WHEN MORE IS LESS:
How a Larger Women's Jail in Baltimore will Reduce Public Safety and Diminish Resources for Positive Social Investments

A Justice Policy Institute Report
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About the Justice Policy Institute

The Justice Policy Institute is a non-profit research and public policy organization dedicated to reducing society’s reliance on incarceration and promoting fair and effective solutions to social problems.

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Introduction

Despite declines in the number of women being held in the Baltimore City Detention Center (BCDC, or “the jail”), the State of Maryland, which operates the jail, is planning a new women’s facility with twice the beds currently being used. While numerous factors can affect the number of people entering and being detained in jail, having excess bed capacity often leads to increased incarceration: a “build it and they will come” phenomena. Policies that increase the jail population often have a lasting effect on communities of color – and in Baltimore City, a disproportionate majority of people arrested and incarcerated are African American. Given that research indicates that increased incarceration does not equal less crime—it actually is the opposite1 — the negative public safety, economic and community impacts of the planned expansion are not justifiable. Almost none of the women in the jail have been convicted of the offense they were brought in for and should only be held pretrial if there is a clear risk to public safety.

Home to one of the 20 largest jails in the country,2 Baltimore City continues to incarcerate its residents at alarming rates despite falling crime rates in the city.3 Women make up about 11 percent of the people held in the Baltimore City Detention Center.4 At the start of 2010, 400 women and six girls were being held in the Women’s Detention Center, with more than three-quarters of them charged with nonviolent offenses.5 After a federal Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation found poor living conditions for people—especially women—detained in the jail, the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services (DPDS), a division of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) that operates the jail, entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the DOJ identifying what needed to be done to come into compliance with federal guidelines. As part of this agreement, DPDS is currently in the planning stages for a new, 800-bed detention facility for women arrested in Baltimore. The total project will cost Maryland taxpayers over $181 million for the construction alone, not including the additional annual operating costs.

According to the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, the new women’s jail facility will not only increase the number of available beds for women, but will provide space for a separate booking and intake center for women as well as facilities for dining and programs such as education, training, recreation, counseling, medical and mental health service and visiting.6 While the current plan is for the wings and units in the jail that previously housed women and girls to be opened up to expand delivery of programs and services to the male jail population, in the future they also could be used to increase bed capacity in that part of the facility.7

While there is clearly a need for an improved facility for women who are detained, evidence from other localities that have expanded their jails shows that the addition of new pretrial correctional facilities frequently eliminates pressure to reduce the number of people held in jail. Women who now are released either on bail or on their own recognizance may be detained in these facilities in the future because more and better space is available. Other systems such as law enforcement may see additional beds as an invitation to arrest more women for minor offenses, even when crime is down in the city. This net-widening process can actually be detrimental to individual and community: women who do not need to be incarcerated to ensure court appearance and public safety would do better staying in the community pretrial so they can maintain support networks like family, employment and education. Reducing the number of women held in jail while awaiting trial will save money that can be redirected toward proven cost-effective public safety strategies, such as education, job training, housing for the city’s vulnerable homeless population, and treatment for people who are either involved in—or at risk of becoming involved in—the justice system.
One challenge is that Baltimore’s justice system and jail are structured differently than a typical county or city jail. Unlike other localities, the State of Maryland funds and operates the pretrial detention facilities in Baltimore City, including the Baltimore jail facilities. For this reason, initiatives that have worked in other jurisdictions to reduce the number of people in jails may not be as effective in Baltimore. While counties and cities that pay for their own detention facilities have a financial incentive to limit the number of people in their jails, Baltimore City does not, and residents all over the state of Maryland pay for the facilities at a cost of around $150 million a year. Better and more cost-effective solutions are available to improve public safety and strengthen communities, including pretrial release supervision, diversion and treatment, especially considering that so many women are held for nonviolent offenses.

It is past time for coming up with effective solutions that will create lasting reductions in the number of women incarcerated in the jail and long-term gains in public safety. Before the State of Maryland spends millions of dollars to construct this larger jail facility, stakeholders at the local and state level should develop and carry out a plan that will ensure that only those who present a genuine risk to public safety are held in the jail before their trial. Baltimore should be looking at innovative and evidence-based approaches to reducing the number of women going into and being detained in the jail, following the example of other jurisdictions around the country. The result will be a stronger and safer Baltimore for generations to come.
Given data showing decreases in crime and arrests, not only should Baltimore City not be expanding its jail, it should be holding fewer men, women, and youth in its jail facilities than currently are there. Past projections showing skyrocketing crime rates and increased arrests did not materialize, and the trends have even reversed over the last decade.

**Crime is down in Baltimore City.**

While some communities in Baltimore continue to face public safety challenges, the number and rate of reported crimes in the city continue to fall. Since 2000, the violent crime rate (per 100,000 people in Baltimore City) has fallen 38.74 percent and the property crime rate slightly more at 41.30 percent.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Violent Crime Rate (per 100,000)</th>
<th>Property Crime Rate (per 100,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,469.77</td>
<td>7,777.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,239.47</td>
<td>7,432.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,054.91</td>
<td>6,314.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,735.00</td>
<td>5,813.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,839.41</td>
<td>5,685.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,754.49</td>
<td>5,185.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,696.48</td>
<td>5,069.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,631.11</td>
<td>4,796.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,588.53</td>
<td>4,817.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,512.94</td>
<td>4,565.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Change 00-09</td>
<td>-38.74%</td>
<td>-41.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States*, Table 8: Offenses Known to Law Enforcement

If crime rates were the only factor affecting the number of people in jail, a comparable drop in the jail population would be evident. But this is not the case. Around 4,000 men, women and children are still being held in the jail. With crime falling, Baltimore has a unique opportunity to shift investments away from more jail beds to community-based programs that are shown to help improve public safety and reduce the likelihood that its residents become involved in the justice system.
Arrests are down in Baltimore City.

