



Research Brief: Oneida County's Centralized Arraignment Part Courts

Practitioner:

New York State Office
of Court Administration

Academic Partner:

Utica College

Project Completed:

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Brief Issued:

February 2021

Summary:

Utica College assessed Oneida County's centralized arraignment part (CAP) court model. Researchers interviewed stakeholders and analyzed court data to assess CAP court implementation and identify best practices for other jurisdictions to follow when establishing a CAP court.

Background

New York State law allows counties to create off-hours, centralized arraignment parts (CAP courts) to facilitate timely court processing and an individual's right to counsel at first appearance after arrest. CAP courts aim to foster efficiency and ease logistical and administrative burdens by assigning off-hours arraignments to local criminal court judges according to a rotating, predetermined schedule. This ensures a judge within the county is always available to handle an arraignment. Utica College examined Oneida County's CAP implementation and identified best practices that may benefit other localities seeking to utilize a CAP court model.

Design

Researchers analyzed court data from the three designated CAP courts in Oneida County from October 2017 to June 2019. Data included the number of cases proceeding through each court, usage by police departments, offense charges and level, and bail decisions. Researchers also surveyed and interviewed CAP court stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors, defense counsel and law enforcement.

Findings

After a review of literature and discussion of the importance and legal requirement of having an attorney present at arraignment, the study noted that Oneida County's CAP courts resulted in improved availability of counsel and more consistent arraignment process compared to the decentralized system of arraigning individuals. The study also noted

that CAP courts created some fiscal and operational efficiencies within the county Sheriff's Office and local police departments. In addition, there was a statistically significant reduction in daily jail population following the creation of Oneida County's CAP courts.

Recommendations

Researchers recommended several best practices for other jurisdictions considering CAP courts:

- Establish a CAP court team during the planning phase that includes all stakeholders to promote collaboration.
- Consider which CAP court model (e.g., schedules that are fixed, rotating, or on-call) would work best based on considerations such as population and geography.
- Identify locations for CAP courts that would work best within the county. Existing local courts may be used as CAP locations.
- Ensure that defense counsel is present in CAP court to represent all individuals at arraignment.
- Establish standardized CAP court policies on topics including, but not limited to, pre-arraignment detention, court operations, security and unexpected absences. Ensure all stakeholders are aware of policies.
- Commit to ongoing assessment of the program for fidelity to plan and measure CAP impact on time to arraignment, representation and detention.

About the Research Consortium

An initiative of the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Research Consortium promotes criminal justice research and the use of data and evidence by facilitating partnerships between local practitioners and college and university-based researchers. The research design and conclusions detailed here are the sole work product of the academic partner that conducted the research. Neither DCJS nor the State of New York endorse the program, methodology or results.