

Reducing Jail Use through Diversion and Deflection

Housekeeping

- The event is being recorded, and the recording will be posted online afterward.
- Speaker biographies and related materials are available online.
- All participants are muted, but you can type your questions or comments into the Q&A box at any time. We will have a Q&A segment at the end of the session.
- You can hide captions or adjust settings with the Live Transcript button.

January 21, 2026

Reducing Jail Use through Diversion and Deflection

Local Lessons on Rethinking Jail Use Webinar Series



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

Session Overview

- Rationale for Rethinking Jail Use
- Summit County Felony Summons
- East Baton Rouge Parish Diversion Program
- Discussion

Presenters



Jesse Jannetta
Senior Policy Fellow
Urban Institute



Lisa Burns
Clinical Social Worker
East Baton Rouge Parish
Pretrial Diversion and
Recovery Program



Niles Haymer
Deputy Director
East Baton Rouge Parish
Criminal Justice
Coordinating Council



Debbie Norwood
Resource Coordinator
East Baton Rouge Parish
Pretrial Diversion and
Recovery Program



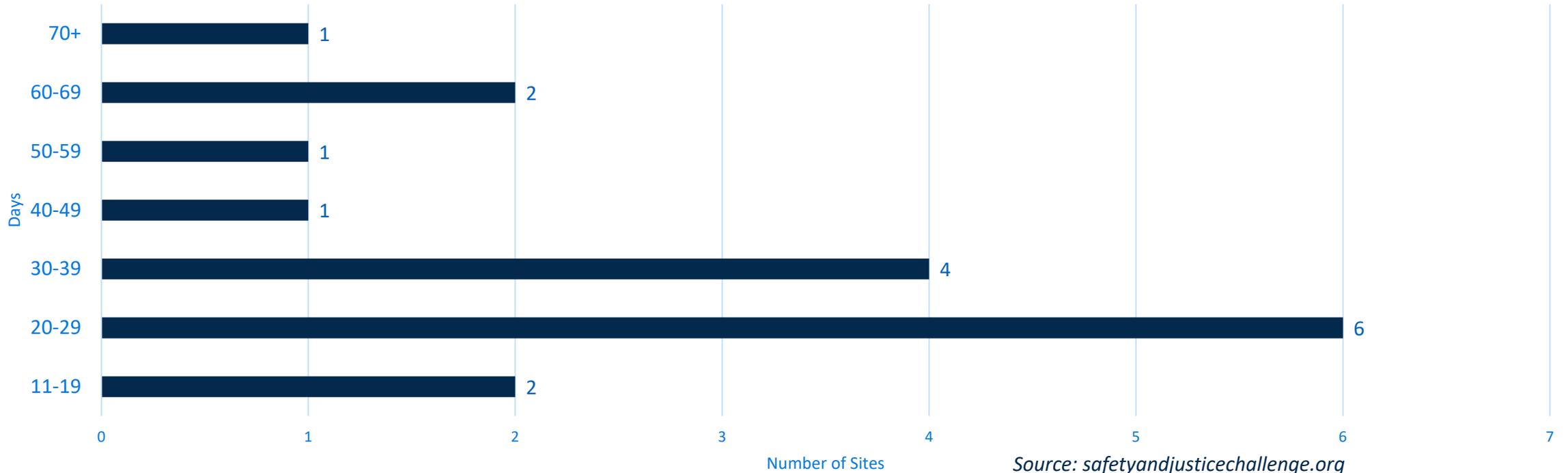
Lori Pesci
Director
Summit County
Department of Public
Safety

Jails Touch Millions of Lives Each Year

- 8 million admissions annually
 - Nearly 70% of the daily jail population is pretrial detainees
 - Significant racial disparities
- Jail incarceration can be criminogenic
 - Even a small amount of pretrial detention is associated with subsequent criminal involvement
- Serious mental health issues 4-6 times more common in jails than in the general population
 - 83% of people in jail with mental health issues did not receive treatment after admission
- 68% of people in jail have suffered from addiction to drugs, alcohol, or both
- Local jurisdictions spend at least \$22.2 billion annually on jails

