

# Who is in the Jail and Why?

I can't breathe! I can't breathe! I can't breathe! I can't breathe! I can't breathe!

[00:00:05] **Jason Hibbs:** Before the calls for criminal justice reform after the death of George Floyd and others were heard around the country, there was a quieter conversation taking place closer to home.

[00:00:18] **Carol Contrada:** This all began when we started looking at what the purpose of a jail is, and who is in the jail and why.

[00:00:25] **Jason Hibbs:** That's Carol Contrada.

[00:00:27] **Carol Contrada:** I am a retired Lucas County Commissioner, and I was on the original team that applied for and was successful in achieving the Safety and Justice Challenge grant.

[00:00:39] **Jason Hibbs:** The reasons seemed more practical than political, as the Lucas County Sheriff at the time raised concerns about overcrowding and unsafe conditions at the jail.

[00:00:48] **Carol Contrada:** We had a professional study done that projected what size jail we would need. You need to build a jail twice as big as what you've got, which was shocking. And that if you made no changes in the criminal justice system, you'd need to build it about three times bigger than what we had. And we thought, we can't at least we have to stop and take a look.

[00:01:09] **Jason Hibbs:** So that's what Contrada did in 2014, along with others, Some of whom joined me to talk about how the safety and justice challenge started in Lucas County.

[00:01:20] **Sean McNulty:** I'm Sean McNulty. I'm the Chief Public Defender of the Toledo Legal Aid Society.

[00:01:24] **Jason Hibbs:** And Executive Director of the Toledo Lucas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Holly Matthews.

[00:01:30] **Holly Matthews:** My role in the Safety and Justice Initiative really started with being on the grant writing team with two of my colleagues. And we worked really hard to pull everyone's ideas together into the written form. And then I became I was the project director of the Safety and Justice Challenge

Grant throughout the years, and my agency has also been responsible for the data collection.

[00:01:59] **Jason Hibbs:** Five million grant dollars and ten years later, what went well, what went wrong, and where do we go from here? Welcome to episode one of the Rethinking Jails and Justice podcast, produced by WGTE Public Media, and made possible by support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce over incarceration, by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

I'm your host, Jason Hibbs. In this episode, we explore the origins of the safety and justice challenge in Lucas County and how changes in processes and the way people think about criminal justice have led to reform.

You asked the question, who is in the jail and why? What answer did you get?

[00:02:56] **Carol Contrada:** It took several years to get an answer. We're still trying to answer that question. To understand the answer, you have to look at the purpose of a jail. The purpose of a jail is different than that of a prison. A jail is to do two things.

It's to hold people who have been arrested or charged with something, a violation, to make sure that they show up for trial. It is also to make sure that before trial, they don't commit another crime. It is not a prison. Most of the people in jail have not, are innocent until proven guilty, to use the old phrase.

With a small exception of people who have been sentenced, who are awaiting transportation to a sentenced facility like a prison or a detention facility. So a jail is a holding facility, but it also protects the community.

[00:03:52] **Jason Hibbs:** In the early stages, Contrada says the team discovered many inmates were sitting in the jail for too long.

And that's not her opinion, but state law. She says inmate transfer after sentencing wasn't efficient, and often inmates had a prolonged wait longer than allowed by state law. Addressing this was a quick way to free up space at the corrections center.

[00:04:14] **Carol Contrada:** And what we found were there. There were people you want to make sure that the right people are in jail for the right reasons.

So we found that there were people in jail that absolutely needed to be there before their trial. But there were people who were there who didn't need to be there. So you want to have the right people for the right reasons. Then you really Drilling down, which is something that Holly Matthews and her team at CJCC is fantastic at doing, looking at the data.

And I'll never forget the day that Sean McNulty came into my office with a stack of papers showing me everyone who was in the jail. And we went case by case.

[00:05:01] **Jason Hibbs:** After 20 years working as an assistant public defender, Sean McNulty's boss unexpectedly passed away. So McNulty was appointed chief public defender, giving him a new perspective and some new questions similar to Contrada's. He says he first asked for a list of everyone in the jail.

[00:05:20] **Sean McNulty:** I think there was roughly 430 or 450 people in that jail at the time.

