

OKLAHOMA COUNTY  
**CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE**  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice  
Advisory Council  
Midyear Report to Interlocal Partners

For the Second Quarter of FY 2023  
February 2023



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

Second Quarter Highlight: New Jail Construction Oversight Board Appointed

4

Detention Center's Fast Track Booking System processes over 450 residents

5

Justice Champion: Roy Williams, former CEO of the Greater OKC Chamber

6

County officials advance effort to streamline process for court cost fines and fees

7

CJAC seeks employers through Fair Chance Hiring videos

8

Midyear jail population averages dip below recent historic lows



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**Don Andrews**, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma County District Court

**Vicki Behenna**, District Attorney of Oklahoma County

**Craig Freeman**, City Manager of Oklahoma City

**Christy Gillenwater**, President of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber

**Wade Gourley**, Chief of Police of Oklahoma City

**Judge Philippa James**, Presiding Judge of Oklahoma City Municipal Court

**Tommie Johnson III**, Oklahoma County Sheriff

**Rev. Theodis Manning**, Fourth Community Representative

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**Robert Ravitz**, Oklahoma County Public Defender

**Scot Rigby**, City Manager of Edmond

**Carrie Slatton-Hodges**, Commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

**Dan Straughan**, Third Community Representative

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## BACKGROUND

In response to the growing concerns about chronic overcrowding in Oklahoma County's jail facility, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber announced the creation of a special task force in December 2015 to evaluate Oklahoma County's criminal justice system. With collaboration and input from a diverse group of community members, the Chamber contracted with the Vera Institute of Justice to complete an initial analysis and make recommendations for reform of the Oklahoma County criminal justice system. Vera released their recommendations in December 2016. As a central recommendation of the report, an interlocal agreement between Oklahoma County, the City of Oklahoma City, the City of Edmond and the City of Midwest City created the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC) in November 2017. The Advisory Council continued to evolve with the hiring of a full-time executive director in February 2018 to provide support to the CJAC's efforts. The creation of this permanent oversight body is key to implementing the proposed criminal justice reforms which can be summarized in these six key recommendations:

1. Create oversight and accountability mechanisms for the local justice system.
2. Reduce jail admissions for municipal violations and low-level misdemeanors.
3. Create a fair and efficient pretrial release process that safely reduces unnecessary pretrial incarceration.
4. Identify and address district court case processing delays that increase jail admissions and length of stay.
5. Expand meaningful diversion program options, focusing on those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders.
6. Reduce the impact of justice system fines and fees as a driver of jail growth and recidivism.

Although each of the six recommendations carry numerous challenges and barriers to improvement, the good news is that because of the cooperative effort of the Advisory Council's stakeholders, progress continues to be made on each of the six recommendations.

# SECOND QUARTER HIGHLIGHT: NEW JAIL CONSTRUCTION OVERSIGHT BOARD APPOINTED

One of the promises that came with the strong public vote to approve bonds for a new jail in June 2022, was a commitment to more transparency and accountability in the design and construction process. Oklahoma County residents and officials are keenly aware of the debacle that occurred over 30 years ago when the current detention center was built. In an effort to provide Oklahoma County residents and taxpayers a higher level of information on the process, the Board of County Commissioners unanimously created the Oklahoma County Citizens Bond Oversight Advisory Board for the construction of a new OK County Detention Center.

The oversight board has broad authority to:

1. Act in an advisory role to assist the county commissioners with regards to best practices, professional expertise, and wise and efficient use of bond sale proceeds in all aspects of the projects for the construction of a new Oklahoma County Detention Center, including site selection, facility design, and public transparency and accountability.
2. Consult with the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority (Jail Trust Authority) and detention center staff in considering design, cost and operational issues for the new facility.
3. Provide advice and recommendations to the county commissioners after reviewing information related to:
  - All aspects of construction of the new detention center including proposed sequence or timing of commencement, continuance and/or completion of the projects.
  - The proposed design, phasing, site selection and construction.
  - Any specific issue or question that the county commissioners, together or individually, may submit.

