



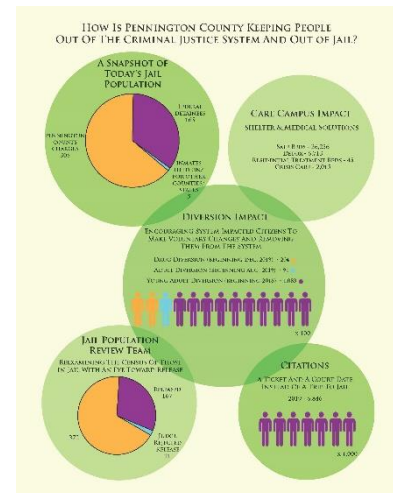
COVID-19 Response Perspectives

Community Outreach & Public Access
Bookings & Jail Population in Clark County, Nevada
Pretrial Services in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Community Outreach & Public Access

Our criminal justice systems have been working tirelessly to react to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of that, it is easy to overlook keeping the members of our communities aware of the steps being taken. It is incredibly important during this time to consult with local community groups and community leaders to understand the needs of the community and to provide full transparency on steps taken and expected by the criminal justice system partners to mitigate risk to the community and to those involved in the criminal justice system.

In Pennington County, South Dakota, their Community Engagement Workgroup (formed as a result of the Safety and Justice Challenge) [wrote a letter to their justice system leaders](#) outlining the needs and recommendations from the community. On March 27th, the State's Attorney's Office [authored a response from the justice partners](#) explaining the steps being taken in each of the partner agencies. The justice system leaders also prepared [an infographic](#) to help inform the community of how they are working to make the best decisions they can for the community as a whole.



Another way that justice systems are being transparent is by providing the public with information about the number of individuals with COVID-19 who are working or detained in detention centers. For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections shares basic information and statistics about the status of the virus in the state prison system on their

[dashboard page](#) and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation also provides the COVID-19 status in their detention centers in an [interactive dashboard](#).

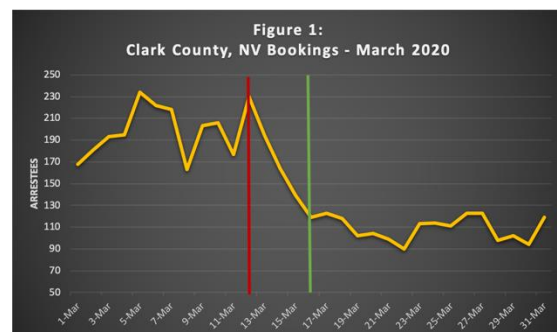
With many jurisdictions turning to video hearings to keep up with caseload, there is yet another example of transparency by granting public access to video hearings. Sacramento County Superior Court, as of April 1, has provided a live stream of criminal hearings from four separate courtrooms through Zoom and available on YouTube Live to the public. Live stream of these hearings are available [here](#) (starting at 1:30pm PT).

Transparency is critical for our communities and, while this is a very busy time, we cannot forget to keep our communities well-informed.

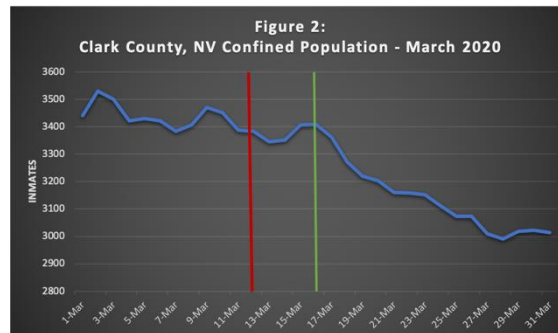
Clark County, Nevada

The State of Nevada was quick to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. On March 12th, 2020, Nevada Governor Sisolak declared a State of Emergency and during this time period Clark County officials began mobilizing a response that culminated in Administrative Orders being issued by the [Eighth Judicial District Court](#) and the [Las Vegas Justice Court](#). Both orders curtailed non-essential court operations to protect the health and safety of residents and justice system personnel. The Las Vegas Justice Court Administrative Order, issued on March 16th, also required releases on own recognizance for eligible arrested persons and recalled active traffic and misdemeanor bench warrants. In addition, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) took action by increasing the use of cite and release for traffic and misdemeanor offenses, with exceptions such as Driving Under the Influence, Domestic Violence, and Violation of Protection Orders charges, and Nevada Probation and Parole reviewed every confined revocation case for potential release from incarceration.