And and they were able to give me a printout of every single person. And it didn't have a great deal of information, but I did know the individual's name. From there, I could look up their prior history. It would tell me what the charge was that they had, and it would tell me how long they had been in the jail.

And I think it had bond information. And it was a date, probably two months prior to the date I was reviewing it, which was important because when I looked at who was in the jail and I looked up an individual, I could see that somebody was sitting there with, you Two suspended operative license charges, traffic cases, and I knew from 20 years of experience that the likely resolution on that case is that they would plead to one of those charges, perhaps even reduced, and then have another one dismissed.

And then they would likely get credit for time served. And then I looked at the docket to see when they came to court, and that's what happened. And there was just a multitude of cases like that. Low level, Non often non victim non violent cases that were housed at the jail. That perhaps are not the people that Commissioner Contrada was saying, or the people that we are concerned about with respect to public safety.

[00:06:38] **Jason Hibbs:** In all, Lucas County received 5 million in MacArthur grant funding, and it's important to note that's not taxpayer dollars. But first,

county leaders said they had to prove to the foundation, which we'll hear from in a later episode, that they could do what they promised to do.

[00:06:56] **Carol Contrada:** It was very competitive.

[00:06:57] **Jason Hibbs:** Contrada says there were more than 150 communities that first applied, and that number was whittled down.

[00:07:05] **Carol Contrada:** The MacArthur Foundation held every community to a very high standard. You had to be able to meet your metrics that you proposed. You had to explain what you were going to do and how you were going to tie those efforts into actually reducing the jail population while reducing recidivism.

While reducing racial and ethnic disparity in the jail, so it was very data intensive.

I think our success is extremely dependent on the dedication of the people who said, let's do this thing and let's do it right. The judges, the sheriff, the prosecutors, the defense attorney's office criminal justice coordinating council. Everybody said, can we do it better?

[00:07:54] **Jason Hibbs:** But did they? Throughout the next episodes of the Rethinking Jails and Justice podcast, you'll hear a view from the bench, sheriff's department, community, and others.

Meanwhile, Holly Matthews says she and other county leaders are hearing from other MacArthur communities, too.

[00:08:13] **Holly Matthews:** It really is a network that we belong to. They host, right now, annual all site meetings that are around 600 individuals, where we're able to convene, share successes, share challenges, and strategize about what works in each jurisdiction.

There is a finite ending to the Safety and Justice Challenge. We had one strategy called Electronic Monitoring, and I believe right around 2019, the cost of that strategy was assumed by Lucas County as part of our sustainability plan. So although started through Safety and Justice Challenge funding, We did sustain the strategy through taxpayer dollars.

[00:09:00] **Jason Hibbs:** The 5 million MacArthur grant dollars were not provided in a single installment, but allocated to different strategies. As you

heard mentioned over multiple phases, a budget and details on each strategy are on our website at [www.wgte.org/forward/slash/R-J-J](http://www.wgte.org/forward/slash/R-J-J). While we don't have time to explore each element in this episode, in upcoming Rethinking Jails and Justice episodes, we'll take a deeper dive into some of the biggest issues people working in, through, and around the criminal justice system have identified, including the future of criminal justice reform.

But after talking with these people, a few underlying themes emerged. The first one, Changing the way we think about jails and justice. And you might be able to hear that in Sean McNulty's answer to this question. But Sean, how can we be sure we're not endangering people by making fewer arrests or not keeping people locked up?

[00:10:06] **Sean McNulty:** I'm Suggesting to you that is a short sighted way of looking at that analysis, because often what happens, and there is lots of data to back this up, people that are low or moderate risk of re offending have their lives destabilized if you put them in custody where there might have been a alternative.

That might have been a better alternative for that individual. And if they have their lives destabilized, like they lose their housing, they lose their jobs, perhaps they lose their license, they lose their health benefits children may be taken into custody of children's services, all of these things combine to make somebody more likely return to the criminal justice system.

That, by definition, means we have less public safety. So sometimes, the alternate response is actually going to make the community safer and make somebody less likely to return to the criminal justice system.

[00:10:59] **Carol Contrada:** One of the great successes of the that this project has had is what the Common Pleas Court and the municipal court judges were able to do pre trial, in evaluating community risk.