One of the reasons cited in the projection report for a need for more jail beds was increasing arrests.\textsuperscript{10} From 2000 to 2006, the total number of arrests in Baltimore City increased 8 percent.\textsuperscript{11} From these numbers, the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services forecasted 104,018 total arrests in 2010. However, due to changes in policing practices, falling crime rates and other factors, the number of arrests fell 16 percent from 2006 to 2009 to around 75,000,\textsuperscript{12} and the Police Commissioner has noted that arrests are down an additional 11 percent in 2010.\textsuperscript{13} With fewer people being arrested, the jail needs fewer beds, not more. Although relying on any guesses about future crime rates or arrest rates is difficult, erring on the side of larger facilities and more beds can result in negative consequences not only for state budgets but for communities most impacted by these facilities.

With fewer people being arrested, the jail needs fewer beds, not more.
Baltimore doesn’t need a bigger women’s jail.

The Maryland Division of Pretrial Detention and Services is planning a new, 800-bed jail facility for women arrested in Baltimore, with an ability to increase capacity to up to 1,024 women.14 This size plan is based on a population analysis conducted by the department indicating a need for 820 female beds by 2025, including space for an estimated 121 women who have received sentences of 18 months or less for nonviolent offenses.15 The analysis was based on “historical trends, crime and arrest policies, and programmatic goals for the facility.”16 However, data from the last five years do not support this conclusion, as crime and the population of women at the jail have gone down.

Women make up about 11 percent of the people held in the Baltimore City Detention Center. On January 4, 2010, there were 400 women being held in the Women’s Detention Center, including those who were held pretrial, sub curia17 and sentenced.18 In its population projections for planning the new Women’s Detention Center (WDC), the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services forecasted that it would need up to 621 beds for pretrial and sentenced women in 2010, or 810 accounting for “peaks” in the population.19 This is not the case, and unlike the overall population of the BCDC, the number of women in the Women’s Detention Center has dropped 15 percent in the last five years.

![The number of women held in the Baltimore Women's Detention Center fell 15 percent in the last 5 years.](chart).

The number of women held in the Baltimore Women's Detention Center fell 15 percent in the last 5 years.

Source: Jail Daily Extract, provided by Division of Pretrial Detention and Services

The reasons for this population change can be numerous and are beyond the scope of this brief,20 but frequently-identified causes for drops in jail populations include:

- changes to policing practices that result in fewer arrests;
- changes in crime;
- changes in availability or utilization of community-based services;
- changes in use of pretrial release and diversion programs;
- and changes to bail practices.

Regardless of the reasons behind it, this drop in the number of women behind bars in Baltimore is a positive step in the direction of reducing the number of women, children and families impacted by detention. Women have unique needs and face unique challenges when they come in conflict with the law,21 which are not typically met within the justice system, especially a jail.
The following section provides data on who is being held in the jail and why. Our analysis does not support building a women’s jail twice the size of the current facility.

**Most women in the jail are awaiting trial.**

Ninety percent of the women held in the Baltimore Women’s Detention Center at the start of 2010 were pretrial, meaning that they had yet to be convicted and awaiting their day in court on the current offense. Pretrial status can offer a variety of options for release, including pretrial supervision and treatment. Pretrial detention in the jail should be used as a very last resort; it separates people from their families, jobs and education and can have a negative impact on trial results, including a higher likelihood of conviction and incarceration over probation.

**Women of all ages are detained in Baltimore City.**

The age of women in the Women’s Detention Center on any given day is diverse, about half of women are aged 35 or younger. Women as young as 17 and older than 56 are held in the jail.

Women have unique needs that are frequently unmet in jail facilities, including a higher incidence of mental illness and often substance abuse problems. In addition, many women in jail are mothers and caregivers to children; when mothers are incarcerated it frequently disrupts the entire family.
Girls in the Baltimore jail

On January 4, 2010, 90 youth were being held in the Baltimore jail because they were being tried as adults (this number has been as high as 140 in recent years), including six girls under age 18. In addition to the new Women’s Detention Center, Maryland plans on constructing a new Youth Detention Center to hold youth being tried as adults, including both boys and girls. Girls in the jail are most likely to be held for assault and attempted murder, but some girls are held for offenses such as auto larceny and carjacking, robbery, conspiracy and narcotics violations, as well as failure to appear and violations of probation. Though girls are much less likely to be charged as adults than boys, their situation may be troubling in a different way, as girls, like women, face unique needs that are frequently unmet by jails.

