

2021

Strategic Plan

OFFICE OF LAW & JUSTICE
SPOKANE, WA

Office Overview

The Office of Law & Justice (OLJ) is responsible for implementing broad systems reforms designed to create a fairer, leaner and more equitable legal system. Such efforts include Law & Justice systems planning, meeting facilitation, consulting with technical assistants and researchers, partnering with local and state actors, collecting, analyzing and sharing quantitative and qualitative data, and managing long and short-term projects of various complexity. Some of the projects the OLJ has managed, include the MacArthur Foundation's Safety & Justice Challenge Grant (\$4.4 million from 2015 to date), a Bureau of Justice Assistance Reentry Grant (\$998,259), the 2019-2020 Justice Task Force convened to develop recommendations related the future of the County Jail, and a variety of efforts funded by CARES Relief dollars in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (\$923,147). The OLJ also provides administrative support to the Spokane Regional Law & Justice Council (SRLJC) and its committees.

The OLJ is jointly funded by the City and County in recognition of the need for collaborative efforts to meaningfully achieve reform. As of February 2021, office staff include the Law & Justice Administrator, Data Analyst, Staff Assistant, and part-time Project Manager, plus four extra help Criminal Justice Information Hotline Associates. The work of the office turns on the successful collaboration and communication across jurisdictions, government entities, and community partners.



Guiding Principles

The OLJ's work is guided by principles recommended by the Justice Task Force and adopted by the Spokane City Council and the Spokane Board of County Commissioners with separate amendments.

(Appendix A). [1]

- We are committed to ensuring safe and humane treatment and conditions of confinement for everyone who comes into contact with the local justice system (including but not limited to defendants, victims, and staff).
- We recognize that unnecessary pre-trial incarceration actually undermines public safety.
- We are committed to ensuring the rights and safety of victims and survivors of crime, and the broader community.
- Increased investments in rehabilitation and diversion opportunities, especially for individuals in need of behavioral health support, are necessary for the region's safety.
- Increased investments in community-based resources (especially housing and behavioral health treatment) will ultimately improve community safety and well-being.
- We will use data-driven and evidence-based reforms with the goal of reducing crime, decreasing the use of tax payer dollars, and increasing community safety.
- We are committed to pursuing a criminal justice system that ensures racial equity and equity across all identities.



[1] Given the different versions of the Guiding Principles adopted by jurisdictions and the jointly funded nature of the OLJ, the original version endorsed by the Justice Task Force is included here.

Recent Achievements

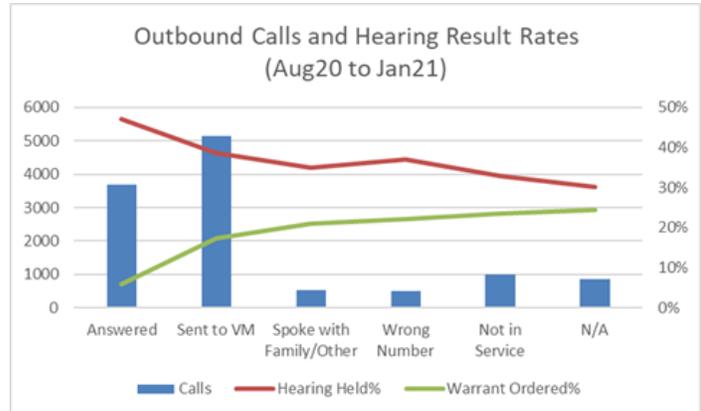
The OLJ led and supported the successful launch of several new reform efforts in 2020.

The Criminal Justice Information Hotline

12,659

OUTGOING COURT DATE REMINDER CALLS

from July 2020 to January 2021. Hotline associates have also fielded over 250 incoming calls regarding criminal court.



Cab Vouchers at Jail Releasing

159

RIDES PROVIDED

in November and December 2020.

Remote Court Pilot with Area Shelters

112

HEARINGS

screened for remote court eligibility in the program launched November 2020.

Launch of Criminal Justice Data Dashboard



<https://www.spokanecounty.org/4248/Criminal-Justice-Data>.

The Intake & Release Center

50

INDIVIDUALS BOOKED & RELEASED

in the first two weeks of February 2021. The average booking time at the Center is 8 minutes.

Challenges

- **Staffing Capacity:** With only three full time staff, the OLJ has limited capacity and resources to lead or support all initiatives requested or identified by government officials and/or community members.
- **Funding:** CARES Relief investments in criminal justice reform efforts highlighted the swift action that is possible when funding is readily available. With grant funds terminating in 2022 and a constricting general fund due to the pandemic, however, the OLJ notes the possibility of struggling to access regional investments necessary to launch and/or sustain critical efforts.
- **Coordination:** The work of the OLJ relies on engagement from state, local, and community partners. As regional leaders understandably prioritized pandemic-related efforts, their capacity for collaboration on criminal justice projects declined.
- **Jail Clearance:** Contractors working in correctional facilities must secure appropriate clearance through Detention Services. This can slow efforts to partner with Peer Navigators and/or Community Health Workers in relevant settings.