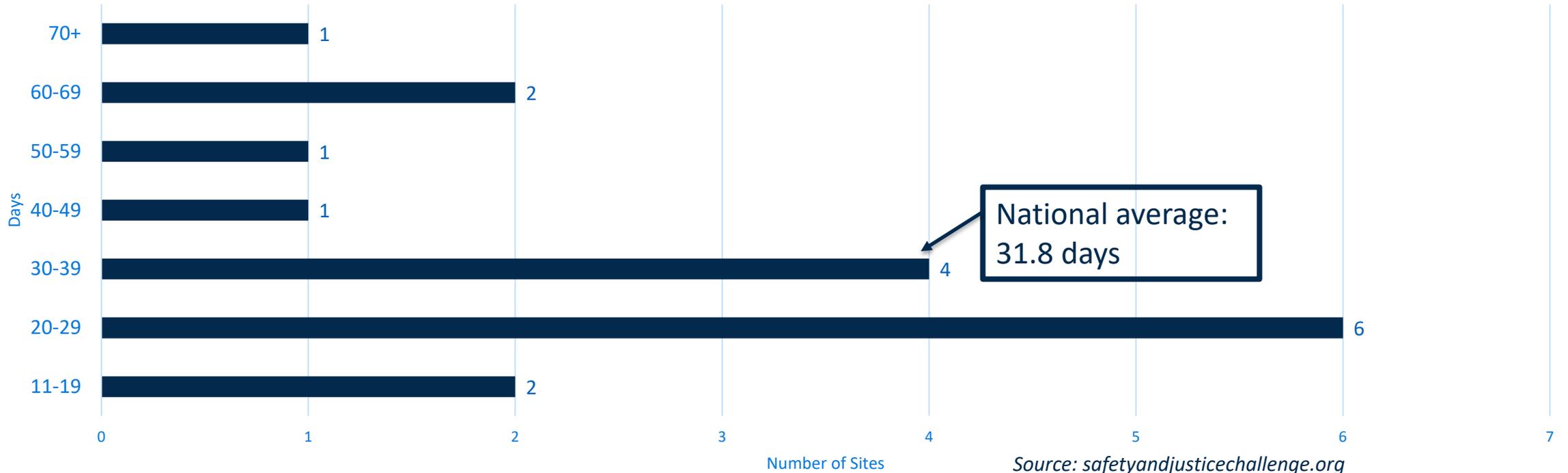
Average Lengths of Stay Vary...

