

Yavapai County Jail

Yavapai County operates two adult detention facilities, also called jails. The main jail is located in Camp Verde. It is a 644-bed facility. A second, much smaller and older jail is located in downtown Prescott. This facility does not house inmates and serves only as a partial booking and holding facility for the Prescott courthouse. By law, the county sheriff manages the jail.

The primary function of a county jail is to hold pretrial detainees (persons who have not yet been convicted) who are considered dangerous or a flight risk. The second function of the county jail is to house defendants who are sentenced to less than one year in prison, such as DUI offenders (Driving While Impaired). By law, county jails are managed and funded by county government. Prisons are managed and funded by the state. Defendants who have had their trials and been convicted and sentenced to prison will serve their time at the state prison, not in county jail.

The Yavapai County jail receives approximately 8,500 bookings per year. 90% of the jail inmates are facing felony charges; 10% are facing misdemeanor charges only. The overall average length of stay in the county jail is 22 days. The average length of stay for a misdemeanor offender is 4 days. Approximately 80% of the inmates are pretrial detainees and 20% have been sentenced after a conviction to serve time in the jail. County officials have worked hard over the past years to bring down the jail population through innovative programs such as REACH OUT and Diversion. Over the last two years, the inmate population has declined by 10% or 52 inmates daily. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the average daily population was about 520 inmates.

The New Co-Located Facility with Jail, Courts and Mental Health Services

In 2003, the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors (“BOS”) began discussing the need for a new jail. In 2016, the Chinn Study recommended construction of a new jail facility to the west of the Yavapai County Juvenile Detention Center on the Prescott Lakes Parkway property. This property had been identified by the county and the city of Prescott as an ideal location over 20 years prior. In December of 2018, Yavapai County hired a firm to assist with project management.

On August 7, 2019, after many years of studies and public meetings, BOS approved the construction of the new Criminal Justice Center. It is 93,868 gross square feet with 144 beds, two courtrooms, and supporting services including administration, mission supporting stakeholder areas, medical, food service, laundry and building services. The new center includes a co-located non-custodial Mental Health Facility. The approximate cost to build this center is \$68 million.

Site construction is slated to begin in July 2020; building construction will begin in September 2020; and occupancy of the new Prescott Criminal Justice Center will occur in February of 2022.

Why is a New Criminal Justice Facility Needed?

The Current Jail is at Maximum Capacity

- Yavapai County's Camp Verde jail facility is at maximum capacity. Although the facility has 644 beds for inmates, the true capacity, as explained below, is 512 inmates (644 beds minus 20%).
- Jails must maintain a vacancy rate between 10-20% for peaking (high populations at certain times of the year) and classification. Jail inmate classification protects the health and safety of the inmates by separating certain inmates who are dangerous, suffering from mental or physical illnesses, or other civil rights concerns.
- During peak season, the county jail population is routinely 600. The result is that up to 85 inmates are crowded into dorms, sleeping on the floor. Overcrowding presents serious safety concerns for inmates and staff. It also creates liability health concerns and potential civil rights violations.

Daily Jail Transports from Camp Verde to Prescott Courthouse Are Costly and Present a Threat to Public Safety

- The current county jail is located on Highway 260 between the towns of Cottonwood and Camp Verde. This is where all inmates are housed whether they are pre-trial detainees or serving a sentence of less than one year.
- Venue for criminal trials is a matter of law and is determined by where the crime occurred. Approximately 65% of criminal trials and judicial proceedings are held in the Yavapai County Superior Courthouse located in downtown Prescott. Only 35% of criminal trials and judicial proceedings are held in the Superior Court located in the Verde Valley.
- Consequently, each day, inmates are loaded onto large busses and transported from the Camp Verde jail to the Prescott courthouse for their court proceedings. Approximately 200 jail inmates are transported *each week* to the Prescott courthouse and back to the Camp Verde jail.
- The 2016 Chinn Study concluded that these weekly transports cost Yavapai County more than \$2 million every year.
- The Chinn Study further concluded that these weekly transports pose a major safety and security risk for the public, detention personnel, court personnel and the inmates themselves.
- Not only are inmates being transported daily on public highways, but they are also escorted into and out of the downtown Prescott courthouse in public view. The entrance/exit to the courthouse on Cortez street is adjacent to the public entrance/exit.