The juvenile justice system came into existence under the rationale that youth are at a different stage of development than adults, and thus more malleable and amenable to treatment. Juvenile courts and correctional facilities specialize in strategies best suited to youth, including greater emphasis on rehabilitation and education. Most recently, however, the protections that have been conferred upon youth have dwindled, as a significant number are automatically charged as adults and held pre-trial in adult jails. A recent report by the Just Kids Partnership, which followed the cases of 135 youth charged as adults in Baltimore City, concluded the following:

1. The majority of cases in which youth are charged as adults will ultimately be dismissed or returned to the juvenile system. Sixty-eight percent of the 135 cases followed were ultimately sent to the juvenile court system or dismissed completely.

2. Before a youth charged as an adult can even request to be transferred to the juvenile justice system they are incarcerated pre-trial in adult jails. Youth in 13 of the 135 cases included in the study were kept in adult jail for over a year without having been convicted and without receiving any rehabilitative services. About 1/3 were held for almost 5 months.

3. Charging youth as adults does not reduce crime, it makes crime worse. Youth in the adult system are more likely to commit future crimes—and more violent crimes—than their peers in the juvenile system. Youth in adult prisons are also more likely to be raped, beaten, or commit suicide than those in juvenile facilities.

4. Providing rehabilitative services to youth reduces crime and costs less in the long run than charging youth as adults. Experts have estimated that overall every $1 spent on older teens in the juvenile justice system results in $3 of savings in the criminal justice system.

5. Treating a youth like an adult is contrary to scientific evidence. The part of the brain that deals with decision-making and risks and consequences is not fully developed in a youth.

6. African-American youth are disproportionately impacted by laws charging youth as adults. African-American youth are severely overrepresented among youth charged as adults, and are more likely to be convicted than their white peers.
7. Judges’ decisions are based on unreliable and incomplete information. Often judges who preside in cases where youth are charged as adults receive no special training in child development and are not familiar with services available in the juvenile justice system.26

Youth charged as adults face significant disadvantages throughout the court process. As youth are seldom employed or property-owners and often lack "ties to the community," they are regularly held on low bail amounts that adults would likely be able pay. Youth often over-implicate themselves and are more prone to confusion, contradiction and unintended admissions when testifying than adults. At their stage of mental development, youth are less able to comprehend long-term consequences, and therefore more likely to accept pleas that only benefit them in the most immediate future.27

![Graph showing the average number of girls under age 18 held per day in the Baltimore Women's Detention Center from 2005-09.](image)

Source: Jail Daily Extract, provided by Division of Pretrial and Detention Services

_Baltimore jails a disproportionate number of African American women._

African Americans make up 63 percent of the population in Baltimore City,28 but account for 79 percent of women in the Baltimore City Detention Center.29 In cities and states around the country, reasons for the disproportionate number of African Americans in jail can include policing practices and enforcement in certain communities, disproportionate allocation of resources in the community and within the court system, and disparate treatment by the courts. In addition, this disproportionality can become entrenched when discrimination against people with a criminal record and other barriers to employment increase the pressure to engage in illegal activities (for instance, prostitution and selling drugs) in order to meet basic human needs. The responsibility for alleviating these disparities falls not only on criminal justice
agencies, but on society as a whole, and needs to be addressed appropriately through both policy and practice at all levels of government and the community. While working to reduce the number of women in the jail, the state and city should examine more closely the reasons why women of color are disproportionately impacted by the justice system and explore ways to reduce this disparity.

Most women are detained for nonviolent offenses.

At the start of 2010, 77 percent of women held in the Baltimore City Detention Center were arrested for nonviolent offenses. One in four women was being held for a drug offense and one in five for a violation of probation (VOP). At this time, 11 women were held for trespassing and 26 for solicitation (prostitution). The decrease in the number of women in the jail is primarily due to a reduction in women held for drug offenses and violations of probation, indicating a possible shift in priorities of law enforcement and other justice agencies. Since these two offenses consistently make up the highest percentage of women in jail, this drop also points to a decreased need for jail space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Charge</th>
<th>Total Number (Jan 4, 2010)</th>
<th>CY2005 Average</th>
<th>CY2009 Average</th>
<th>%Change CY05-CY09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>-37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent/Person Offenses</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of Probation</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handgun Violation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>200%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to Appear</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trespassing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving While License Revoked or Suspended</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitation</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>402</strong></td>
<td><strong>553</strong></td>
<td><strong>474</strong></td>
<td><strong>-14%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jail Daily Extract
All taxpayers in Maryland, not just those in Baltimore City, will spend $97 million on the Baltimore City Detention Center (Detention Center) in FY2011 and another $53.6 million on the Baltimore Central Booking and Intake Center (Central Booking). The Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, which includes the Baltimore jail and pretrial release services, consumes about 13 percent of the total Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services budget ($1.3 billion). Ninety percent of DPDS’ budget goes to Baltimore’s jail facilities. Only 3.5 percent of this spending goes to the Pretrial Release Services Program, which supervises people in the community while they await trial.

The total Division of Pretrial Detention and Services budget increased 74 percent in the last decade; the Pretrial Release Services Program spending increased at a much slower rate—up 46 percent from FY2001 to FY2011. The majority of the increase in spending has gone to the jail (Central Booking and the Detention Center), as incarcerating people in these facilities can be extremely costly. The Maryland Department of Budget and Management estimates that it costs $100 per day to hold one person in the Detention Center.