The oversight board is made up of seven talented community members all with extensive experience in the construction industry, procurement process and/or public works process. Each Commissioner appointed one member and then four members at-large were chosen.

- Commissioner Carrie Blumert appointee: Sandino Thompson
- Commissioner Myles Davidson appointee: Xavier Neira
- Commissioner Brian Maughan appointee: Patrick McCoy
- Appointees at-large: Steve Mason, Larry Stevens, Joanne Davis and Mike Mize

The oversight board will meet monthly at a minimum, but they will likely meet more often during the design and construction process in order to keep construction timelines moving forward.

Creating oversight and accountability mechanisms for our local justice system was the first recommendation from the Vera Institute of Justice. You can review their six key recommendations on page two of this report.



*Pictured from left to right: Xavier Neira, Sandino Thompson, Steve Mason, Joanne Davis, Mike Mize, Larry Stevens, Pat McCoy (photo courtesy of The Oklahoman)*

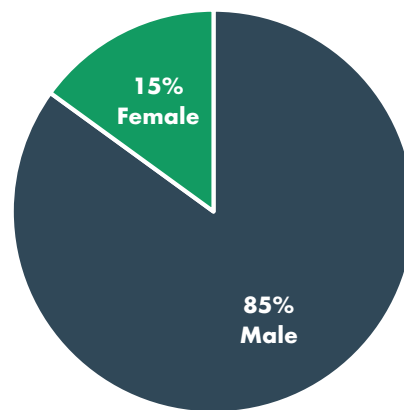
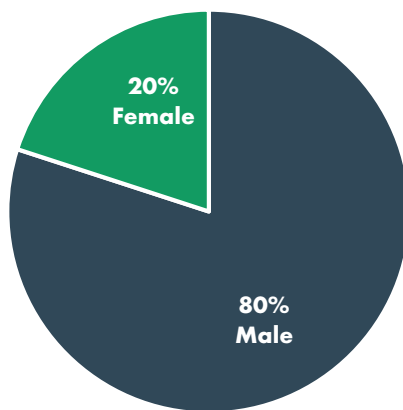
# NUMBER OF WOMEN IN JAIL DECLINES

Fiscal year 2023 data continues to show a decline in women incarcerated in the Oklahoma County Detention Center (OCDC). When the Vera Institute for Justice report was released, the number of women detained was 20% of the jail population. For the midyear point of FY23, the number of incarcerated females in OCDC has dropped to 15 percent. It should be noted that when people think about women in detention, they should think about how many of those women are mothers. Studies from the Oklahoma State Department of Corrections show that

two out of three women in prison are mothers with at least two children.

Creating a fair, efficient pretrial release process that safely reduces unnecessary pretrial incarceration and expanding meaningful diversion program options focused on those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders were the third and fifth recommendations from the Vera Institute of Justice. You can review their six key recommendations on page two of this report.

## Gender Breakdown of Jail Population Comparison Vera Report vs. FY23 (midyear avg.)



# DETENTION CENTER'S FAST TRACK BOOKING SYSTEM PROCESSES OVER 450 RESIDENTS

As Jail Trust Authority Trustees and detention center staff await the design process and construction of the new jail, they are continuing to push forward with improvements that can be accomplished in the interim at the current facility. One such innovation is the Fast Track booking process.

The Fast Track booking process serves Oklahoma County residents by allowing them to be booked and released from the jail without being arrested or going through the secured area of the detention center. Anyone with a warrant or secured bond can make an appointment with the Fast Track office by calling 405-713-2020 or emailing [fasttrack@okcountydcc.net](mailto:fasttrack@okcountydcc.net).

Once the appointment is arranged, the person will come in

and complete the process in about 30 minutes. There is no fee for this service.

The public is responding to this service and utilizing it. For the first six months of FY23 (July 1-Dec. 31, 2022), the Fast Track office processed 474 individuals through the system. This new process kept those 474 people from being arrested and spending any time in jail. The great response from the public is an indication that the new jail needs to be designed to further facilitate this service in the future.

Reducing jail admissions for municipal violations and low-level misdemeanors was the second recommendation from the Vera Institute of Justice. You can review their six key recommendations on page two of this report.