SJC Sites Average Length of Jail Stay

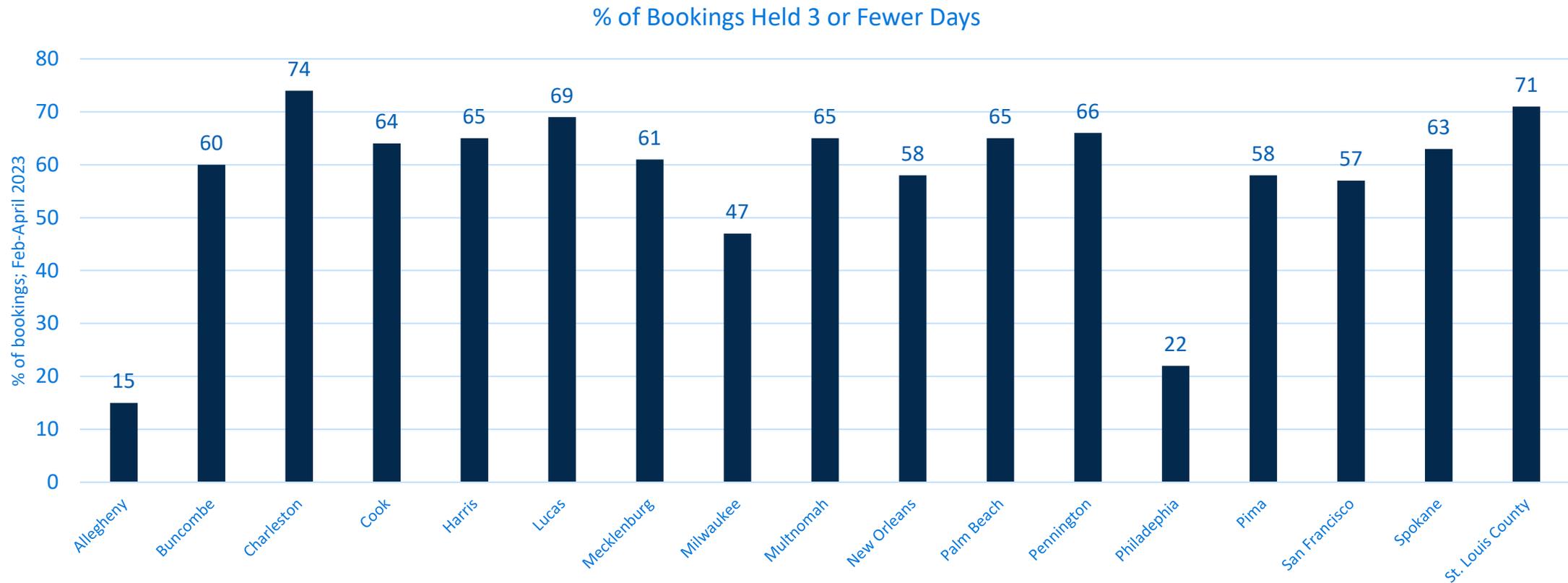


Average Lengths of Stay Vary...

SJC Sites Average Length of Jail Stay



...But Much of the Jail Population Turns Over Quickly



Source: safetyandjusticechallenge.org

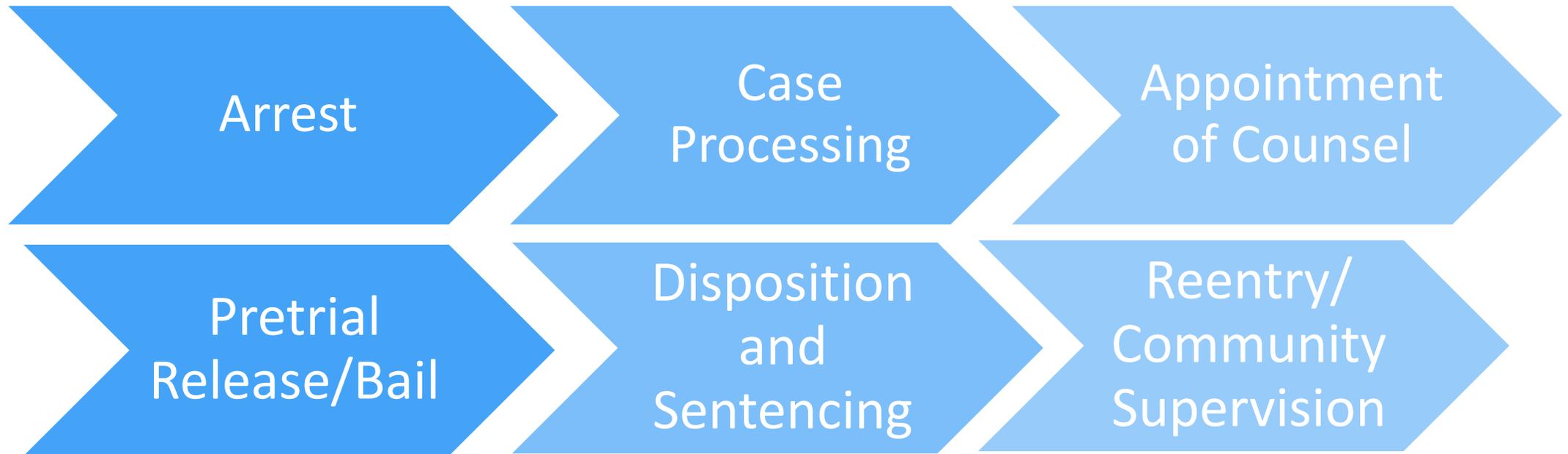
Many Factors Determine the Size and Composition of the Jail Population

- Arrest practices and enforcement priorities
- Charging practices
- Role of cash bail
- Pretrial assessment, release and supervision practices
- Court efficiency
- Jail capacity and staffing
- Availability of alternative behavioral health options
- Responses to probation violations