The inmates are moved between floors inside the courthouse using the same elevator used by the public. This poses numerous security risks.

- The county population is expected to surpass 250,000 this year thereby increasing the number of superior court judges by one more division. It is likely this expansion will create even more daily inmate transports.

County Mental Health Needs

- Title 36 is an involuntary process for evaluation, care and treatment of persons with a mental disorder. This process includes both in-custody and out-of-custody mental health evaluations, followed by court hearings and, in some cases, court-ordered treatment. Yavapai County is coping with an expensive and inefficient Title 36 process and needs a new location.
- The new co-located jail, court and mental health coordinated release center will address the following issues: public safety; overcrowding; police service; transportation of inmates securely; downtown Prescott security; lack of court space; lack of mental health treatment space; efficiency; and need for future planning.

How Is the Jail Funded?

The Yavapai County jail is funded by a “jail district” under the authority of the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors (“BOS”). The jail district is countywide and includes all cities and towns within the county. Funding for the jail district primarily consists of .25% sales tax and a primary property tax. The municipalities can use the jail for free (no per inmate per-diem as is common in other places) in exchange for sales tax collection in the municipalities. The statute permits the sales tax up to .5% with voter approval.

On August 7, 2019, BOS unanimously approved the new Prescott Criminal Justice Center. At that time, they also approved a property tax increase, a portion of which will pay for the construction and operation of the new criminal justice center. Beginning in September 2019, Yavapai County property owners began paying an additional \$30 for each \$100,000 dollars of “assessed limited value” on their properties.

What Has the County Done to Reduce the Jail Population?

Yavapai County is the most progressive county in the state in taking measures to decriminalize mental illness, divert drug offenders to services, and reduce the jail population. These measures have also had a dramatic impact on increasing public safety. In 2016, the County Sheriff and County Attorney began a diversion program, called REACH OUT, a national model and diversion strategy built under the guidance of the sequential intercept model (SAMHSA). This evidence-based model builds strategies to connect offenders at every step of the way (community, pre-arrest, post-arrest, jails, courts, reentry) to treatment and other resources associated with the prevention of recidivism (reoffending or committing new crimes).

Creating diversions at all intercepts requires partnerships and collaboration. In 2018, in order to connect criminal justice with services, build strong partnerships, and share information, the Yavapai County Sheriff and Yavapai County Attorney established the Yavapai Criminal Justice and Mental Health Coalition (www.justicementalhealth.com). The overall result has been a 10-12% jail population reduction and a decrease in recidivism (re-offense rate) from 38% to 16%.

In the last three years, since the opening of the Crisis Stabilization Unit in Prescott Valley in 2017, the countywide Mobile Crisis Teams in 2016, the Crisis Intervention Training, and the creation of REACH OUT:

- ✓ 1,541 arrests have been diverted from the jail
- ✓ 3,289 emergency room visits have been averted
- ✓ More than \$3.7 million in incarceration costs have been avoided.