# JUSTICE CHAMPION: ROY WILLIAMS, FORMER CEO OF THE GREATER OKC CHAMBER



The CJAC stands on the shoulders of numerous justice champions who served and toiled on previous commissions, taskforces and working groups, and one of those champions is Roy Williams, former president and CEO of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber. Williams was an instrumental player in criminal justice reform work even before the Vera Institute of Justice's report in December 2016, which lead to the creation of the CJAC.

Since the majority of the CJAC members are appointed or elected officials, the makeup of the 19 members fluctuates from year to year. Yet each year, the CJAC's progress continues because of the work of the members and the numerous community partners, like Williams.

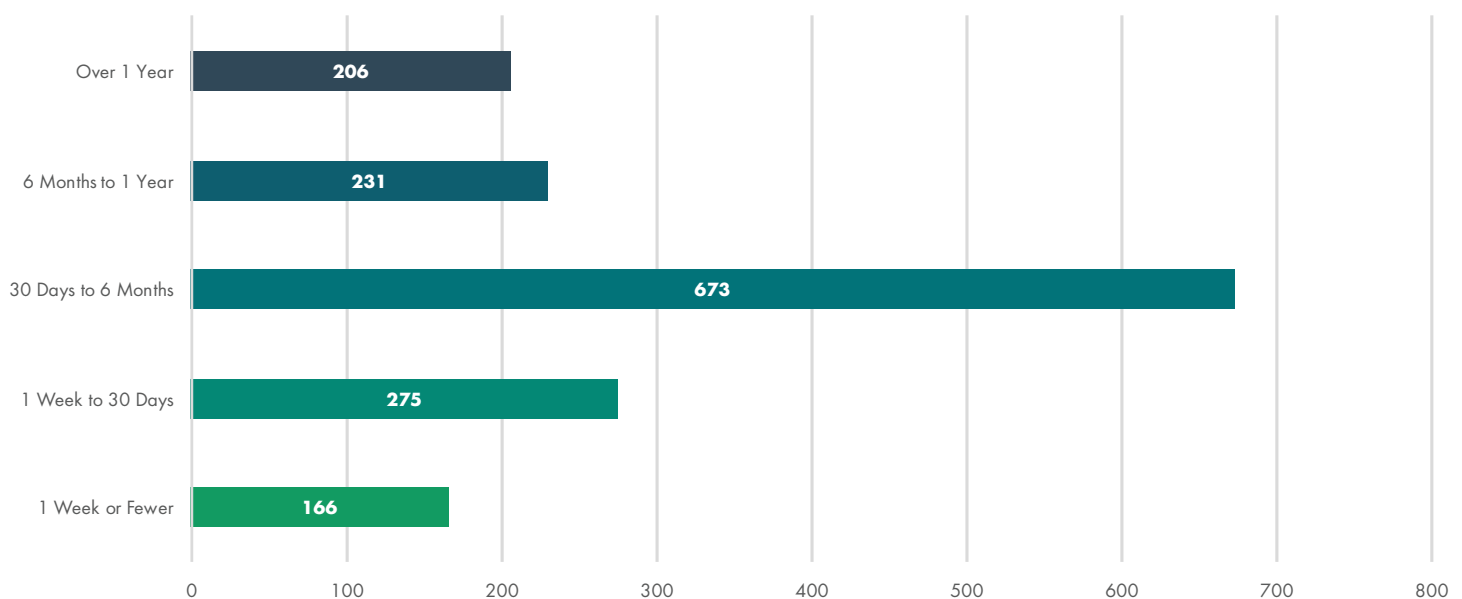
Williams provided critical leadership to form, and later support, the original Greater OKC Chamber Criminal Justice Task Force. The task force partnered with the Vera Institute in producing a deep review and subsequent

recommendations to improve the Oklahoma County justice system. As a leading member of the American Assoc. of Chamber of Commerce Executives, Williams was often asked to speak at national and other conferences on why Chambers should be involved in the work. Not only do Chambers have an interest in community development, but they also have an interest in workforce development. He pointed out, "I think I am speaking for the Oklahoma business community when I say we support reforms. This impacts our workspace and our workforce in multiple ways. Locking people up for low-level offenses is really crippling our workforce because these people should be at work, and our employers need them."