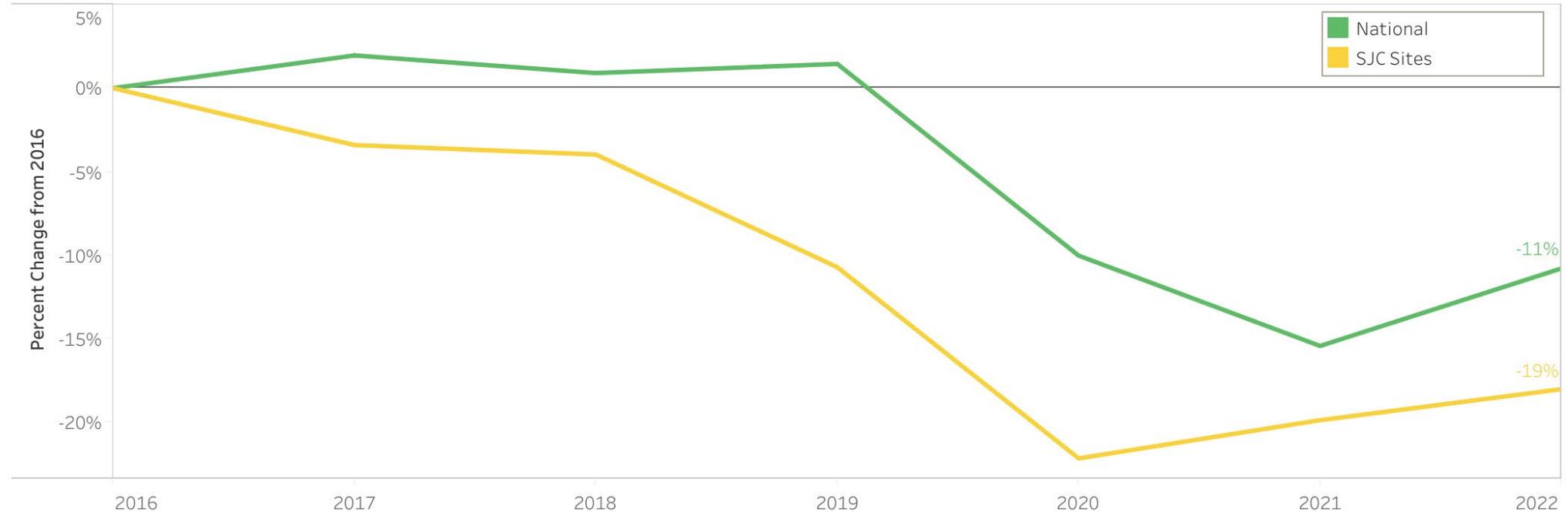
SJC Overview

- Support to local communities ready to tackle the misuse and overuse of jails
 - Collaborative, data-driven examination of jail population drivers
 - Investments in local change and innovation
- Network of cities, counties, and states rethinking local justice systems
- Safely reduce jail populations, eliminate ineffective and unfair practices, and reduce racial disparities
- Creation of a peer network to share and spread strategies

