

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **CJCC CONTINUES ITS INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO JUSTICE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS—2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C., As the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) enters its fourth year, local arrests and the local population of the Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center continues to decline, according to the CJCC’s 2018 Annual Report released today. The report details the past year’s achievements as well as continuing challenges in the criminal justice system (CJS).

“I think most Americans believe that big problems must have big solutions. However, through the work of the CJCC we discovered that is not the case when it comes to improving the criminal justice system. The CJCC has shown that taking small steps, across the system, can make a big difference. The data affirms we’re on the right track to make our system increasingly effective, efficient and equitable,” said Assistant Sheriff Mitch Lucas, CJCC Chairman.

Related achievements in 2018 include:

- Over 4,000 Pretrial Service Reports, including an objective assessment of risk and other salient information, provided to bond-setting magistrates in 2018
- Fewer individuals cycling through the jail repeatedly (“familiar faces”)
- Increased deflections from the justice system and jail diversions for individuals living with mental illness, homelessness and/or substance use disorders
- Launch of automated text message reminders of General Sessions court dates
- Shortened time to initial assignment of public defender attorneys for poor defendants that qualify
- Faster transfer of evidentiary data using the Ninth Circuit Solicitor’s new technology
- Released a comprehensive report on racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparity (REDD) across numerous points in the local CJS

As of 2018, the local jail population decreased 16% from the 2014 average of 1,111. Recent data indicates this trend is continuing. For example, the local jail population in March 2019 was 873, 21% smaller than it was in 2014. However, those within the jail are staying longer, with the average length of stay increasing from 12 days in 2014 to 24 days in 2018.

Since 2014, the local jail population shifted from 85% to 97% pretrial defendants awaiting trial in summary and general sessions level courts. Despite the Solicitor’s and Public Defender’s improved efficiencies in the early stages of case processing (e.g., timely assignment of attorneys and faster transfer of evidence), Charleston County, like much of South Carolina, struggles to achieve swift dispositions in General Sessions Court. The Court continues to enhance its new docket management system. In order to reduce the backlog of cases awaiting resolution, there is a compelling need for the Court, defense and prosecution to continue increasing the use of technology, data analysis and process improvements to bring cases to justice faster.

Studies included in this report also underscore the need to improve pretrial risk management and confirm the predictive accuracy of the pretrial risk assessment used at bond court. A multi-year study of new arrests of General Sessions defendants released from jail found forty percent (40%) of those awaiting their court

date failed by returning to jail at least one time before the resolution of the initial charge, most often within the first six months of release. The individuals returning to jail often failed repeatedly while out on bond. The studies also find financial bond types do not produce better outcomes than personal recognizance (PR) bond types.

“CJCC’s approach is the way citizens want all government systems to operate. It brings together diverse stakeholders from across the criminal justice spectrum and uses data to guide action. I am proud of this collaborative effort to improve public safety and enhance justice,” said Ian Scott, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce and CJCC Community Representative.

Areas of ongoing focus include:

- Expand the availability of the Pretrial Service Reports for use by bond-setting judges
- Increase enrollment for the text message court reminder program
- Advance bond conditions and reentry efforts to help lower recidivism, minimize risk of missed court dates and improve public safety
- Intensify efforts to resolve cases faster
- Deepen efforts to help reduce REDD in the justice system

The voice, concerns and experiences of the Charleston County community are integral to the future direction of CJCC efforts. The 2018 report includes the bold future goal to reach 1,000 voices across the county to identify community priorities on safety, justice and community well-being. This information will be integrated in the development of the next 3-year strategic plan to launch in 2020.

For more information, visit our website at [cjcc.charlestoncounty.org](http://cjcc.charlestoncounty.org).

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### ***About the CJCC***

*The CJCC is a collaboration of elected and senior officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, behavioral health professionals, victim and legal advocates, and various community leaders working in service of the Charleston community. The mission of the CJCC is to assist in making sustainable, data-driven improvements to Charleston County’s criminal justice system and thereby improve public safety and community well-being. The CJCC is currently funded by a Safety + Justice Challenge grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more information, visit [www.cjcc.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.cjcc.charlestoncounty.org).*

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