And there are proven ways that are used in very successful communities, and I'm proud to say that Lucas County is one of them that evaluate the risk of recidivism, which is committing another crime, and the risk of flight, and it doesn't really mean, flying to Jamaica or something like that.

It means not returning for trial. And those risk tools are very predictive.

[00:11:42] **Jason Hibbs:** In an upcoming episode, we take an in-depth look at the predictors, but if you want to read ahead, we have those uploaded to our

website at [www.wgt.org/rj](http://www.wgt.org/rj). The group also says, rethinking how police interact with people is another major step in criminal justice reform.

Deflection allows law enforcement to make different decisions, such as taking people to specialized facilities addressing behavioral health needs instead of jail. A 2014 review found that 57 percent of people released from the Lucas County Correction Center.

[00:12:21] **Sean McNulty:** Deflection often is going to be a decision made by a police officer that encounters somebody on the street.

Historically, they really had just a couple of different options. One would be take someone to jail or elect to do, perhaps, nothing within the legal system or they could give him a summons and tell him to come to court. Those were really the decisions and there's unfortunately sometimes where the police officer didn't feel comfortable leaving somebody in the community and their only alternative was to bring him to jail.

The idea of deflection is to give additional opportunities for law enforcement so they can make different decisions. In this case, deflection is referring to the idea that you could still be removed from the situation that the individual was in, but then taken to another setting. That's very important because not only are you not driving up jail numbers, but more importantly, you're taking the individual to a place that is probably better suited to serve those needs.

[00:13:22] **Jason Hibbs:** But how do officers know if they're making the right decision? Holly Matthews says the answer is C. I. T.

[00:13:30] **Holly Matthews:** The Mental Health and Recovery Services Board added the number of CIT trainings offered throughout the year. And CIT stands for Community Intervention Training. And it's really that special, specially training for law enforcement officers, jail staff, probation officers to better interact with individuals with behavioral health needs.

And then through two Justice Mental Health and Collaboration Program grants, one received in 2018, one received in 2019, we were able through the 2018 grant to implement a behavioral health screener at the jail and so that every individual booked is able to be screened and can indicate whether or not they are severe, persistent, mentally ill, and we can provide either linkage or better service to those who are identified as SPMI. And then through the 2019 grant, we received funds. to pilot the Law Enforcement Deflection Center, which we call the CARE Center locally, and that is operated through the ZEF Center.

[00:14:37] **Jason Hibbs:** As mentioned earlier, of course judges also play a major role in criminal justice reform. 2. 3 million dollars were allocated for managing based on risk to help judges make the best decisions.

[00:14:51] **Holly Matthews:** We funded personnel for our enhanced electronic monitoring services. We funded that, I think, for approximately four years.

It funded three electronic monitoring officers. One clerk, one enforcement deputy, and their salary was approximately 66,000 a year. We also had to invest in additional GPS, electronic monitoring bracelets. We funded approximately 105 units. We also paid for the phones for the additional personnel, and then as we talk about managing based on risk, part of the strategy was having appropriate risk assessment scores on sentenced individuals at the Correction Center of Northwest Ohio.

[00:15:41] **Jason Hibbs:** Lucas County is also part of the statewide Stepping Up Initiative, directed by retired Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Stratton. This initiative is similar to MacArthur, which aims to reduce the number of people in jail with mental illnesses, specifically by connecting them to treatment and services.

For We'll hear more from the justice later in the series, but after seeing many communities spend their grant money without a solid plan to sustain, the justice issued a warning to communities like Lucas County.

[00:16:11] **Evelyn Stratton:** They got a million dollar grant, they did a great program, and then the money ran out and everybody got terminated, and the program's pfft, nothing.

We're hoping that doesn't happen with Lucas, we're hoping that they come up with some very permanent changes that can hopefully be used as templates elsewhere, but our experience is, large grants don't often transfer into the ability to take them to scale, because you need large monies.

[00:16:33] **Jason Hibbs:** So Holly, new people were hired?

[00:16:36] **Holly Matthews:** Correct.

[00:16:37] **Jason Hibbs:** How do those people, how do you sustain that long term?



