

*Jurisdictions Served: District of Columbia*

*Mission Statement: The Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia promotes pretrial justice and community safety by assisting judicial officers in making appropriate release decisions, and by providing supervision and pro-social interventions to defendants released into the community.*

The District of Columbia Pretrial Services Agency (PSA) provides an example of a program that tracks performance of the pretrial stage of the DC justice system. DC has one of the oldest and largest pretrial programs in the country. It has a long and well-deserved reputation for providing quality services to its jurisdiction.

Out of its mission, the program has identified three strategic outcomes:

1. Minimize rearrests among defendants released to the community pending trial, particularly new arrests on violent and drug crimes to help assure public safety.
2. Reduce failures to appear for scheduled court appearances to help promote more efficient administration of justice.
3. Maximize the number of defendants who stay on pretrial supervision with no pending requests for removal or revocation at the conclusion of their pretrial status to encourage defendant accountability.

Two outcomes that the program tracks are the percentage of defendants rearrested for violent and drug crimes during the period of pretrial release, and the percentage of cases in which a defendant failed to appear for at least one court hearing. The program has worked to make certain that it can provide that data. In PSA's fiscal year 2011, 88% of defendants on pretrial release remained arrest free. For released defendants, 1% committed a violent crime while on release. Eighty-eight percent of released defendants appeared at all scheduled court appearances.

While these are two very important outcomes for any pretrial services program, PSA recognizes that there is a third, equally important, outcome – maximizing safe release. As a result of PSA's successful work to provide high-quality services to the bench and the community, financial bail is used very sparingly in the jurisdiction. The majority of defendants are released on their own recognizance or to PSA with conditions they monitor. The remaining defendants, those for whom no conditions or combination of conditions will suffice, are held with no bail. Thus, a judge makes a decision, aided by the information and options provided by PSA, which results in the immediate release or the assured detention of the defendant. They do not use the practice that is typical in many other counties whereby judges set high bail amounts in hopes that the defendant will not be able to post it, thus staying in jail. The PSA works very closely with its funding authority, as well as with judges, prosecutors, defenders and other key local officials, to review its work as it continuously strives to maintain an effective balance of maximizing release and minimizing failure. **The key to their success has been the ability to collect and report on data in a time frame that can impact policies and practices.**