

Actions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in the Criminal-Legal System: Examples from Sheriffs' Offices

Please note that the following examples are far shy of the dramatic, decarceral actions needed now. However, these actions demonstrate that policymakers can [leverage legal authority](#) to begin emptying detention centers and otherwise mitigating the COVID-19 emergency.

REDUCE JAIL ADMISSIONS:

- *Los Angeles, California:* In Los Angeles County, the police and sheriff departments are now [issuing more citations](#) instead of custodial arrests. Total daily arrests have fallen by 80 percent.
- *Miami-Dade County, Florida:* The Police Department in Miami-Dade (one of the nation's largest) is [issuing citations](#) for all misdemeanor offenses, dramatically reducing the number of arrests in the county.
- *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:* The Philadelphia Police Department announced it would [stop arrests](#) over crimes considered to be nonviolent, including drug offenses, theft, and prostitution.
- *Denver, Colorado:* Police officers in Denver will default to [issuing summons](#) instead of arresting people suspected of low-level, non-violent property and drug crimes.
- *Osage County, Oklahoma:* Osage County is [suspending enforcement](#) of outstanding warrants in all non-violent cases.

DECARCERATE LOCAL JAILS:

- *Cincinnati, Ohio:* The Hamilton County Jail population is [down 40%](#) after a court order authorized Sheriff Jim Neil to release, at his discretion, all "low-risk, nonviolent" individuals.
- *Skagit County, Washington:* The local jail population in Skagit County has [decreased](#) by nearly 40 percent due to the joint efforts of the Sheriff, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and the Skagit Superior Court to resolve cases quickly and release people held on any but a few specific offenses.
- *McLennan County, Texas:* The Sheriff's Office is in the process of releasing "[as many misdemeanor](#) inmates out of the jail as possible."
- *Los Angeles, California:* Los Angeles Sheriff Villanueva has also begun [releasing](#) from the jail those who had fewer than 30 days remaining in their custodial sentences. The county jail population has dropped from over 17,000 to just over 13,500, a decrease of [more than 20 percent](#).