In comparison, providing pretrial release services in the community costs significantly less; Justice Policy Institute researchers estimated costs of the Pretrial Release Services Program at only $2.50 per person per day. Releasing more women to pretrial supervision, where they can maintain ties in the community, will reduce the number of people in these facilities; this in turn can have lasting cost savings benefits to Maryland. Moving just 100 women from the Detention Center to the Pretrial Release Services Program for 30 days, which is the average amount of days until trial, could save Maryland $292,000 per month.

While the estimated operational costs for the new Women’s Detention Center are unavailable, the total project costs to plan and build it are estimated at $181 million, including planning and
construction to be completed in 2015. In times of a budget crisis like Maryland is now facing, funds should be spent on the most cost-effective programs and policies that are shown to improve public safety and promote positive life outcomes. The money Maryland is planning to spend on increasing the number of women who could potentially be held in the jail is not the most effective use of these scarce resources.

Moving just 100 women from the Detention Center to the Pretrial Release Services Program for 30 days, which is the average amount of days until trial, could save Maryland $292,000 per month.
One of the biggest concerns of courts across the country and in Baltimore City is people not showing up to court. Failure to appear for court causes increased workloads for court staff, issuance of arrest warrants, incarceration on minor offenses for people who are non-compliant and longer jail stays in connection with the present offense or future offenses. And one of the factors considered by the courts in determining conditions of release is a person’s past history of failing to appear. Failure to appear also sometimes results in the loss of revenues from unpaid fines and fees.

Nationally, 74 percent of women charged with felonies are released pretrial. These women have a 21 percent failure to appear (FTA) rate; about one in five women will not return to court on the set date. About 12 percent of these women will be re-arrested while awaiting trial. Multiple options are available to help ensure that people return to court and receive any services or programs they need to thwart future involvement in the justice system. With smaller programs and interventions like reminder phone call systems to more involved supervision like pretrial release supervision and programs like diversion, jail should be the last resort for women awaiting trial in Baltimore.

**Court Date Notification Systems**

People can miss their court date for myriad reasons that are unrelated to an unwillingness to appear, ranging from lack of transportation, being unsure what is expected of them or just plain forgetfulness. The Maryland Pretrial Release Services Program has been effective in reducing the number of failures to appear (FTA) for people under its supervision, but for the thousands of people who are released pretrial without supervision, FTAs may still be a challenge without a reminder of court date. People kept in jail for FTAs are not generally considered to be a risk to public safety and keeping them in detention is a drain of public resources (the Baltimore jail currently holds over 100 people whose most serious charge is failure to appear). Promising results have been shown in other localities that have successfully implemented court date notification systems that may be even more cost-effective than the Pretrial Release Services Program. In Multnomah County, Oregon, for example, in the first two years of the program alone, failures to appear dropped from 29 to 16 percent, representing a nearly 45 percent decrease in the number of people who didn’t show up for court. The program, which was allotted $40,000 in funding when launched in 2005, is estimated to save up to $6.4 million worth of staff time each year.

**Pretrial Risk Assessments and Screening Tools**

Using appropriate screening and risk assessment tools for women who are arrested before they go before the bail commissioner can help the commissioner or judge make a more evidence-based decision on whether the person should be released, offered bail, or committed to the jail to await trial. Such risk assessments are starting to be used more frequently across the country and are showing positive results, including reducing the number of people detained pretrial with no negative impact on public safety.
In Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh), the Pretrial Services Agency worked with the Pretrial Justice Institute to develop a comprehensive instrument for assessing people’s risks as both a danger to the community and for failing to appear in court. This evidence-based instrument allows for people who are arrested to be evaluated consistently and fairly, and provides judges with a tool for making appropriate pretrial release decisions. Thanks in part to this tool, 90 percent of people arrested in Allegheny County are released pretrial, leading to less unnecessary jailing of people who do not pose a risk to public safety, and saving money on jail beds that can be invested elsewhere.

Screening tools that have been created to identify gender-specific needs can be important in enabling staff to quickly identify women who merit additional in-depth assessment for risk and need. A 2008 survey of pretrial practice conducted by the Pretrial Justice Institute showed that only 6 percent of programs surveyed have special procedures to supervise women; nine percent of the programs use separate assessment tools to identify unique risk factors that create barriers for women. Having gender-responsive screening tools that take into account unique characteristics of women can make for more effective decision-making.

In Hamilton County, Ohio (Cincinnati), administrators started noticing an uptick in the number of women coming into and staying in their jail, especially women with mental health and substance abuse disorders. To diminish the impact that these increasing numbers of arrests had on the jail, pretrial services implemented an intake tool to screen women arriving in the jail before they got too far into the system. The tool they chose cost $10,000 to set up the software and just $.35 per intake evaluation, which typically lasts about five to 10 minutes. When the tool identifies a woman as likely needing further evaluation the arraignment judge receives a recommendation to order an in-depth assessment as part of a presentence investigation or bond condition. As a result of this new screening tool, judges are able to make recommendations for diversion programs and other release conditions for women who come in conflict with the law who may have an underlying mental health or substance abuse issue.