The CJAC and its community express our deepest appreciation for Williams' important service. His insight and hard work are reflected in the progress being made in our county toward more fair and effective justice.

Creating oversight and accountability mechanisms for our local justice system was the first recommendation from the Vera Institute of Justice. You can review their six key recommendations on page two of this report.

## Duration of Detainment Days Detained as of 12.31.22



# COUNTY OFFICIALS ADVANCE EFFORT TO STREAMLINE PROCESS FOR COURT COST FINES AND FEES

Last session, the Oklahoma Legislature passed House Bill 3925 which created the Cost Administration Implementation Committee (CAIC) for the purpose of streamlining the administration of court fines, fees, costs and assessments. Oklahoma County officials played a prominent role on the CAIC, with Court Clerk Rick Warren and District Judge Nikki Kirkpatrick serving on the committee. Additionally, Special Judge April Collins also participated to provide further clarity on the Cost Docket process in OK County. The CAIC also included:

- The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts.
- Court Clerks from Bryan, Cleveland and Tulsa counties.
- Sheriffs from Carter and Seminole counties and the Sheriff's Association.
- A representative from the Oklahoma Municipal League and a municipal judge.
- An associate district judge from Cotton County.
- Two community representatives, including the CJAC's Timothy Tardibono for OK County.

The legislation created a court cost compliance program to allow a justice-involved individual to set up a payment plan with the courts through the court clerk in order to avoid arrest, jail and/or prison. A payment plan could be as little as \$25 per month or another amount as agreed upon between the defendant and the court.

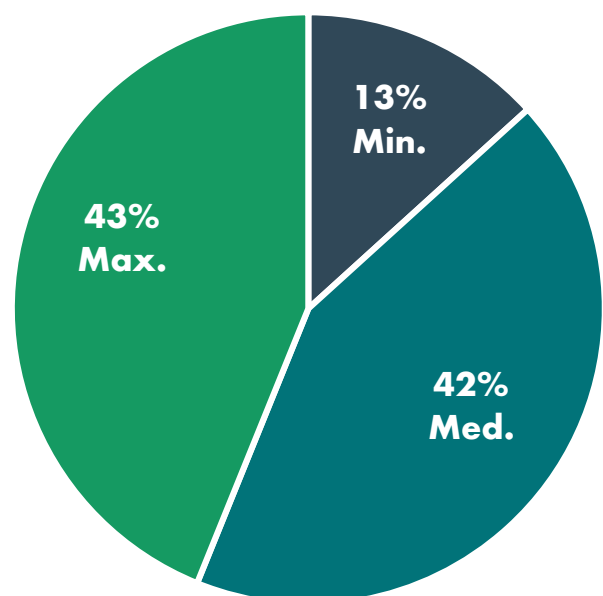
In lieu of arrest, law enforcement officers will be able to issue a cite and release citation for the defendants that have outstanding failure to appear warrants for costs. The court hearing determines a defendant's ability to pay and

allows the court and the defendant to set up a payment plan. If a defendant falls behind on payments once a payment plan is set up, they have 90 days to get back on track and avoid delinquency. If a defendant has a change in circumstances, the defendant can set up another cost hearing to determine a new payment amount. The court has discretion to reduce costs or waive remaining costs if the court finds it appropriate in light of defendant's record of compliance. If the defendant becomes delinquent and does not seek a new cost adjustment hearing, the case will be turned over to collection agencies.

The CAIC's task was to ensure the implementation of the new cost compliance program would be realistic and feasible through the various steps in the law enforcement and court systems. The CAIC is expected to send its recommendations to the Oklahoma Legislature this session to make the recommended improvements so the program can begin before the end of 2023. The goal is that the program reduces arrests and increases cost compliance in a reasonably achievable way.

Reducing the impact of justice system fines and fees as a driver of jail growth and recidivism was the sixth recommendation from the Vera Institute of Justice. You can review their six key recommendations on page two of this report.

