



*Sedgwick County...
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Public Safety

fastFACTS

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Criminal Justice Fast Facts

Background

Sedgwick County is struggling to manage an ever-increasing demand for jail beds. Through the 1990s, we saw a dramatic increase in the incarceration rate: in 1990 our rate was about half the national average and by the end of the decade we exceeded the national average. Among the many reasons for the dramatic change were new laws, more stringent sentencing guidelines, mandatory sentences, greater investment in law enforcement, effective prosecution and forensic science resources. Many of these changes were wrought by an increase in serious crime, more public outrage at crimes like DUI and domestic violence, and the crimes and fear of emerging gangs.

The reaction to these changes was the construction of 1068 jail beds in two additions costing about \$60M to build and many millions to operate each year. Unfortunately, the demand for beds continued to grow. Faced with the dilemma of a full jail and no end in sight for continued expansion, the Board of Commissioners hired a criminal justice consultation firm in 2003. The firm's observations were startling. Using trend and cost analysis, simply continuing down the path of building beds to meet demand would result in the jail consuming about 30% of the County's budget by 2025—an untenable position. A new direction had to be found.

Forming the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)

One of the principle recommendations was to organize key stakeholders into a body committed to the most rational, effective and efficient criminal justice operation within the framework of law and values in Sedgwick County. Using the consultant's report as a springboard, a master plan was developed to improve processes and procedures, providing safe and viable alternatives designed to reduce recidivism, and to provide adequate, well-run facilities.

The council began their work in April 2004 and continues this public service today. Voting membership includes state and municipal judges, district attorney, Wichita's chief prosecutor, public defender, chief of police, and a city council member, two Sedgwick County commissioners, sheriff, manager, COMCARE director, corrections department director, public safety division director, and a Sedgwick County Association of Cities representative.

What steps and alterations have been made?

Some of the early work was a judicial review and adjustment of district court and Wichita court bond schedules, extending pre-trial supervision services to the Wichita Municipal Court and safely double bunking in the jail. A number of significant investments were made as well:

- Funding 45 beds in the Community Corrections Adult Residential Program to relieve a persistent waiting list in the jail. The Adult Residential Program provides the district court a place other than state prison to sanction select inmates. It provides a structured environment where inmates are closely supervised, but are able to work, receive treatment and remain attached to the community. It is primarily a state-funded program. Currently the program is full and there are 30+ inmates waiting in our jail for an opening.
- Expanding the sheriff's Work Release Program from 96 to 157 beds. The current facility is double bunked and maxed out. About 50% are four-time DUI offenders, now serving their sentence in jail as opposed to prison as a result of state sentencing changes.
- Creation of the Sedgwick County Offender Assessment Program (SCOAP) in July 2006. This 24/7 program is designed to identify, stabilize and provide treatment or other services to those who are arrested for what are fundamentally manifestations of mental illness. Clients of this program are typically arrested for nuisance and disorderly conduct infractions and tend to be frequent residents, but short-term residents of the jail. The program capacity is 100 and average daily population (ADP) for 2008 was 81. Budget for 2009 is \$1.6M.
- Creation of the Sedgwick County Day Reporting Center (DRC) in July 2006. The DRC is a non-residential sentencing alternative to incarceration. The program provides multi-level supervision, case management treatment for cognitive behavior changes, pre-employment and anger management. The program can last from six to 12 months and is designed to reduce recidivism. The program is operated under contract by Behavioral Interventions, Inc. Current ADP is 155, including 40 in post-program "aftercare" cases. The 2009 Budget is \$2.4M, which could support an additional 75 offenders.



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What steps have been taken? Cont'd.

- The District Attorney's Diversion Program was expanded. This program is designed to provide qualified offenders an opportunity to avoid a criminal conviction, yet still be held accountable for their acts. Program requirements may include restitution, counseling, treatment, community service and payment of fines and costs. Success results in dismissal of charges. 2009 budget is \$273,00.
- Creation of a drug court in the district court. This is our newest effort, which just kicked off in November 2008. This targets high-risk felony offenders who have violated their probation. This problem-solving court is coupled with treatment and supervision resources to provide extensive intervention (expected to be 18 months on average) to reduce recidivism and substance abuse among this addicted population. The target number of offenders in the program is 120 as we begin. Budget for 2009 is about \$1M.

Sedgwick County has been working to alter its future in safe and productive ways. We have seen a significant short-term change in the growth of bed demand trends and the CJCC continues to work on smarter, more effective ways to administer and manage criminal justice.

How can you help?

All of the programs we have undertaken have had a positive effect on our jail trends. Two programs, the local funding for Adult Residential and the District Drug Court, have a positive effect on the state prison population and budget by providing community-based alternatives for district court. We need your help as you face significant challenges and pressure this legislative session to be cautious about decisions that place more pressure on our criminal justice system.

Specifically:

- Carefully consider legislation that shifts sentences from prison to jail. Jails are not as well equipped to provide support services for long-term inmates and the shift in cost is very painful.
- Be thoughtful and probing about new or increased jail sanctions. Consider if a new or expanded sanction is going to effectively deter or affect offender behavior.
- Always feel free to call or e-mail us if you need information or input.

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