In 2007, then 22-year-old Michelle was arrested after getting into a fight with another young woman and taken to Central Booking. She didn’t know it at the time, but she would be spending the next nine months in jail awaiting trial. She spent almost 24 hours in Central Booking that day. When she finally saw the commissioner he was “rude” and “had an attitude.” Michelle was not offered bail. The realization set in that she was not going to be released from the jail that day, or any day soon.

*Michelle’s name has been changed to protect her privacy. Michelle was personally interviewed by the author of this report.

**Pretrial Release Services Program (PRSP)**

The Pretrial Release Services Program (PRSP), which is a part of the Maryland Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, currently supervises around 1,100 men and women daily who are referred by the judge for community-based supervision in Baltimore. This program monitors people to ensure that they go to court and follow the terms assigned by the judge, which may include things like drug treatment and regular meetings with their pretrial agent. Of over 50,000 people screened annually, the Pretrial Release Services Program supervises and monitors approximately six or seven thousand of them for whom the court orders pretrial release. At trial or in subsequent proceedings, the pretrial agent reports to the court on the person’s compliance with the terms of pretrial release. These compliance reports are used for sentencing decisions and, in some instances, plea bargaining negotiations.
The Pretrial Release Services Program has a very high success rate as measured by the percentage of people under their supervision who make their court date. Ninety-four percent of people who are under the supervision of this program show up for court; this percentage is significantly higher than the national average of 88 percent. In addition, just 4 percent of people under supervision will be arrested on a new charge while awaiting trial, compared to 18 percent nationally.

Pretrial release supervision is a common practice across the country, with many localities expanding and improving upon these services due to overcrowding and excessive spending on their correctional facilities. Supervising someone in the community through the Pretrial Release Services Program is considerably less expensive than keeping them incarcerated in the jail ($2.50 versus $100 per day, respectively). Pretrial supervision also provides a number of advantages over incarceration:

- Supervision protects the public by reducing the risk that people under supervision will engage in illegal behavior.
- Supervision gives pretrial officers the means to enforce conditions ordered by the court, such as those requiring persons to perform community service or seek treatment.
- Supervision may provide referrals for substance abuse treatment for people who need it.
- As an alternative to incarceration, supervision allows people to live with their families, hold jobs and be productive members of society.
- Supervision may provide referrals for mental health treatment to people who need it while awaiting trial and reduces the decompensation that many people with mental illnesses experience during incarceration.
- Supervision may provide referrals for educational or vocational training that boosts people’s capacity to earn a living.
- Supervision can demonstrate to a judge that a person will be able to stay in the community without engaging in illegal behavior, possibly making it more likely that they will receive a sentence of probation over incarceration.
A piece of reducing the population of the jail is reducing the amount of “repeat business,” or re-arrests for the same types of offenses; however, people leaving correctional facilities face a number of different challenges when re-entering their communities. Finding employment and housing, accessing treatment or services, establishing positive social networks and even just getting transportation home are all common challenges faced by people re-entering the community. These challenges are partially responsible for the high re-incarceration rate; the lack of access to re-entry services can make the transition back to the community even more difficult. A survey of women in the Baltimore jail revealed the five most important factors in keeping them from returning to jail: employment, drug treatment, housing, seeing their children and living in a different neighborhood.50

The success of re-entry initiatives pays dividends, both in terms of social costs and financial costs. Providing services that guide formerly incarcerated men and women into jobs can have a positive impact on communities, both in terms of public safety and cost savings. In 2007, the Urban Institute found that the Maryland Reentry Partnership Initiative (REP) saved Baltimore residents $7.2 million—$21,500 per REP participant—producing $3 in benefits for every $1 spent. Participants in REP also committed fewer crimes (72 percent during the study period) than the control group (77.6 percent).51 Women especially could benefit from policies that keep them from being held in jails. Improving access to treatment in the community before justice involvement and providing treatment after release can reduce the number of women in the jail and improve public safety.

Mental Health Treatment

A collaborative project commissioned by Baltimore non-profit organization Power Inside,52 working with women inside the Baltimore jail and the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, surveyed women leaving the jail in winter 2005. The purpose was to gain information about the women generally and what they felt that they needed when they got out.53 Of the 148 women surveyed, 59 percent reported having been diagnosed with depression and 33 percent with bipolar disorder.54

Anita* struggled with addiction for many years but was never able to access treatment and admittedly did not always have the desire to seek treatment. A few years ago she was arrested in Baltimore and sent to jail on drug-related charges and for violating her probation. She spent six months in the jail.

While incarcerated in the Women’s Detention Center, Anita took part in group sessions with Baltimore Rising, Inc., a nonprofit group that provides re-entry services inside and outside the jail. Because of the support she received from Baltimore Rising and this group of women at the jail, Anita felt hope.

After release, staff at Baltimore Rising referred her to a transitional recovery house for women who have been released from jail and are in need of treatment. Anita continues to work with Baltimore Rising and is attending college. She has goals for her life now, like getting her own place and finishing her education. She knows that it is hard for women who have been in jail to make positive changes to their life and not go back to their old ways. She tears up when thinking about how grateful she is for the help she has received since she’s been released and how excited she is for the positive things in her future. She never wants to go back to the jail.