[00:16:41] **Holly Matthews:** As I said, the bulk of that strategy has already been transitioned to the County General Fund budget. So the electronic monitoring program, within reason, to meet the needs of the community, will be continued forward as a jail alternative.

The CCNO contract was a two year contract to get everything implemented and up to speed and institutionalized. Once institutionalized, that cost fell off and now it is just completed.

[00:17:15] **Carol Contrada:** Electronic monitoring is another, restrictive tool. Jail And prison is the ultimate restriction. People are removed from society, but electronic monitoring is another tool.

At the time that I was a commissioner, and I don't know if it's still true, the most expensive option was jail. The most expensive by far. So if you are safely and successfully reducing your jail population, then you can afford to build into your budget other, less expensive options. But jail is the most expensive.

[00:17:47] **Holly Matthews:** And to add to what Carol is saying, The interesting kind of caveat for Lucas County since Lucas County does not operate the Correction Center of Northwest Ohio. Lucas County is a paying member into the Correction Center of Northwest Ohio. It was much easier to reduce jail costs on the sentence level since it didn't involve staff, personnel, operating a building, lights. Instead, it was a per bed cost. So it provided a little more bang for the buck.

[00:18:24] **Sean McNulty:** We're ultimately looking at the outcomes to the individuals, which impacts the community. If the individuals are having more positive outcomes and not returning to the system, that is a positive for the community. And, the opposite of that is true as well.

So we need to look at those things, not just fiscally, but also how are the outcomes, what is happening with these individuals locally and nationally. There's individuals that are going to cycle through the criminal justice system and you would like to think that they will be rehabilitated and that they won't come back to the system.

The reality is people come back to the system over and over again. And that cycling is something that we've been trying to say, how can we interrupt that cycling? One way you cannot do it is by solely looking at charges. One way you can do it is by looking at the underlying issues that an individual may be facing. That may be a driver in bringing them back to the system.



[00:19:18] **Jason Hibbs:** Another big step involved bringing in social workers.

[00:19:22] **Sean McNulty:** The Opportunity Project is really the introduction of social workers to my office the Public Defender's Office. Initially, we brought social workers into the felony arraignment courtroom.

And the idea was, this is, this was my thinking behind this project. Over time, I was seeing that individuals had maybe different struggles, to them, you saw the same types of things across individuals. It might be mental health issues, it might be Substance use issues. It could be transportation issues.

It could be housing issues education impediments. It can be challenges to seeking and obtaining employment. There's lots of things like that. And those are all things that a social worker would have the opportunity to discuss with the individual and try to see if the individual is interested in addressing any of those things at any given time.

[00:20:20] **Jason Hibbs:** McNulty says judges tend to look more favorably on the defendants who are getting the help they need. So it often changes the trajectory of the case. Another reason most defendants agree to the program. And you might be surprised by this. McNulty says the state reimbursement for local defender's offices in recent years has increased and is projected to stay at a historic high.

This coincidentally comes as the MacArthur grant ends, which is good timing, and not the only reason these three are confident the strategies can be sustained.

[00:20:54] **Holly Matthews:** Our data collection capacity was already in existence, so we didn't have to invest in an IT infrastructure to extract data. Through the CJCC, the Northwest Ohio Regional information system, NORIS for short, has been around since 1974, 1976. And the purpose of NORIS is to share integrated criminal justice data and we have a staff dedicated to do so when this project came around, it was adding work to my staff, but it was work that they were able to do. There was a team of us that really stepped up to lead the different strategies and initiatives that we did not fund, that really has set us up to sustain our strategies quite nicely.

[00:21:45] **Jason Hibbs:** Another point of pride for this group, the First Wednesday program at One Government Center, which provides services like birth certificates and license assistance to defendants.

This model expanded into a program called Reentry on the First Day, for people returning from incarceration to assist them in planning for success by identifying needs, arranging appointments with behavioral health providers, and addressing housing needs, all to keep people from going back to jail.

But who is most likely to take advantage of diversion programs which redirect people away from conventional prosecution processes in exchange for fulfilling certain conditions? The team investigated defendant demographics and learned this area, too, needed some rethinking.