## Security Classification Midyear FY23



# CJAC SEEKS EMPLOYERS THROUGH FAIR-CHANCE HIRING VIDEOS

Recently, the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council released a series of three videos that highlight Fair or Second Chance Hiring. Fair- and Second-Chance Hiring is when employers hire employees who have a justice-involved background. Studies show that compared to the general workforce, justice-involved individuals have lower turnover rates, lower absenteeism and higher retention rates. Those advantages allow businesses to control operational overhead while continuing to grow and be successful. The videos highlight several companies in central Oklahoma that are becoming a “fair-chance employer” by offering justice-involved people an equal shot at gainful employment. The companies are Woody Candy Co., SendaRide and Locke Supply with the videos showcasing their partnerships with The Employment and Education Ministry’s (TEEM) Pretrial Release program, ReMerge and TEEM’s Community Sentencing programs, respectively.

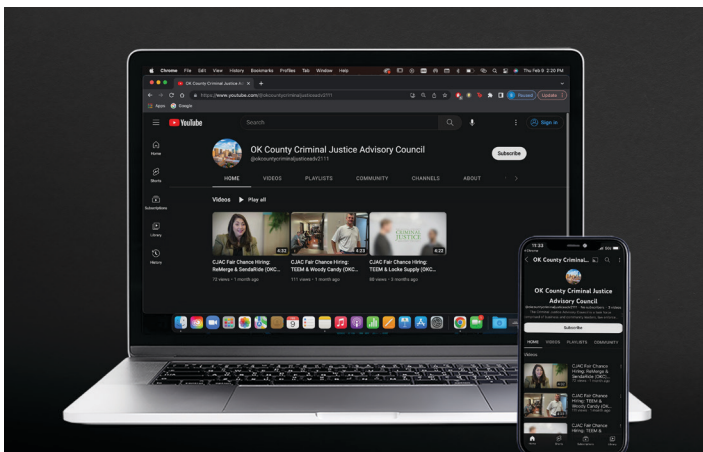
For employers, embracing the opportunity to hire justice-involved people connects businesses with talented and dedicated workers while improving our community. For employers in OK County that partner with diversion programs, they gain an added partner to help them manage the justice-involved employee. Most diversion programs have extensive support teams that help the justice-involved employee with stabilization, encouragement, sober success strategies and general life support. As one employer said, “It’s almost like the diversion program provides you an extra human resources staffer on your team.”



More videos are set to be released in the first half of 2023. If an employer is interested in learning more about fair-chance hiring and our community’s wonderful diversion providers, please contact the CJAC staff for further discussions.

Creating a fair, efficient pretrial release process that safely reduces unnecessary pretrial incarceration and expanding meaningful diversion program options focused on those with mental illness and substance abuse disorders were the third and fifth recommendations from the Vera Institute of Justice. You can review their six key recommendations on page two of this report.

To watch the videos, visit CJAC’s new YouTube page at:



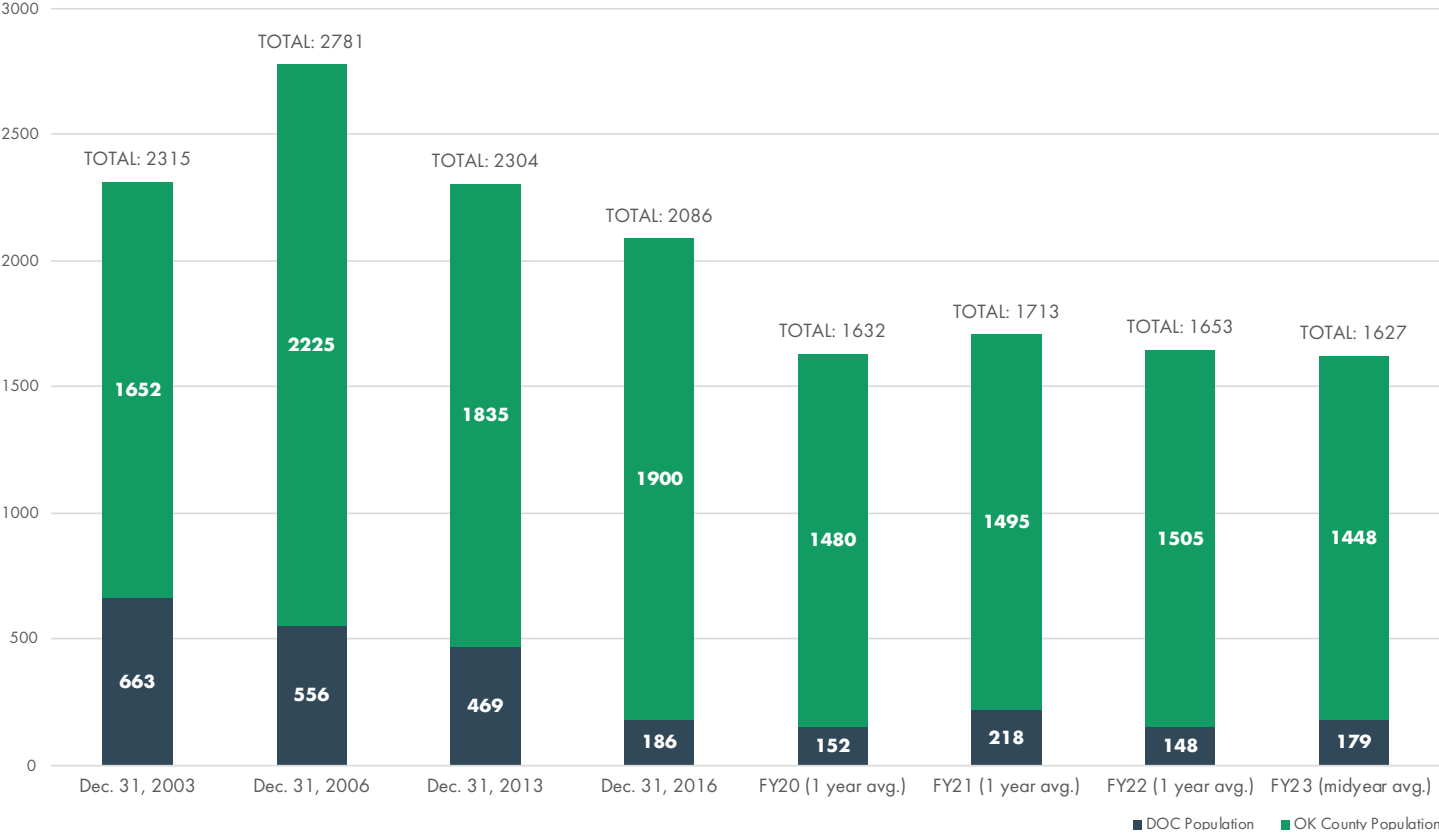
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSOII\\_3dplleFDLfYX15W6Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSOII_3dplleFDLfYX15W6Q)

# MIDYEAR JAIL POPULATION DIPS BELOW RECENT HISTORIC TRENDS

At the midpoint of fiscal year 2023, average jail population continues its downward trend against the backdrop of chronic and concerning jail overcrowding over the last two decades. As the chart below shows, the midyear average for the first and second quarters of FY23 was 1,627, with 179 of those being individuals who are awaiting transport to the Department of Corrections after

their judgment and sentences have been determined. The FY23 average so far is lower than any of the previous three-year averages, which all were significantly lower than the previous 20-year averages. The trend is encouraging and would meet compliance of being under capacity if the new detention center was already open.

### Oklahoma County Jail Totals Total Average Population



## CONCLUSION

Quarterly reports are functions of good and bad news, including some progress, but also a nagging awareness that much work still needs to be done. The encouraging numbers on declining total jail population as well as the decline of female incarceration are tempered by sobering numbers on detainee days of duration. Yet, the

effort of two steps forward but one step back reminds us and our community partners that moving forward, albeit ever so slowly, is still better than the years, even decades, when progress was hard to find. As the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council moves into the latter half of the fiscal year, it must keep taking steps forward toward a brighter future for a fairer and more effective justice system.



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