*Anita’s name has been changed to protect her privacy. Anita was personally interviewed by the author of this report.
People who have co-occurring drug addiction and mental health disorders can experience a psychological deterioration once jailed due to the interruption in treatment and medication and environmental stressors. People with these issues are in need of extra care from mental health professionals, who, according to the National Association of Counties, have to work “twice as hard to get them back to where they were before they entered the jail.” The lack of available community mental health treatment can lead to more people with mental illness coming into contact with the justice system, especially for people who are also homeless.

![Chart showing mental illness prevalence in jail vs. general population]


Researchers have found that people’s reaction to jail conditions can exacerbate mental health problems and conditions that may increase their propensity towards suicidal behavior. Newly jailed people experience fear of the unknown, distrust of the environment, isolation from family and significant others, shame and stigma of incarceration, a loss of stabilizing resources and severe guilt or shame over the alleged offense. Current mental illness and prior history of suicidal behavior also intensify in the jail environment. These conditions and stressors conspire to increase the suicide rate in jails, as compared to the general population. Compared with a U.S. suicide rate of 17 per 100,000 people, the suicide rate in local jails is 47 per 100,000 people. Suicide is second only to illness in the leading cause of death in jails: 25 percent of all deaths in jails in 2006 were suicides.

One in four women surveyed in the Baltimore Women’s Detention Center didn’t know where she would be staying when she was released.
**Substance Abuse Treatment**

Fifty-five percent of women surveyed reported recently using heroin.\(^{59}\) Three quarters of women reported wanting drug treatment upon release, but only 13 percent of women who participated in the survey reported accessing some form of drug treatment during incarceration. Nearly 40 percent of women reported not having insurance and 53 percent of women reported not accessing drug treatment because they could not afford the fees.

An estimated 68 percent of people in jails across the country have a substance abuse problem,\(^{60}\) and Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems (BSAS) estimates that 8,000 Baltimore residents receive court orders with conditions for treatment annually.\(^{61}\) Although drug treatment in the community is more effective than treatment in prison or jail,\(^ {62}\) quality institutional treatment can be beneficial and may help with re-entry into the community. The Baltimore jail provides substance abuse treatment for select people who were either participating in methadone programs when they were arrested or who were court ordered to treatment while incarcerated through Addicts Changing Together—Substance Abuse Program (ACT-SAP), but more can and should be done to reach women who are struggling with addiction.

**Housing**

Adequate and affordable housing is one of the key factors in whether a person will succeed in the community upon release. Of the 148 women surveyed who were leaving the jail, only half (54 percent) anticipated stable housing upon release. One in four women surveyed did not know where she would be staying when she was released, and among those who did know where she would be staying, 28 percent anticipated staying with a family member, 16 percent at their own home, 13 percent in a residential treatment program and 8 percent were planning to stay with friends.

Studies show that quality affordable housing can mean the difference between a person returning to jail and being successful in the community. For people who are most at risk for criminal justice involvement—such as those with substance abuse or mental health issues—supportive or affordable housing has been shown to be a cost-effective public investment, lowering corrections and jail expenditures and freeing up funds for other public safety investments.\(^ {63}\) Additionally, providing affordable or supportive housing to people leaving correctional facilities is an effective means of reducing the chance of future incarceration. A 1998 qualitative study conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice found that people leaving a correctional facility in New York City on parole who entered shelters for the homeless were seven times more likely to abscond during their first month after release than those who had some form of housing.\(^ {64}\)
The primary recommendation is for the State of Maryland to abandon plans to build an 800-bed women’s jail. The 2007 projections that were used are overstated even without any systematic reforms. And a number of changes to policies and practices in the jail system could have a significant impact on reducing the number of women held in the Baltimore jail and the costs associated with pretrial detention, as well as on improving the outcomes of Baltimore women charged with an offense. Court processes have a real impact on the number of people incarcerated in the jail and how long they stay there. Identifying promising practices could reduce the length of time people wait for trial, reducing the number of people in the jail, thereby reducing costs and possibly leading to better outcomes for people involved in the justice system.

Making necessary changes drawn from evidence of what works and on best practices in re-entry in other localities will reduce the number of people in the jail, reduce costs associated with the jail and other criminal justice costs, improve safety in the jail and in the community and improve life trajectories for people re-entering the community. The State of Maryland should postpone any additional planning or construction until it has completed a new population projection that takes into account the implementation of the following recommendations:

1. **Baltimore police should provide citations rather than arrests for certain offenses.** Baltimore should determine which policies and practices are causing more people to go to jail for offenses that do not create a public safety threat, like zero-tolerance policies that incarcerate people for quality-of-life offenses. About two-thirds of the people currently in the jail are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses, including three-fourths of women. By reducing the number of people in jail for these types of offenses, resources and space could be directed toward people who may need to be detained for a public safety reason. A number of low-level misdemeanor offenses may be better handled by issuing citations rather than arrest, including driving on a suspended license, shoplifting, violation of park rules, trespassing, disorderly conduct, alcohol-related offenses and possession of marijuana. Localities like New York City and some counties in Texas have already implemented such policies without any negative impact on public safety.

Law enforcement responses to low-level, nonviolent offenses use up valuable time and costly resources from the courts, law enforcement, and the jail; subject individuals being arrested to unnecessary trauma and deprivation of liberty; and fail to address the underlying causes for the behaviors that led to a person’s arrest. More appropriate and cost-effective responses need to be developed to replace the default mode of enforcement, financial penalties and confinement.