[00:22:30] **Sean McNulty:** You were seeing an over representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system especially given the the local population, the 19. 5 percent of the Lucas County population, and yet over 50 percent or 60 percent of each of these contact points along the system were much, much greater than you would to see.

And unfortunately, as we did the data analysis, one of the places where there was the least highest level of over representation or the lowest over representation was in diversion. In other words, African Americans were getting stopped by the police more, charged by the police more, held in jail by the police more, going to prison and jail more, and the one place where there was an opportunity to be diverted out of the system, to have charges not fully prosecuted and to have them ultimately not on your record was diversion. And they were getting less of an opportunity to avail themselves of those diversion opportunities.

[00:23:36] **Jason Hibbs:** Carol Contrada says it came down to money.

[00:23:39] **Carol Contrada:** It affected the black population disproportionately because they could not afford to pay. So I won't say it was a simple solution, but a part of the solution that was simple was say Let's make that free. It should be a burden that shouldn't be shouldn't skew to any population. It should be available to everyone in the jail.

[00:24:02] **Sean McNulty:** And to her credit Prosecutor Bates was part of this discussion, part of the MacArthur strategies as well, and when this came to her attention, she also wanted it to be a fair process of somebody to be able to go into the felony diversion program.

And she did not want somebody not to be able to do it because they simply couldn't afford it. And unfortunately that was what was happening.

[00:24:28] **Jason Hibbs:** Part of the diversion program. A new course focusing on cognitive behavioral change, improving interactions with law enforcement, and providing information on community resources.

[00:24:39] **Holly Matthews:** And this is Holly. It's essentially a four hour course that's grounded in the elements of procedural justice, that individuals with a history of more than one offense are referred to. And if the program is completed, then the charges are dismissed.

[00:24:57] **Jason Hibbs:** \$370, 000 were allocated to Strategy 5 for new community coordinated practices, Matthews says, before people on probation often faced the complicated barrier of being supervised by multiple jurisdictions at the same time.

In some cases, probationers had two ankle monitors.

[00:25:16] **Holly Matthews:** Yes, because different jurisdictions, different supervision, and then the other kind of downside we found is that you could be drug testing for the city of Toledo on Monday, and then you could be drug testing for the city of Oregon on Tuesday, and we're not sharing those drug testing results.

Is there really a need for probationers to do that? To give up their time to provide tests for two different jurisdictions, where all you have to do is share the results.

[00:25:52] **Jason Hibbs:** They also made changes to the probation process.

[00:25:55] **Sean McNulty:** If people keep coming before the judge, even if it is a minor thing, like I missed an appointment, or I was late for an appointment, or I had a marijuana positive screen, whatever the situation might be, there's going to be a time where the judge says clearly you're not getting the message and they will revoke the probation and send them to CC& O for, whatever period of time.

One of the things that they're doing with this strategy is they're allowing a system of sanctions and incentives to be put in place for probationers. And they want that to be consistent across the probation departments, so that if somebody misses an appointment, they may say, going forward, you're now going to have two appointments a week.

If somebody has a positive drug screen, they may step up the frequency of those drug screens. That doesn't mean you don't end up in front of the judge, it does mean they have some flexibility in when that violation may be formally processed.

[00:26:58] **Holly Matthews:** And as I mentioned, the evidence based practices, what Sean is referencing is graduated sanctions, which is probably the preeminent evidence based practice in probation.

And The other kind of caveat to this, the state of Ohio has a justice reinvestment initiative grant, and to be eligible for funding through the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, you have to have evidence based practices, and specifically graduated sanctions implemented in your jurisdiction. to be eligible for the state funding. So the goal was really to work with all jurisdictions to getting to the baseline to be eligible for the state funding and to further enhance probation departments. And I believe so far, Three out of the five have received state funding and I believe two are still working towards that.

[00:27:56] **Jason Hibbs:** Graduated sanctions involve progressively stricter disciplinary actions, such as probation officers managing the first three failed drug tests and involving a judge only on the fourth. Matthews says the system empowers probation officers to perform their duties without repeatedly taking people to court.

To ensure consistency, a graduated sanctions grid was developed, standardizing policies and practices across five local jurisdictions, which helps avoid confusion.