2021 Priorities

The OJJ's upcoming 2021 priorities are informed by recommendations put forth by the Criminal Justice Commission in the *Blueprint for Reform* (2013) and *Blueprint for Reform Status Report* (2020), Justice Task Force Recommendations (2020)[1], and input from a variety of systems actors and community leaders.

Strategic Goals

- **Sustainability Planning:** Developing sustainable funding and infrastructure for grant funded and/or CARES Relief funded initiatives.
- **Implementing Recommended Reforms:** Supporting the implementation of recommendations endorsed by the Criminal Justice Commission, Justice Task Force, and/or the SRLJC.
- **Data Driven Decision-Making:** Analyzing, tracking, and reporting performance indicators across all projects and contracts.
- **Effective Grants Management:** Launching and sustaining initiatives funded by the MacArthur Foundation's Safety & Justice Challenge and winding down the Bureau of Justice Assistance Reentry Grant.
- **Cultivating Partnerships:** Expanding and deepening partnerships with government officials and community groups.

Strategic Projects

- The OJJ identified Strategic Projects for 2021-2022 with significant input from systems actors and community members. This portfolio includes evidence based programs along with innovative and promising practices.

2021 Priorities

Initiative	Description	Tentative Timeline	Funding Source
Criminal Justice Information Hotline	Continue operating a Centralized Hotline to provide information regarding criminal court matters and court date reminder calls on behalf of District Court.	Ongoing	SJC
Uptrust	Continue supporting the use and expansion of the Public Defender's text messaging application. The application provides one-way court date reminders and two-way text communication between a client and attorney.	Ongoing	SJC
Staff Intake & Release Center with a Peer Navigator	Contracting with the Workforce Development Council to hire, train, and supervise a Peer Navigator in the Intake & Release Center.	March 2021	CARES Relief (pilot)
Cell Phone Initiative	A program that disseminates cell-phones to low-income individuals involved in the criminal court system. Ideally, phones will come pre-programmed with helpful contact numbers and applications.	August 2021	SJC
Microgrant Initiative	A microgrant initiative managed by a committee of systems actors and community members. The committee will solicit proposals addressing criminal justice challenges and award three grants up to \$25,000 each.	August 2021	SJC
Transportation Initiative	A rideshare partnership to provide free rides to court-related appointments, including but not limited to: hearings, public defender meetings, probation meetings, and urinalysis testing.	September 2021	SJC
Supported Release	A pre-trial release program that provides judicial officers with the option of releasing an individual to voluntary case management. The case management will be provided by a community-based organization.	September 2021	SJC

NOTE: Although the table includes an aspirational timeline, it is important to emphasize that the challenges identified earlier can result in a project's delayed implementation and launch.

2021 Priorities

Initiative	Description	Tentative Timeline	Funding Source
Quarterly Reports	Designing and publishing quarterly reports tracking projects and relevant data.	September 2021	OLJ
Expanding Data Dashboard	Working with courts to expand data reporting capacity.	November 2021	SJC
Equity Toolkit	A user-friendly tool designed to ensure policymakers account for equity in funding and programming decisions.	January 2022	SJC
Pilot First Appearance Hearings at the Intake & Release Center	Holding District Court First Appearance hearings for eligible charges at the Intake & Release Center in order to avoid unnecessary overnights in jail.	January 2022	To Be Determined
Explainer Videos	Creating a series of accessible videos that explain existing resources across the legal system. In addition to the Criminal Justice Information Hotline (already published) this project will produce a video highlighting the Intake & Release Center, resources available to victims and survivors of crime, as well as the forthcoming rideshare and cell phone initiatives.	February 2022	SJC
Citation Redesign	Work with state and local officials to incorporate design changes into the standardized citation form in order to make the document more reader-friendly. Research has shown that a redesigned citation can increase court appearance rates.	April 2022	OLJ
Evaluation of Supported Release	Contracting with an independent researcher to evaluate Supported Release outcomes.	September 2022	SJC

[1] See Appendix B for a list of the Justice Task Force's recommendations and current status.