2. **Identify low-risk people at the start.** The State’s Attorney’s Office should review low-level arrests in addition to more serious ones and make recommendations on pretrial release. The SAO investigates people with violent or serious histories in the War Room to make recommendations to the District Court Commissioner. This process could also be used for people with little or no criminal history who pose no threat to the community and are likely to return to court. Identifying more people at the outset who...
could be released will save money through reduced incarceration, less court time, and reduced workload of Pretrial Release Investigators.

3. **Utilize diversion and treatment for people with substance abuse problems.** Judges should refer more people to drug treatment, as appropriate. But for the people with substance abuse problems who judges feel should be detained for public safety reasons, judges should make more referrals to treatment programs. The Division of Pretrial Detention and Services should work with judges and treatment providers to expand these programs in the jail.

4. **Utilize pretrial risk assessments and screening tools to help determine who is released pretrial.** Localities around the country are realizing the importance of using evidence-based risk assessments and screening tools to help judges determine pretrial statuses of people being charged with offenses. Using an objective, research-based approach, particularly one that is gender-specific, can lead to fairer and more effective decisions on who is released pretrial and who is held in jail because of they are a flight risk or a risk to public safety.

5. **Increase the use of Pretrial Supervision.** Baltimore should release more people to be supervised in the community by the Pretrial Release Services Program. This program is less expensive than incarceration and the results are even better than the national average. Expanding this program could save thousands of dollars a month, reduce the jail population and reduce the number of people who fail to appear at court.

6. **Expand pretrial release options outside of money bail.** As money bail discriminates against people with fewer resources and contributes to fewer people being released despite being low-risk to public safety, examining alternatives to money bail could result in more effective practices that reduce both failure to appear rates and the number of people held in the jail on low bail amounts.

7. **Remind people to go to court.** Baltimore should consider implementing a court date notification system modeled after effective programs in other jurisdictions. Multiple localities across the country are experimenting with both automated and live calling systems to remind people of their court dates, like the Court Appearance Notification System in Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon or the Court Date Notification Program in Jefferson County (Denver), Colorado. Just as your doctor will call you the day before your appointment as a reminder, setting up a system of calling, emailing or texting individuals to remind them of their court date may reduce the number of failure to appears, saving the courts time and saving law enforcement resources.

8. **The Division of Parole and Probation should send fewer people to jail on violations of probation and follow a support model of probation supervision, and the Courts should reduce the amount of time women wait for their probation violation hearing.** One in five women in the jail is there for a violation of probation. Research shows that the most effective probation systems are based on support and services, similar to Maryland’s Proactive Community Supervision (PCS). As incarceration in the jail is the most expensive and ineffective modality of supervision, fully implementing the PCS program would result in fewer people incarcerated for violations of probation, freeing up jail space and better utilizing valuable resources. And forcing women who are trying to establish positive ties to the community, like
employment and education, to remain incarcerated for upwards of 30 days if they cannot afford bail on a technical violation is a waste of jail resources and may be contributing to jail overcrowding.

9. **Reduce time between arrest and court.** Baltimore should reduce the length of time between arrest and court date. As it is now, some people are held pretrial for 30 or more days only to have their case dismissed or to receive probation without jail time or even to receive a shorter sentence than they have already served. In the meantime, individuals who have been locked up may have lost their jobs, had their education derailed, or not met child custody or support expectations. Every extra day that a person is incarcerated while awaiting trial costs Maryland taxpayers an average of $100. Speeding up the process, while maintaining fair legal practices, can significantly reduce the number of people in the jail at any given time and reduce costs.

10. **Evaluate court processes.** The Baltimore Courts should examine the fairness of fast-tracking court processes that require guilty pleas. Finding ways to streamline court processes while providing alternatives to pleas could benefit people involved in the system and the larger community because that person would not be hindered by the collateral consequences of a criminal record. In order to accomplish this goal, system players need better access to court data.

11. **Expand court hours.** Baltimore Courts should expand their hours to include nights and weekends to clear up court backlogs. Other jurisdictions like New York City have opened up extended hours for their courts to reduce clogged court dockets. Expanding court hours could alleviate long wait periods for people awaiting trial, which could have a significant impact on the amount of time people spend in jail pretrial.

12. **Address postponements.** Baltimore criminal justice agencies need to address the number of postponements allowed in cases, as these are affecting the length of time people remain incarcerated pretrial. Postponements are caused by nearly all parts of the system and examining possible solutions to this problem will help reduce the length of time people remain in jail awaiting trial.

13. **Maryland and Baltimore should provide more funding for front-end services such as education, employment, treatment and housing.** Research has shown that education, employment, drug treatment, health care, and the availability of affordable housing coincide with better outcomes for people leaving correctional facilities. Jurisdictions that spend more money on these services are likely to experience lower crime rates and lower incarceration rates. An increase in spending on education, employment and other services not only would improve public safety, but also would enhance and enrich the community to the benefit of all Baltimore residents. Issues around “who pays for what” could be resolved so that one level of government or part of the system doesn’t bear the costs while another reaps the savings.