Below is an overview of the program implemented by Yavapai County criminal justice partners to keep our communities safe while cutting jail incarceration costs:

- **Yavapai County Attorney Drug Diversion Program (2020).** Offered to low level offenders struggling with drug use and addiction, this program offers wrap-around services designed to help the offender achieve sobriety and a productive life. Those who succeed in the program will have their criminal charges dismissed.
- **Yavapai Reentry Project (“YRP”) (2019).** YRP is a project of MATFORCE, first started in 2011, that matches individuals leaving prisons and returning to Yavapai County with a coach to help them navigate the challenges of reentry into society and avoid reoffending or committing new crimes. A very successful program, MATFORCE extended its services to individuals leaving the county jail in 2019.
- **Yavapai Justice and Mental Health Coalition (2018).** A national model and a first of its kind, the Coalition was formed to bring partners together from each sector of the sequential intercept model to build a collaborative system of diversion. The partners in this Coalition include law enforcement, AHCCCS, mental health, physical health, housing, transportation, social services, faith-based, treatment, community, and all three branches of local and state government. The goal is to improve cross-system collaborations to reduce involvement in the justice system of people with mental health and substance abuse disorders.
- **Crisis Stabilization Unit (“CSU”) (2017).** The CSU opened its doors in Prescott Valley in 2017. The CSU gives a police officer who encounters a person experiencing a mental health crisis an alternative to taking the person to jail. At the CSU, patients are stabilized, treated, and connected to more permanent treatment.
- **REACH OUT Coordinated Release & Reentry Program (2016).** This program links jail inmates with mental health treatment providers as part of a comprehensive jail release plan. REACH OUT includes a team of stakeholders that cross over multiple systems, including mental health, substance abuse, law enforcement, pretrial services, courts,

jails, community corrections, housing, health, social services, family members and many others. The goal is to improve cross-system collaborations to reduce involvement in the justice system by people with mental and substance abuse disorders.

- **287(g) Program (2016).** In 2016, the Yavapai County jail, which had been cooperating with ICE since 2008, was recertified for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 287(g) Program, a certification held by only two other Arizona county jails. This program enhances the safety of our communities by screening, identifying, and removing illegal aliens who have been arrested for the commission of a crime. Through the 287(g) Program, Yavapai County law enforcement officers cooperate with the federal government to enforce federal immigration laws, transferring illegal immigrants to federal custody and reducing our local jail population.
- **Pre-Arrest Mental Health Diversion Strategies (2016).** Designed to keep patient out of jail, these strategies divert individuals to inpatient and outpatient programs managed by behavioral health providers.
- **Reduce Recidivism Through Better Diagnosis and Treatment (2016).** This strategy consists of greatly strengthening mental health treatment in the jail which, together with the REACH OUT Coordinated Release Program, reduced re-arrests and recidivism.
- **Crisis Intervention Training (2016).** County law enforcement officers undergo 40 hours of intense training about the causes, effects and treatment of mental illness, and de-escalation skills to keep patients out of jail and in treatment.
- **Mental Health First Aid (2016).** This is an 8-hour course to teach law enforcement, first responders, teachers and citizens to identify a developing mental health crisis and how to respond. This program helps prevent a mental health crisis from becoming a criminal justice issue.
- **Mobile Crisis Response Teams (2015).** Mobile Crisis Response Teams assist mental health patients on-site. Law enforcement officers who encounter an individual in the public have the option of calling the Mobile Crisis Team instead of arresting the individual and booking him/her into the county jail. Approximately 75% of all such encounters are stabilized in the community, averting arrests and bookings into the jail.
- **Public Safety Assessment for Pre-Trial Release (“PSA”) (2015).** This program screens inmates for possible release to the community pending trial focusing on public safety and appearing in court as required. Releasing inmates who are pending trial and permitting them to return to family and work reduces the jail population immediately.
- **Veterans Court (2015).** America’s Veterans can face unique challenges related to their service in the military, including homelessness, substance abuse and mental health crisis. Veterans Court is designed to recognize the unique challenges and needs of Veterans, and reduce incarceration and recidivism by addressing their needs through treatment and support.
- **Early Disposition Court (“EDC”) (2005).** EDC is designed to resolve lower level criminal offenses with as few court appearances as possible. This highly efficient court provides

swift and just criminal consequences for criminal behavior while protecting the rights of victims and all parties involved. After its implementation in 2005, the county jail saw a sharp reduction in the jail population and the backlog of inmates awaiting trial.

