



PSA Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia

Promoting pretrial justice and enhancing community safety

LEADING IN THE FIELD

Administering pretrial services in the Nation's Capital for over 50 years

FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

In 2017, PSA celebrated 50 years of service to the Nation's Capital. During this time, PSA has earned a national reputation as a leader in the pretrial justice field. We honor this status by providing ongoing technical support to jurisdictions throughout the US and abroad that are interested in initiating or enhancing their own pretrial programs.



PSA's mission is to promote pretrial justice and enhance community safety. Our unique model provides timely and accurate information to the courts to support informed decision-making; honors the presumption of innocence and each defendant's right to pretrial release under the least restrictive conditions that assure community safety and return to court; promotes graduated sanctions for violation of release conditions and supports incentives for defendants who consistently comply with release conditions; implements continuous process evaluation to improve outcomes and assure the fair administration of justice; partners and collaborates with other justice agencies and community organizations to enhance public safety in the District's neighborhoods; and effectively manages the appropriated funds entrusted to our stewardship.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

The District operates an "in or out" bail system that promotes open and transparent decisions about release or detention. The foundation of this system is the DC bail statute, which presumes release on personal recognizance, emphasizes the use of least restrictive release conditions for eligible defendants, authorizes statutory-based detention for those who pose an unacceptable risk to the community, and includes an absolute prohibition on the use of financial conditions to assure community safety. The statute allows judges to detain defendants in a way that not only protects public safety, but also safeguards due process. Most significantly, the District's bail law encourages strong pretrial outcomes with very minimal use of money bonds.

EFFECTIVE RISK ASSESSMENT, SUPERVISION AND TREATMENT

PSA has used some form of risk assessment since its inception in 1967—the longest continuous use of a risk instrument in the pretrial field. PSA's current risk assessment is the result of independent research to identify factors that are predictive of failure to appear for a

scheduled court appearance and rearrest on a new offense during pretrial supervision. This helps ensure that defendants are matched to appropriate and effective levels of supervision when release is appropriate, or detained when that is consistent with public safety.

PSA provides a continuum of supervision for defendants released into the community pending trial, based on each individual's assessed level of risk. PSA promotes defendant accountability to court-ordered conditions, court appearance and public safety by employing supervision levels consistent with a defendant's identified risk level, and promotes swift and effective consequences for pretrial misconduct.

Illicit drug use and mental health issues can contribute significantly to public safety concerns and flight risk. When appropriate, PSA integrates substance use disorder treatment and mental health services into supervision. This includes referrals to community-based treatment providers and PSA's own specialized treatment and supervision programs. The District of Columbia Superior Court's nationally-recognized Drug Court and Mental Health Community Court are two examples of how PSA and the court have collaborated to provide appropriate treatment (in lieu of punishment) for defendants with substance use disorders and/or mental health issues, and thus breaking the cycle of drug use/mental illness and involvement in the criminal justice system.

RESULTS

PSA has responsibility for over 17,000 defendants each year, and has oversight of approximately 4,600 individuals on any given day. The vast majority of defendants are awaiting trial in DC Superior Court, with a smaller number awaiting trial in US District Court. PSA's current caseloads include individuals being supervised on a full range of charges, from misdemeanor property offenses to felony murder. On average, defendants remain on supervision for just over 100 days. During this period, PSA administers evidence-based and data-informed risk assessment and supervision practices to identify factors related to pretrial misconduct and maximize the likelihood of arrest-free behavior and court appearance during the pretrial period.

Today in DC, we release over 90% of arrestees and approximately 88% of these individuals remain arrest-free while awaiting trial. Of those re-arrested, less than 2% are alleged to have committed a violent crime. In addition, over 90% of released defendants make all scheduled court appearances. We believe these outcomes demonstrate the efficacy of our efforts to keep the District of Columbia a safe place for to live, work and visit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call 202-220-5500 or email contact@psa.gov