14. **Increase preventative treatment availability for people with mental illness.** Baltimore City should fund more community mental health treatment for people with mental illness before they become involved in the justice system. People with mental illness do not belong in the justice system or in jails, and providing community-based services and medication regardless of ability to pay can prevent some behaviors that may lead to arrest or incarceration. As women especially are more likely to live with a
mental illness, providing broader access to treatment for women would reduce the likelihood of justice involvement.

15. **Coordinate re-entry services.** Baltimore lacks a coordinated re-entry system for people leaving the jail. Many jurisdictions around the country either have re-entry agencies run by the city or county, or they work with non-profits in their area to provide these immediate services to people leaving their local jails. Baltimore City and the State of Maryland should create such an agency or at a minimum a full-time staff position that would provide a case management system that works with people while they are incarcerated and also connects them to an office close to the jail when they are released. This agency could keep files on each of its clients and provide case management and referrals to services like treatment, housing and employment that are critical to people leaving correctional facilities. These services would be most effective if available right when people are released, as a first stop on their way back to the community. Providing these services to people after their release could have a great impact on their success in the community and reduce the likelihood that they will return to the jail.

16. **Follow best practices and models in re-entry.** The Division of Pretrial Detention and Services should utilize best practices in jail re-entry to reduce the number of people returning to the jail. The National Institute of Corrections and the Urban Institute just released the Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) Implementation Toolkit. This web-based learning resource is designed to guide jurisdictions through implementation of the TJC model, in whole or in part, and serves as a hands-on resource for users interested in jail re-entry, whether in a criminal justice or community-based organization. The Toolkit is available here: wws.jailtransition.com/Toolkit.

17. **Baltimore City and Maryland should foster greater coordination and understanding between agencies.** While the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee is a promising place for individual agencies to meet and discuss emerging and ongoing issues within the justice system, a lack of communication and understanding between agencies still exists, and some agencies are not as involved as they could be on these important issues. Having greater coordination and collaboration both within and between city and state agencies involved in the jail system, including the Mayor’s Office of Human Services and Office on Criminal Justice, could greatly assist efforts to improve public safety while reducing the jail population and saving money. Furthermore, involving community organizations that work with people leaving the jail would provide valuable insight and give these groups a voice in the process.
1 See Justice Policy Institute, Public Safety Research, www.justicepolicy.org
2 See Justice Policy Institute, Public Safety Research, www.justicepolicy.org
5 DPDS Daily Population Report, January 4, 2010
6 DPDS Daily Population Report, January 4, 2010
7 Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, Analysis of the FY 2010 Maryland Executive Budget, 2009, New Women’s Detention Facility (Baltimore City)
8 Personal communication with Thomasina Hiers, former Assistant Secretary/Chief of Staff, Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, May 2010.
10 FBI Uniform Crime Report, Crime in the United States, Table 8: Offenses Known to Law Enforcement, www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm
11 Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Project Program for New Youth Detention Center (Baltimore, MD: Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, 2007)
12 Baltimore Police Department, Quality Assurance Unit, Planning and Research Section, as reported to the Uniform Crime Reporting Unit of the Maryland State Police, provided March 30, 2010.
13 Meeting notes, November 11, 2010, Baltimore City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.
14 Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, Analysis of the FY 2010 Maryland Executive Budget, 2009, New Women’s Detention Facility (Baltimore City)
15 Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, 2007 Page I-30.
16 Division of Pretrial Detention and Services, Analysis of the FY 2010 Maryland Executive Budget, 2009, New Women’s Detention Facility (Baltimore City)
17 Sub curia means that the court is holding the motion for sentence modification until such a time as the woman or her attorney, if applicable, notifies it that they are ready to proceed on the hearing. This usually happens when, for example, the modification will only be granted if the person completes something like drug/alcohol treatment or anger management. The reason it must be held sub curia is because this motion is due within 90 days of sentencing, but the person wants to wait longer than that for the hearing to take place.
18 DPDS Daily Population Report, January 4, 2010. Note that there is significant turnover in the population, so this figure is only a small percentage of the number of different women and girls are held for some period of time during a year.
19 Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, 2007 Page I-32.
21 For more information on women in correctional facilities, please see Shawn M. Flower, Gender-Responsive Strategies for Women Offenders: Employment and Female Offenders: An Update of the Empirical Research (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Corrections, 2010)
22 DPDS Daily Population Report, January 4, 2010
24 Division of Pretrial Detention and Services
25 Jail Daily Extract
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Pretrial Analysis


Analysis of the Jail Daily Extract, February 17, 2010, provided by Division of Pretrial Detention and Services


See Pretrial Justice Institute, www.pretrial.org


Division of Pretrial Detention and Services Population Briefing for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, March 2010


Maryland Department of Budget and Management, 2010, 676-677.


John Roman and others, Impact and Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Maryland Reentry Partnership Initiative (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2007), pg. i.

Power Inside is a multidisciplinary program that is committed to building self-sufficiency and preventing incarceration among women and families in Baltimore through direct client services, advocacy, leadership development and public education. Visit them at www.powerinside.org

Rachel L. McLean, Jacqueline Robarge, and Susan G. Sherman, 2006

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Bureau of Justice Statistics, Deaths in Custody Statistical Tables, http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/dcrp/dictabs.cfm

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The Justice Policy Institute is a non-profit research and public policy organization dedicated to reducing society’s reliance on incarceration and promoting fair and effective solutions to social problems.

The full report is available on line at www.justicepolicy.org.

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