- **Jail Medical Services Privatized (2003).** Contracting with a private company (Wexford) to provide jail medical services reduced county jail costs and limited the county’s liability exposure.
- **Civilian Staff and Volunteers (2003).** This program recruits and trains less costly civilian staff and volunteers to perform routine tasks previously assigned to certified detention officers and results in ongoing savings to the county.
- **Inmate Co-Pay Programs (1999).** Inmates with funds to pay are charged for part of the cost for food and medical services provided in the jail, saving taxpayer dollars.

History & Timeline

- Early 1990s: Yavapai County and the city of Prescott acquired land to site a regional landfill and a planned regional connector road, called the Prescott Lakes Parkway.
- 2000: Yavapai County Jail was under a federal consent decree for civil rights violations associated with overcrowding. The county added 480 beds to the Camp Verde facility in order to avoid contempt of court and the take-over of jail operations by the Department of Justice (“DOJ”) (similar to Maricopa County jail current status). DOJ also recommended the construction of another jail facility in Prescott.
- 2003: Yavapai County Board of Supervisors (“BOS”) began discussing the need for a new criminal justice center and recommended using the Prescott Lakes Parkway property.
- 2007: City of Prescott traded their interest in the Prescott Lakes Parkway in order to gain ownership of the county-owned rodeo grounds in Prescott.
- 2008: Former Yavapai County Sheriffs Buck Buchanan, Steve Waugh and current Sheriff Scott Mascher all advised BOS in public meetings that a new facility was needed in Prescott.
- 2008: BOS attempted to establish funding by increasing the jail district sales tax to .5%. The ballot measure was narrowly defeated.
- 2014: Yavapai County Juvenile Detention Center was relocated from the downtown Prescott area (next to the YMCA and YRMC) to its current location at 1100 Prescott Lakes Parkway.
- 2014: BOS again attempted to establish funding for a new detention facility with a ballot measure to increase the current .25 cents sales tax to .5%. Again, this measure was narrowly defeated.

YAVAPAI COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER FACT SHEET

- 2016: Jail Assessment Study of Yavapai County's adult jail system concluded that (1) the county jail's current facility, located in Camp Verde, is at maximum capacity; (2) renovations on the Gurley Street facility (former jail) and expansion and repairs to the Camp Verde jail facility were not practicable; and (3) transporting inmates from the Camp Verde facility to the Prescott courthouse costs the county over two million dollars every year. (Chinn Study, 2016). The study recommended construction of a new facility on county property located on Prescott Lakes Parkway to the west of the Yavapai County Juvenile Detention Center.
- 2018: In December of 2018, Yavapai County hired an owner's representative, Kitchell, to assist with project management of the Prescott Criminal Justice Center.
- August 7, 2019: BOS unanimously approved construction of a co-located facility with jail, courts, and non-custodial mental health services. The 93,868-square-foot adult detention facility will have 144 beds, two courtrooms, medical, food service, administration, and laundry. Approximate cost to build the facility is \$68 million. BOS also approved a property tax increase to pay for the center as well as other needed county obligations. Beginning in September 2019, Yavapai County began paying an additional \$30 for each \$100,000 dollars of "assessed limited value" on their properties.
- December 2019: At its December board meeting, BOS approved a bond issue of up to \$70 million dollars to finance the construction and operation of the new facility.
- January 2020: BOS hired an architect to design the new facility. As of today, the bonds have been issued and the construction company is near contract.
- June 2020: Funding for the new justice facility has been deposited into Yavapai County finance accounts.
- July 2020: Initial site work is anticipated to begin.
- September 2020: Building construction will begin.
- February 2022: Occupancy of the Prescott Criminal Justice Center will occur.

*When newly elected county officers take office on January 1, 2021, construction of this much-needed facility will be far underway. The county will have already spent about \$20 million dollars in construction-related costs for architectural services as well as geotechnical, environmental, inspection and testing consultant services.