system lacks an evidenced-based pretrial risk instrument to guide decisions on release and there is no clear impact assessment of changes in bail schedule on lengths of stay.



A significant portion of the jail population are charged with misdemeanor offenses and misdemeanor probation violations; evidence suggests that a portion of the population may be better suited for alternatives to incarceration.

5. Insufficient resources for specialty court defendants.

Clark County does not have enough resources to support specialty court defendants, who can be held in custody while awaiting bed space in treatment facilities.

6. Limited ability to share data.

Disparate data systems inhibit analysis and information sharing across justice system.

Descriptions and Details of the Recommended Evidence-based Programs and Practices

Pretrial risk assessment

The pretrial risk assessment instrument is a researched-based questionnaire with weighted responses to inform court decisions on release for defendants in custody awaiting trial. A pretrial risk assessment provides a data-driven framework to enhance the decision-making process around pretrial release. Formulating decisions with the assistance of a pretrial risk assessment serves to:

- Minimize unnecessary detention of pretrial defendants
- Provide quantifiable metrics to identify low, medium and high risk defendants
- Reduce failures to appear in court
- Maximize resources of the criminal justice system
- Support release and detention decisions
- Improve public safety for all

Leveraging existing models, national best practices and other risk assessment instruments, the Diagnostic Center supported the customization and tailoring of an instrument to meet the specific needs and data requirements of the Clark County criminal justice system.

This effort generated statewide interest and complemented the work of the Supreme Court of Nevada Judicial Council Committee to Study Evidence-based Pretrial Release, established and spearheaded by the Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court. The Diagnostic Center engaged other county- and municipal-level jurisdictions to collect data to inform tool customization to test and pilot the pretrial risk assessment. The Diagnostic Center provided guidance on tool implementation and delivered accompanying training to judges, court administrators, prosecutors, defense attorneys and law enforcement officials across four pilot sites throughout the state of Nevada.



Interagency coordination

Clark County stakeholders demonstrate a strong willingness to collaborate to address specific challenges within the justice system, but currently lack a formalized structure to support reform implementation. A Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) is the term used "to describe a body of elected and senior justice system leaders that convene on a regular basis to coordinate systemic responses to justice problems."³ A formalized multi-disciplinary entity, such as a CJCC, charged with the review, evaluation and the implementation of justice-focused reforms serves to identify and develop strategies to address factors contributing to changes in the jail population as well as other short- and long-term challenges in the justice system.

The Diagnostic Center supported the delivery of technical assistance in strategic planning to formalize partnerships across components of the Clark County criminal justice system to identify and prioritize key issues in the justice system for improvements. The Diagnostic Center intends to support a peer exchange with the CJCC of Washington, DC to witness first-hand interagency coordination processes under the CJCC framework. Leveraging existing models and lessons learned from the National Network of CJCCs, Clark County stakeholders can maximize resources and increase efficiencies to enhance their capacity to implement justice reforms.

³ <http://www.jmijjustice.org/network-coordination/national-network-criminal-justice-coordinating-councils/>

Community's Response

Multiple stakeholders from all facets of the Clark County criminal justice system engaged in the Diagnostic Center process. Stakeholders included representatives from the Clark County Manager's Office, Public Defender's Office, Office of the District Attorney, Las Vegas Justice and District Courts, Nevada Department of Corrections, Parole and Probation, Pretrial Services Division, the House Arrest Program and the Police Departments of Henderson and North Las Vegas. Cross-coordination, communication, data collection and information sharing improved among these stakeholders as a result of them working together to collectively reform elements of the criminal justice system.

The Clark County stakeholders recognize the value of a pretrial risk assessment tool as well as a formalized working group to address ongoing challenges with the rising jail population. The County, and consequently the State of Nevada, adopted a customized pretrial risk assessment that is being implemented on a pilot basis across various jurisdictions throughout the state of Nevada.

In addition, the County is working to establish the Clark County CJCC and anticipates receiving ongoing technical assistance to develop and implement a strategic plan that prioritizes additional justice-focused reforms and identifies accompanying outcome metrics.

Impact and Outcome

In the brief time since the Diagnostic Center provided LVMPD with its Diagnostic Analysis, LVMPD stakeholders have preliminarily reported:

- Improved coordination among justice partners
- The adoption of a tested, validated, evidence-based pretrial risk assessment
- Improved capacity to collect data and share information across justice components
- Reduction in the jail population for pretrial defendants

Insights Gained

- Jail management requires a coordinated, system-wide approach that incorporates all components of the criminal justice system
- Data-driven and research-based tools can serve to improve detention decisions while relying on less costly and more service-based alternatives for those posing minimal risk