[00:28:25] **Holly Matthews:** The criminal justice system is confusing enough than to add these bifurcated policies across the board for individuals.

[00:28:34] **Jason Hibbs:** Sounds like that was pretty common too.

[00:28:36] **Holly Matthews:** Yes, oh very common.

[00:28:38] **Jason Hibbs:** They say another area that needed some rethinking is how the government engages with the community. Now this is strategy six, one of the final ones. And the group says one of the most difficult.

[00:28:49] **Holly Matthews:** The bulk of the funding in Strategy 6 is really built into our community engagement grants, where individuals, we've had three releases of approximately \$100, 000.

Where community groups could apply for small grants to implement and address neighborhood-based programs. And so this really was meant to further engage the community into our work. A solicitation was released to the community. Where you could apply for upwards of 10, 000. There were very, a few requirements, one being that you were either a non profit agency.

If you were not a non profit and just an individual, you had a partner with a non profit agency and you would be eligible for funding. So the applications were reviewed by the small work group and projects were selected.

[00:29:50] **Jason Hibbs:** Community groups like Tremaine Rayford's The Program, Inc., which received 20, 000 to spend on community programming where youth learn practical skills while having fun.

[00:30:02] **Tremaine Rayford:** I think our dodgeball and economics event, we had 85 kids there. Our tie event, we had another like 75 kids. It's where, it's open to the community, anybody can come. We teach them how to tie tires, or we teach them how to balance, not a checkbook, because nobody uses checkbooks now, but balance. Financial literacy, budgeting, managing money, things like that.

We have our first date event where young men learn how to treasure and respect and court women on their first date and they go on the first date with their mom. It's the peer lead, it's the community development event, and then we have what we call the A list mentoring. That's the enrolled participants of the program.

That's our small, intimate, we'll have a session with 10 or 15 boys going over what does integrity mean? What does it mean to you? What are the attributes of someone that is integral, right? We go over things like that in the small group. We take them fishing, kayaking, go karting, laser tag. We take them to the zoo.

We've taken them to, we did a small engine repair class. And they had a mini bike that they changed, gaskets and got to ride the mini bike around. And then after that we have the social family enrichment portion. We'll hear more about how the

[00:31:15] **Jason Hibbs:** MacArthur Grant is helping community organizations in upcoming episodes, but now, back to Holly Matthews.

What else should we know about Strategy 6?

[00:31:26] **Holly Matthews:** Strategy 6 is hard. We are definitely falling into the trend of a jurisdiction that can reduce jail population while increasing disparities in the jail. And unfortunately, no one has found the solution to that issue yet. We're still working to address it.

[00:31:49] **Carol Contrada:** Looking at the beginning of the Safety and Justice Challenge, a lot of the proposed changes were from individuals who had been working in the system inside for a long time. The CJCC, probation officers, sheriff's deputies. That can solve a lot of things, but it is in some respects, not all a top down solution.

And if you don't include the community, then you are ultimately doomed to fail in certain areas because you have to understand the community, and you may not, from your perspective. Really I think a complex issue that every community across the country is facing. How to engage the people that you are elected or appointed to serve, so that they can be a part, and they should be, because their success is what makes the whole thing go.

[00:32:50] **Jason Hibbs:** Do you feel that it's working? Feedback from these groups?

[00:32:54] **Holly Matthews:** I think it really depends on which community you talk to. Some communities feel safe, some communities do not feel safe. Communities use a system in different manners. And so I think it's just a very complex response to that question. I will say that we are working with our current technical assistance provider.

And launching a smaller, more focused community engagement initiative, where we will have some more candid conversations with impacted individuals to see what we can do better and how to approach racial and ethnic disparities from a community based level.

[00:33:39] **Jason Hibbs:** Do you worry about messaging that word could get out to would be criminals? If you commit a crime in Lucas County, don't worry about it because you're not going to be in jail for that long or at all.

[00:33:50] **Carol Contrada:** That's actually, this is Carol, that's an interesting question. What is being perceived by the community in terms of, gee, I can just do this and get away with it? And I think that's an important part of this overall conversation is to understand what a jail does.