Appendix A

Spokane County Criminal Justice Guiding Principles

1. We are committed to ensuring the safe and humane treatment and conditions of confinement for everyone that comes into contact with the local justice system (including but not limited to defendants, victims, and staff).
2. The County is committed to limiting pre-trial incarceration to that which is necessary to protect public safety and is consistent with the U.S. Constitution, State Statutes, and Court Rules.
3. We are committed to ensuring the rights and safety of victims and survivors of crime, and the broader community.
4. Increased investments in rehabilitation and diversion opportunities, especially for individuals in need of behavioral health support, are necessary for the region's safety.
5. Increased investments in community-based resources (especially housing and behavioral health treatment) will ultimately improve community safety and well-being.
6. We will use data-driven and evidence-based reforms with the goal of reducing crime, decreasing the use of taxpayer dollars, and increasing community safety.
7. We commit to take steps to strategically reduce the occurrence of disparities across the County's law and justice system. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Applying lenses for, but not limited to, race/gender/socio-economics/education/age equity analysis to current and new programs, policies, and services approved and/or funded by the Board of County Commissioners;
 - Including impacted community members in the development and evaluation of law and justice programming; and
 - Investing in hiring/recruiting practices and professional development opportunities that address inequities in the law and justice system.

Appendix A

Spokane City Council Resolution No. 2020-0054

A resolution establishing guiding principles for the City of Spokane's role in the criminal justice system in Spokane County.

WHEREAS, the Spokane Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution on February 5, 2019 authorizing the County to work with the JFA Institute ("JFA") and Vera Institute of Justice ("Vera") to facilitate a deliberative process related to the future of the Spokane County Jail; and

WHEREAS, to develop recommendations, the Office of Law & Justice, in coordination with JFA and Vera, assembled a Justice Task Force ("JTF"); and

WHEREAS, the JTF met four times between May, 2019 and January, 2020 and included leaders from various divisions of the criminal justice system, community service providers, the business community, and community members; and

WHEREAS, in doing this work, the JTF and its committees were informed by a series of qualitative listening sessions meant to solicit input and insight from additional stakeholders and community members, including interviews with fourteen criminal justice system stakeholders, six town halls, interviews with ten jail staff members of Spokane County detention services, and focus groups with currently incarcerated community members.

WHEREAS, Recommendation 1 from the resulting report is that the County adopt a set of guiding principles that will inform the County's future decisions related to the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, as a large participant in the regional criminal justice system, the City of Spokane should also adopt guiding principles as a first, necessary step toward the improvements in our system of criminal justice in Spokane County that will benefit all people, and will implement our comprehensive and strategic plans to be safer, smarter, more compassionate, and fiscally responsible.

Appendix A

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Spokane adopts the following guiding principles to inform future City of Spokane decisions related to the local criminal justice system, including its police department, municipal court, prosecutors, defenders, and probation services, namely that the City of Spokane:

- Commits to ensuring safe and humane treatment and conditions of confinement for everyone who comes into contact with the local justice system (including but not limited to defendants, victims, and staff);
- Recognizes that pre-trial incarceration beyond the “least restrictive conditions” listed in Superior Court Criminal Rule 3.2(b), such as supervised release, travel or housing restrictions, various types of bonds, requirement for the accused to return to custody during specified hours or to be placed on electronic monitoring, or other conditions reasonably necessary to assure appearance as required, actually undermines public safety;
- Commits to ensuring the rights and safety of victims and survivors of crime, and the broader community;
- Will increase its investments in rehabilitation and diversion opportunities, especially for individuals in need of behavioral health support, recognizing that they are necessary for the region’s safety;
- Will increase its investments in community-based resources (especially housing and behavioral health treatment), including public and private partnerships more effective and efficient uses of existing resources, to ultimately improve community safety and well-being;
- Will use data-driven and evidence-based reforms with the goal of reducing crime, decreasing the use of tax payer dollars, and increasing community safety; and
- Commits to pursuing a criminal justice system that ensures racial equity and equity across all identities.

Appendix B

Justice Task Force Recommendations & Progress

Initiative	JTF Vote in Favor	Progress
Adopt Guiding Principles	Majority	Completed (City Council, Board of County Commissioners)
Intake & Release Center	Majority	Phase I Completed
Court Information Hotline	Unanimous	Completed
Redesigning Citations	Unanimous	In progress
Court Date Reminders	Unanimous	In progress
Supported Release	Majority	In progress
Improved Case Processing	Majority	In progress
Expanding Peer Supports	Majority	In progress: Peer support staffing at IRC.
Warrantfest	Majority	No progress to develop opportunities to resolve certain warrants at the event.
Incentivized Probation	Majority	No progress
Relaxing EHM Requirements	Majority	No progress, However, Detention Services has worked to lift financial barriers when possible to release individuals during the pandemic. The Smith Barbieri Progressive Fund is also subsidizing payment in some cases.
Overnight Waiting Area	Majority	No progress
Pre-Filing Diversion	Majority	No progress
Jail Reach-ins	Unanimous	No progress
Bail Review Pilot	Unanimous	Closed

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