The measures taken by Clark County significantly reduced the number of bookings into the jail and lowered the jail population. As shown in Figure 1. The number of bookings (i.e., arrestees brought to the detention center intake) dropped precipitously on the date of the State of Emergency (the red line) and remained low after the Las Vegas Justice Court Administrative Order was issued (the green line). During this time, justice agencies, such as the LVMPD, began adjusting their business practices in anticipation of the potential impact of the virus on the community and the criminal justice system, particularly the inmate population. The result was that the number of bookings averaged nearly 200 per day for the first 12 days of March and then decreased to an average of 114 per day the rest of the month (a 43% decrease). Overall, the total number of bookings for March was 24% less than the month of February.



The decrease in bookings translated into a decline in the confined population at the Clark County Detention Center (CCDC). Figure 2 captures the downward slope of the daily inmate population for March 2020 and the acceleration of the decline after the Administrative Order was issued by the courts. The jail population went from a peak of 3,531 inmates on March 2nd to 3,013 inmates by the last day of the month (a 15% decrease). The average daily population of the CCDC for March (3,031 inmates) was the lowest in years and 17% less than last month and 19% less than March 2019.



Clark County intends to continue monitoring the number of bookings and the confined population levels during the COVID-19 outbreak to ensure the jail does not face overcrowding while the courts are limiting operations to essential activities only. The CCDC also desires to keep the inmate population low in case quarantining inmates becomes necessary. CCDC officials have drafted a depopulation plan as a safety precaution should the inmate population begin to rise.

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Early adoption of best pretrial practices helped guide Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), PA's COVID-19 response. The Fifth Judicial District and its Pretrial Services Department had long adhered to the principle of least restrictive pretrial release. As a result, pretrial supervision pre-COVID-19 for most defendants consisted either of in-person or telephone reporting. Only three percent of defendants were supervised via electronic monitoring (EM) and drug testing was used as deemed necessary by the pretrial supervision officers.

Following COVID-19 guidelines instituted in March 2020, Pretrial Services converted all in-person reporting to telephone contact and suspended drug testing requirements. Department management also revised staff contact with EM-supervised defendants to telephone reporting, relying on the EM equipment to do the monitoring. In an innovative twist, cases that were not placed on EM prior to the judicial emergency order were placed on non-electronic home detention. Case managers for the non-electronic monitoring home detention defendants call periodically to verify they are abiding by the home detention, even asking defendants to take selfies, with the backdrop of their home address sign or holding up a specific object.

Following a [Pennsylvania Supreme Court Judicial Emergency order](#), the Fifth District closed to the public and conducted preliminary arraignment, bail modifications, and other emergency hearings by audio communication. The order expanded Pretrial Services' functions at the initial bail hearing, including securing judicial signature on bail orders by fax. The department continued to coordinate bail modifications in court, process defense attorney modification requests, conduct virtual investigations of pretrial detainees, and submit modification requests to the court.

The COVID-19 plan to reduce the jail population began with lists provided by the Allegheny County Jail on compromised pretrial inmates by age and health risk. It continued with screening all defendants in the jail pretrial, in addition to defendants with multiple holds such as probation detainers and family division holds. Pretrial Services screen cases for release based on prior violent criminal history, current violent charge, victim impact and other holds such as local probation/parole detainers, state parole detainers and federal holds. Cases meeting review criteria are presented daily via audio in motions court for judicial review. Bail modification requests also are processed from public defenders, private bar, or prosecutors through Pretrial Services' web-based system.

According to Pretrial Services Director Janice Radovick Dean, modification requests increased since the COVID-19 judicial emergency order was issued March 16, 2020 from roughly ten per day to around 30 per day. Pretrial Services has a team of about 20 investigators and supervisory staff working virtually and handling petitions for bond revisions around the clock. Between March 16th and April 2nd, 2020, bail modification efforts helped release over 600 defendants from jail.

Allegheny County summarizes its processes in a [regular report to the local media](#).