SJC Sites Implementing Strategies Across the Justice Process



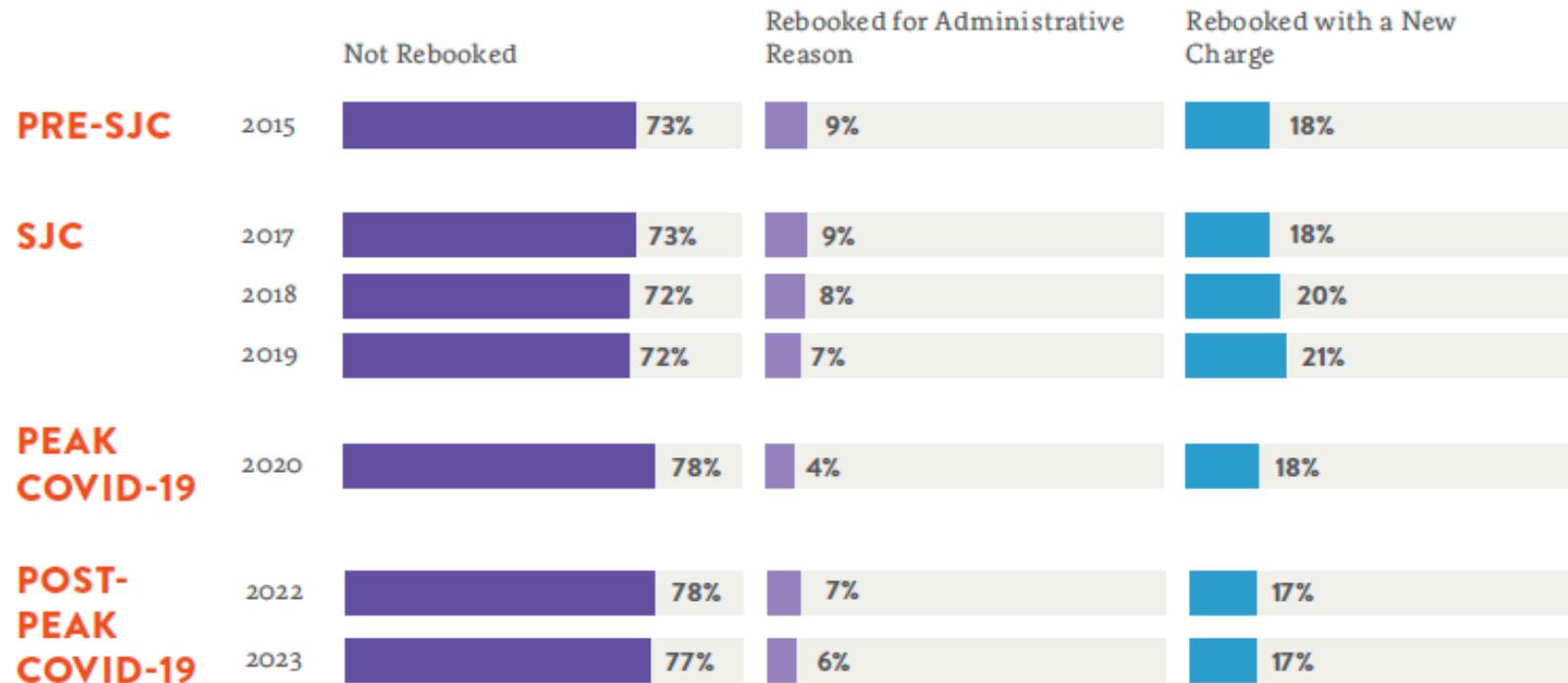
SJC Jail Population Trends Since 2016



SJC sites include those that began implementation in 2016.

Source: safetyandjusticechallenge.org

Trends in Pretrial Release Recidivism in SJC Sites



Source: ISLG (2024): Lowering Jail Populations Safely Before, During and After COVID-19

Summit County Felony Summons Program

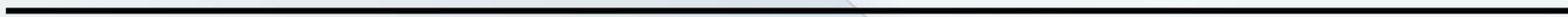
A Safe, Structured Alternative to Jail for Low-Level Felonies



Why This Matters



- Jail used for low-level, non-violent felonies
- Consumes officer, jail, and court resources
- Creates delays without improving safety
- Opportunity to be smarter — not softer



Program Goal



- Reduce unnecessary felony jail admissions
 - Maintain public safety
 - Preserve judicial authority
 - Apply consistent, evidence-based field criteria
-

What This Is (and Is Not)



THIS IS:

- A controlled entry point into the justice system
- Structured officer discretion
- Court-driven outcomes



THIS IS NOT:

- Decriminalization
 - Removal of judicial authority
 - Automatic release
-

Who Is Eligible



LOW-LEVEL, NON-VIOLENT FELONIES

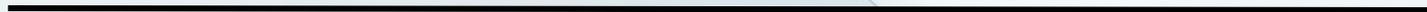
- Financial crimes
- Drug possession / non-violent drug offenses
- Other qualifying offenses



NOT ELIGIBLE



- Violent offenses
- High-risk repeat offenders
- Immediate safety concerns



Field Screening Tool



- 6–7 structured questions
 - Used at point of contact
 - Clear yes/no thresholds
 - Fast, consistent, defensible
-



Pilot Approach - City of Akron

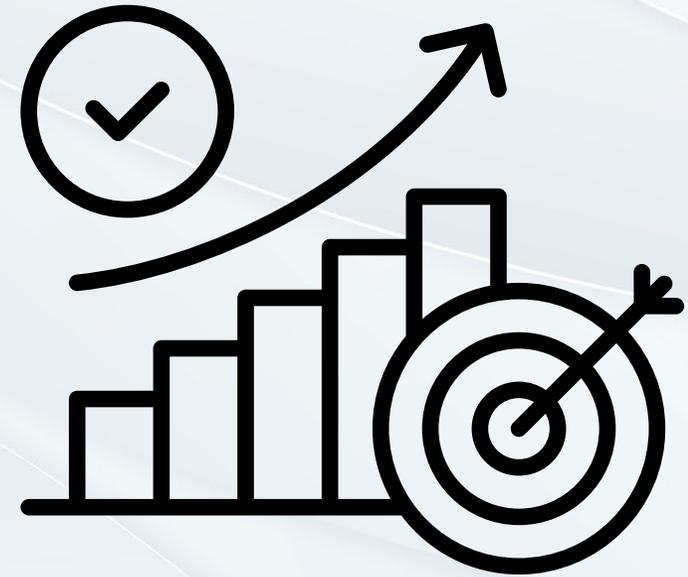
- Akron Police Department pilot
- 1–2 month test period
- Strong officer response
- Positive early feedback
- In-service training already underway



