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Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council celebrates the one-year mark and highlights progress: all six strategies trending in the right direction

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C., April 13, 2017 – A year after beginning an unprecedented collaborative effort to rethink the way we use our jail, the Charleston County Coordinating Council (CJCC) is seeing progress. One year ago today, the (CJCC) announced the achievement of a \$2.25 million John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge Grant to improve the local criminal justice system and safely reduce the jail population. The funding supports the implementation of six core strategies within the three-year transformation plan announced in 2016.

Marking the anniversary, the CJCC recently released an annual report analyzing data provided by law enforcement, Summary Courts, General Sessions Court, and the Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center (SACDC) to identify progress towards achieving the goals of its transformation plan. Highlights of the report include:

- Criminal charges brought by the four largest arresting agencies in the County are down 28% between 2014-2016.
- Of all charges made, the use of non-custodial arrests is up by 14% between 2014 and 2016.
- Bookings into the SACDC are down by approximately 30% between 2014 and 2016.
- In 2014, African Americans were booked into the jail 3.4 times as often as Caucasians. In 2016, African Americans were booked into the jail 2.3 times as often as Caucasians.
- The annual local average daily population of the jail declined 10% between 2014 and 2016.
- The CJCC installed and is utilizing a centralized database, where agencies' information is collected in one central location, in order to analyze data and review progress of our transformation plan goals. This previously did not exist.

The report also includes an update on the implementation of each of six reform strategies and community engagement efforts. Through the reform efforts, the CJCC is rethinking the way jail is used in Charleston County, increasing the use of risk assessment tools, providing treatment alternatives to jail, launching an automated court date reminder system, improving the bond setting process to be more risk-based, increasing the timeliness of case disposition, and utilizing a centralized database to continually assess performance and guide improvements.

“I am excited about the progress made in the first year which has led to meaningful reductions in jail incarceration. Working with all of our partners, we have implemented strategies that are creating positive outcomes. It’s exciting to see a 28% decrease in the number of criminal charges, a 14% increase in the use of cite and release, and a 30% decrease in jail admissions. This demonstrates the value of strong partnerships by all members of the criminal justice system and how using alternative methods to jail can address concerns without compromising community public safety” said Chief Mullen, City of Charleston Police Chief.

“What started as a competitive grant application in early 2015 has grown into the most transformative and collaborative criminal justice system improvement effort I have seen in my more than 30 years in law enforcement” said CJCC Chairman, Assistant Sheriff Mitch Lucas. “While 2016 was a year to move from planning into action, 2017 looks to be a year of even greater change as more and more of the transformation strategies will be on-the-ground. We are happy with our progress to-date and look forward to continuing progress in 2017”.

For the complete 2016 annual report, please visit our website: www.cjcccharlestoncounty.org.

More information about the Safety and Justice Challenge is available at www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org.

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About the CJCC and the Safety and Justice Challenge Initiative

The mission of the CJCC is the 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 a collaboration of elected and appointed officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, behavioral health professionals, various community leaders and many more. The CJCC works collaboratively to improve the administration of justice and promotion of public safety through planning, research, education and system-wide coordination of data-driven criminal justice initiatives.



Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

The CJCC’s annual report was created with the support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Core to the Challenge is a competition designed to support efforts to improve local criminal justice systems across the country that are working to safely reduce over-reliance on jails, with a particular focus on addressing disproportionate impact on low-income individuals and communities of color.