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## **LOCAL JAIL POPULATION DOWN 13% DUE TO INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY EFFORTS**

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The local population of the Sheriff Al Canon Detention Center decreased by 13 percent from 1,111 in 2014 to 963 in 2017, according to analysis by the Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). While this tremendous drop in population cannot be wholly dissected and analyzed, much, if not all of the reduction is likely the result of the work of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Assistant Sheriff Mitch Lucas, Chairman of the CJCC, said, "The only significant difference in our local criminal justice system from 2014 to 2017 is the CJCC." This collaboration among elected and senior officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, behavioral health leaders, victim and legal advocates, and community representatives focuses on strategies that will improve how the system works. The local jail population reduction is just one result of the changes underway by CJCC to improve safety and well-being in Charleston.

"We have the right people at the right time committed to improving our local criminal justice system and making it more efficient, effective, and equitable. I am proud of our progress to-date and anticipate we will continue improving as we move forward," said Charleston County Assistant Sheriff and CJCC Chairman Mitch Lucas.

A recently released [report](#) analyzing the jail population from 2014-2017 highlights several accomplishments, including:

- A significant drop in jail use by individuals that most frequently cycle through the jail, often due to underlying mental illness, substance use disorders and/or homelessness, and increased real-time availability of treatment options for first responders when interacting with these individuals;
- An increase in the use of cite and release by law enforcement for minor, nonviolent charges, leaving more officers on the street to protect public safety and limiting the harmful effects of detention for those that do not need to be jailed to be held accountable;
- Lower rates of racial disproportionality in the jail;
- Higher concentration of more serious crimes coming to jail rather than minor, nonviolent crimes;
- Faster delivery of evidence from law enforcement to prosecution; and
- Earlier assignment of defense counsel and prosecutors helping to bring cases to justice faster.

The report also notes areas to improve Charleston's criminal justice system. A study completed in 2017 utilizing the CJCC's innovative central data warehouse revealed three out of four releases on bonds in 2014 returned to jail prior to the resolution of their cases. Seventy-five percent of these cases involved new arrests, underscoring the importance of improving pretrial outcomes of safety and appearance. To address this need, a new tool that launched in January 2018 is helping bond-setting judges make more risk-based decisions. Other work is also underway to provide additional common sense legal and evidence-based practices, such as bringing case to justice faster, reminding defendants of court dates, and exploring more risk-based mechanisms to help improve pretrial outcomes.

“Having data to show how our system works is changing the conversation. This helps us use our resources in increasingly impactful ways that can help to improve safety, justice, and well-being across our community,” said Kristy Danford, CJCC Project Director.

The CJCC is entering its third year since forming in the spring of 2015. In its first year, the CJCC analyzed the local criminal justice system and identified areas for improvement. This past year the group focused on installing infrastructure and making initial changes that are already demonstrating results with the assistance of a \$2.25 million John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge grant that funds over a dozen positions. This year the CJCC will focus on learning, adapting and growing to help further improve safety, justice and community well-being.

For more information, visit [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).*