- Officer screens in the field
 - Eligibility confirmed
 - Felony summons issued
 - Case proceeds to court as normal
-

Measuring Success

- Jail bookings avoided
- Court appearance rates
- Failure-to-appear rates
- Re-arrest rates
- Officer time saved



“This program doesn’t change accountability — it changes how efficiently and safely we get there.”

Thank You



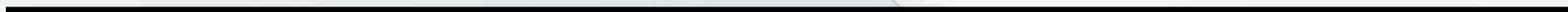
Lori Pesci, Director Summit County Public Safety



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The David O'Quin
**PRE-TRIAL
Diversio
& Recovery
PROGRAM**

Presented by:

Niles Haymer, CJCC Deputy Director

Lisa Burns, LCSW, Program Case Manager

Debbie Norwood, Resource Coordinator

How it Started

- 2018 – The Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF) was awarded a \$50,000 Innovation Grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC).
- BRAAF collaborated with the 19th Judicial District Court, the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office, the East Baton Rouge Public Defender's Office and the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office.
- The Program's intent is to identify incarcerated individuals with behavioral health needs that would be better suited in treatment rather than in jail.

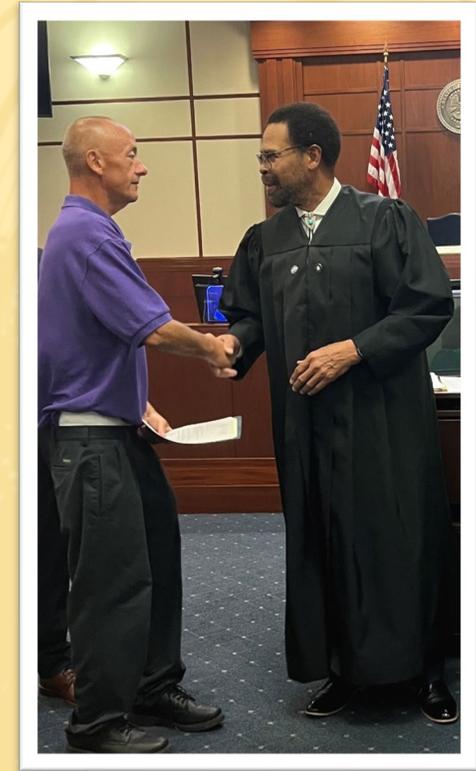


Not A Typical Diversion Program

-  fees to participate in the Program
- Program is budgeted to cover up to \$500 in participant costs for assistance with:
 - Transportation
 - Clothing/Hygiene products
 - Initial costs of rent for transitional housing
 - Drug screening costs

Program Benefits

- Access to treatment earlier
- Comprehensive case management
- Support, guidance, and mentorship
- Opportunities to build life skills
- Case is dismissed by District Attorney