Public conversation, which is based on all kinds of things like movies and the media. Hey, let's, throw them in jail. You can be in jail, but you're not going to be there for long. It's really where you're going to serve your time. And the purpose of a prison thinking back to law school days, there the idea is to remove the person from society.

To have the person be able to perform some kind of restoration, retribution. It's the four R's here. and rehabilitation. A jail doesn't serve any of those purposes.

[00:34:39] **Jason Hibbs:** Sean McNulty says before the risk assessment was implemented, many wouldn't show up for court for a misdemeanor, since failing to appear resulted in a repetitive cycle of arrest and release.

But the risk assessment system, which accounts for failures to appear, is changing that perception because those who have failed to appear before are more likely to be held in jail. The last strategy, Strategy 7, the Safety and Justice Challenge Amplification, to the tune of \$100, 000. WGTE was chosen to help with Strategy 7. How is this money being spent and why not spend that on something else? Why does this need to be amplified?

[00:35:18] **Holly Matthews:** One of the charges of the capstone grant was really to wind down operational activities and share with the country what is being done. We have learned from the Safety and Justice Challenge, what we have done well, maybe what we have not done so well, and really talk about the work that has happened and our successes.

And I would say if you look at jail reduction numbers, we have been successful. We have reduced our local jail population by 36. 5 percent since we established our baseline. That is a big number, and we have continuously sustained our local jail population reduction at about that rate. And so we selected a podcast since it's definitely a current trend to listen to podcasts to serve as our amplification strategy.

And looking at different opportunities, we landed on partnering with WGTE based on what they're able to bring to the table and also the added community engagement that we will do be doing as part of this project. So we are not only completing a podcast, but we'll be hosting several town hall meetings to encourage discussion on the safety and justice challenge, elicit feedback from the community, and really be able to share our story.

And to show that not only can you reduce our local jail population, but we can also keep the community safe while doing so.



[00:36:53] **Jason Hibbs:** To watch the community engagement event or learn more, visit [www. wgte. org](http://www.wgte.org) forward slash rjj.

You mentioned things that went well, things that didn't go so well. Looking back now, are there things you wish had been done differently ?

[00:37:11] **Holly Matthews:** I think for us, our biggest challenge has always been how do you tackle community engagement?

And how do you get the right community at the table to have informed conversations?

[00:37:25] **Carol Contrada:** I would agree. I think the community engagement piece has been the most challenging. From the beginning. I would also say, I don't know that I would have done it differently, but I would have done it sooner. I think a story that I wish had been we had taken the opportunity to explain through the media sooner because it really is a safer community now than we, when we started.

[00:37:53] **Jason Hibbs:** While this episode provided an overview of the origins of the MacArthur Challenge, we're going to get more specific throughout the next nine episodes in the series. There are emerging themes for rethinking jails and justice, some of them tough to talk about. Law enforcement approaches and challenges, including the tension between cops and community.

We'll break down each step in the criminal justice process, have an interesting conversation about a tested algorithm that can predict inmate behavior, we have a critical conversation about saving our kids, and the realities that local kids face. We discuss some unique opportunities for people behind bars, the intersection of behavioral health and criminal justice, the racial realities that are often ignored.

We take a closer look at what these community organizations, MacArthur Community Grant recipients, are doing. Look at how locals are trying to slow the revolving doors of jails and prison by reducing repeat visitors. And we'll discuss the future of reform. Thanks to our guests, Carol Contrada, Holly Matthews, and Sean McNulty.

I'm your host, Jason Hibbs. The Rethinking Jails and Justice podcast series was created with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of its Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce over

incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and treats it. And uses jails

on the next episode of the Rethinking Jails and Justice Podcast.

[00:39:31] **Unknown Speaker 1:** That mentality of a law enforcement officer is lock 'em up and keep 'em there.

[00:39:36] **Jason Hibbs:** They're often the first contact people have with the criminal justice system and sometimes the last group to get on board with criminal justice reform.

[00:39:45] **Unknown Speaker 2:** And that's really what we need to make sure that the police officers understand.

[00:39:51] **Jason Hibbs:** Is that we're not just letting people go when the police arrest them how local law enforcement officers are rethinking jails and justice. The progress made so far and the change is still underway.