



# County of Santa Cruz

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COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### COUNTY JOINS WHITE HOUSE CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Santa Cruz County is pleased to join more than 100 local jurisdictions in the White House's Data-Driven Justice Initiative, a milestone announced today at the White House Frontiers Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

Every year, millions of low-level, non-violent offenders cost local governments approximately \$22 billion, with 64 percent suffering from mental illness, 68 percent from substance abuse disorder and 44 percent from chronic health problems. And every day, 450,000 people are held in jail before trial -- 63 percent of the local jail population in the U.S. -- even though they have not been convicted of a crime.

The DDJ Initiative is a nationwide effort aimed at breaking the cycle of incarceration by using data-driven strategies to divert low-level offenders with mental illnesses out of the criminal justice system and change approaches to pre-trial incarceration, so that low-risk offenders no longer stay in jail simply because they cannot afford bond.

"Santa Cruz County has a strong record of implementing innovative strategies to address chronic offenders, and I am proud that Santa Cruz County is now a part of President Obama's efforts to share best practices and technologies among local governments. Sheriff Jim Hart and the Santa Cruz County Probation Department have been leaders in implementing diversion strategies, and I look forward to sharing Santa Cruz County's successful strategies and learning about new innovative efforts," said Supervisor Ryan Coonerty, who urged the County to join the Initiative.

"We're pleased to join the White House in this Initiative, and Santa Cruz County has been a national leader in efforts such as these. We look forward to participating in this effort, sharing the lessons we've learned, and learning from others as we work to reduce



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our jail population, save taxpayer money and break the cycle of incarceration,” Santa Cruz County Probation Chief Fernando Giraldo said.

“In June 2016, we launched the Data-Driven Justice Initiative to support communities who want to use data to be smarter about diverting people with mental illness away from the criminal justice system and into community based treatment. We are excited that DDJ has grown to include over 120 diverse communities across the country, reaching more than 90 million individuals,” U.S. Chief Data Scientist D.J. Patil said.

Most recently, Santa Cruz County helped implement two award-winning programs, Maintaining Ongoing Stability through Treatment (MOST), which brings together experts from various disciplines to divert those with mental health disabilities from the jail system, and the Bob Lee Community Partnership for Accountability, Connection and Treatment (PACT) program. The latter is a joint partnership of the County, City of Santa Cruz and local nonprofits targeting chronic offenders in the criminal justice system.

The County has also been a nationally recognized leader in criminal justice reforms aimed at reducing the jail population, having reduced the jail population, cut the Juvenile Hall population by more than half, slashed minority arrests and embraced pre-trial assessments and custody alternatives. When it comes to juvenile reforms alone, over 100 jurisdictions have visited the county to learn how to replicate our programs.

Santa Cruz County was one of the first to implement the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a program that now exists in nearly 300 counties nationwide. The County has also contracted with James Bell at the W. Haywood Burns Institute to assess decision points within our criminal justice system, with the goal of reducing racial and ethnic disparities.

The County is one of four in California participating in the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, which looks at cost-effective ways to reduce recidivism. It also partnered with George Mason University's Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence to better assess the risks posed by offenders, and with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation to become a pilot site for a new pretrial risk assessment tool that helps further reduce pretrial detentions.

For more on the White House Data-Driven Justice Initiative, go to:

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/blog/growing-number-communities-are-using-data-improve-policing-and-criminal-justice>.