Referrals and Eligibility

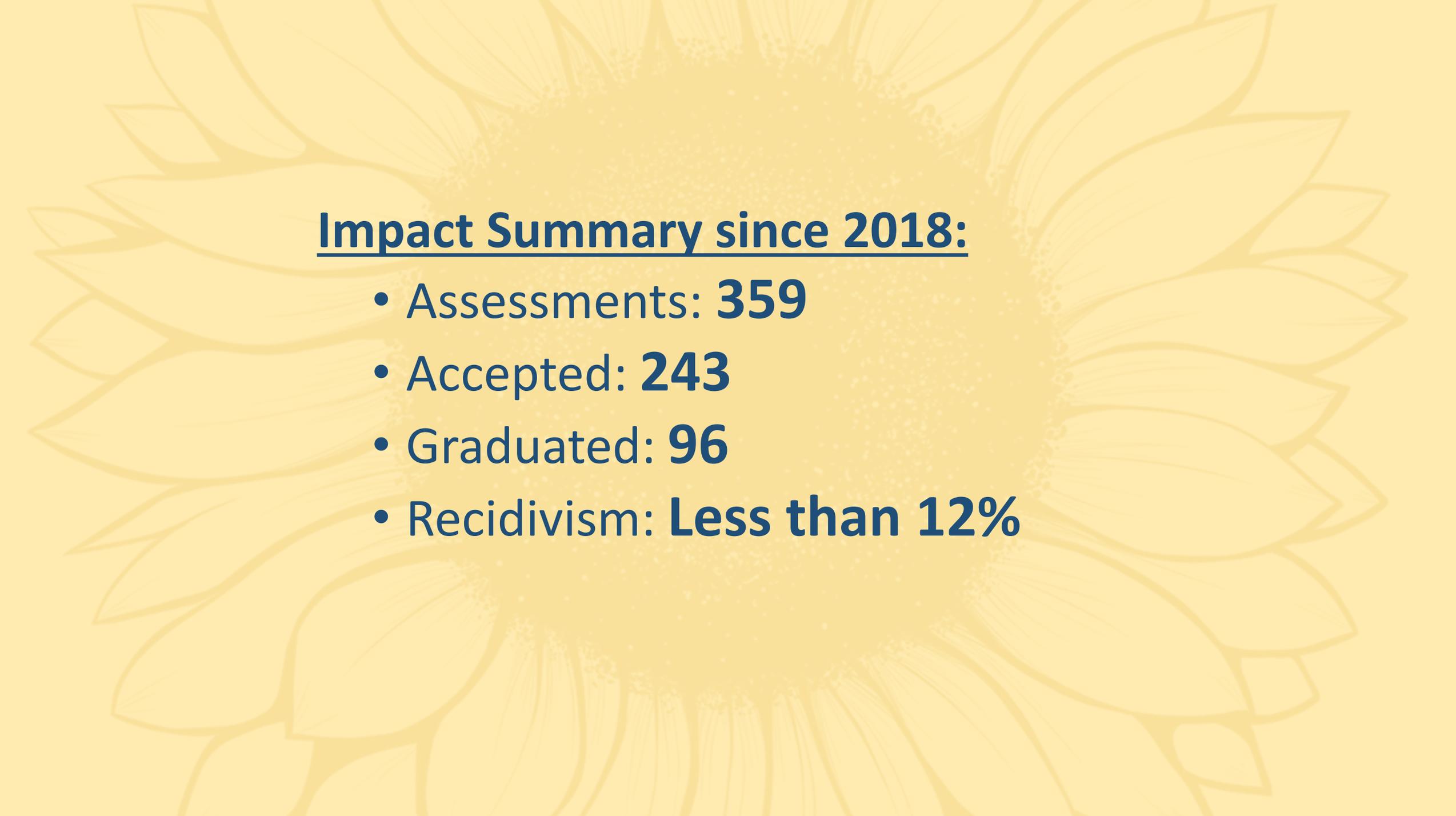
- Candidates are identified by staff after arrest
- Referrals are screened by staff
 - Only nonviolent felony and/or misdemeanor charges accepted
 -  recent violent convictions
 -  DUIs
 - Criminal history review
 - DA has final approval
- Candidates are interviewed by the case manager
 - Psycho-Social evaluation
 - Past or current substance use disorder/mental health treatment
- Candidates agree to 6-12 Month case plan



Program Design

- Once accepted, Judge changes bond to ROR
- Participant is released directly to inpatient treatment
- Continues treatment (IOP) at sober living
- Continual contact and support from Resource Coordinator and Case Manager
- Weekly staffing to ensure
 - Program compliance
 - Secured employment
 - Address any issues
- Mandatory monthly status hearings to:
 - Update the Judge
 - Address any issues
 - Graduate eligible participants



A large, stylized sunflower graphic in a light yellow color, centered on a white background. The sunflower has many petals and a detailed center.

Impact Summary since 2018:

- Assessments: **359**
- Accepted: **243**
- Graduated: **96**
- Recidivism: **Less than 12%**

Questions?

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Debbie Norwood: dnorwood@ebrcjcc.org

Stay Connected:



East Baton Rouge Criminal Justice
Coordinating Council – CJCC



EBRCJCC



East Baton Rouge Criminal
Justice Coordinating Council

Local Lessons on Rethinking Jail Use

Webinar Series

- February 20: Pretrial Detention and Release
- March 12: Prompt Resolution of Cases
- March 26: The Future of Local Justice Innovation

For Further Information

- www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org
- Urban Institute SJC project page
 - <https://www.urban.org/projects/safety-and-justice-challenge>
 - Contact: jjannetta@urban.org

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