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## **Arapahoe County partners with White House on Data-Driven Justice**

*Data-Driven Justice initiative targeted to reduce jail time for low-risk offenders with mental illness*

**LITTLETON, CO –** The White House recently launched the Data-Driven Justice Initiative with the assistance of local jurisdictions from across the country. Arapahoe County and Denver County are the only two governments in Colorado participating in this initiative.

The coalition of city, county and state governments have committed to using data-driven strategies to divert low-level offenders with mental illness out of the criminal justice system; and change approaches to pre-trial incarceration so low-risk individuals do not stay in jail, where they also may not receive services needed to prevent recidivism.

Arapahoe County, through the Justice Coordinating Committee, has been exploring how to address issues facing the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office, such as recidivism. The White House invited Arapahoe County to join the initiative through Commissioner Nancy Jackson. The Board of County Commissioners formally joined the initiative in March. Additionally, Commissioner Jackson, Captain Christopher George from the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office and Todd Spanier, Criminal Justice Planning Coordinator, attended an interactive meeting at The White House in June.

"This is incredibly important work," said Commissioner Jackson. "We're proud to be part of a national coalition to improve outcomes for individuals with mental illness in our criminal justice system and save taxpayer dollars at the same time."

Data-Driven Justice strategies are proven to reduce jail populations, help stabilize individuals and families, better serve communities and often save money in the process.

These strategies use data from criminal justice and health systems to identify and break the cycle of incarceration among individuals with frequent emergency services and connect them to health, behavioral health and social services in the community.

The aim is to reduce reliance on emergency healthcare and frequent entry into the criminal justice system by providing the right services at the right time, particularly to low-level offenders with mental illness. The use of data-driven risk assessment tools also guides pre-trial release of low-risk people in jail. Arapahoe County's Criminal

Justice Planning Office has identified the most frequent criminal justice-involved individuals who have been diagnosed by jail medical staff as having a mental health disorder.

The majority of the offenses committed by these individuals are low-level, non-violent misdemeanors such as a failure to appear in court. Pre-trial supervision allows these individuals to remain out of jail and receive mental health and social services while awaiting court dates.

Diversion out of jail also is fiscally responsible. In Arapahoe County, the average monthly jail population during the past 12 months is 987 inmates and the average daily cost per inmate was approximately \$89 in 2015 - 2016. Diverting low-risk individuals out of jail has shown cost savings in municipalities across the country. Additionally, time spent in confinement can damage individuals' protective factors, such as employment, family relations, housing and treatment programs, which can lead to increases in recidivism.

"If a diversion program which confers public benefits on the criminal justice involved can be sustained for a lower amount than it costs to confine the individual, it will have a direct cost savings to taxpayers," said Todd Spanier. "The community benefits by paying less to confine their citizens and the criminal justice involved benefit by having a greater chance of having a sustained and fulfilling life outside of criminal activity."

More information on the White House Data-Driven Justice Initiative is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/datadrivenjustice>.

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