

2023 Tennessee Pretrial Symposium Series

In May 2023, the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) hosted a series of pretrial events across Tennessee with funding and support from the Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP). Local leaders and pretrial practitioners from over 10 counties and several state agencies came together to hear the latest from the field and share ideas on how to improve system and community outcomes.

OCJP leadership kicked off each event by highlighting successful Tennessee pretrial programs and sharing funding opportunities for initiatives beyond pretrial. The events – held in **Memphis, Knoxville, and Clarksville** – featured two keynote speakers: Spurgeon Kennedy, Vice President of CJI and President of the National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies, and Tara Boh Blair, consultant and former Executive Officer for the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Blair discussed national trends in pretrial justice, including best practices in the field, current research, and the value of partnerships to maximize success. Both speakers emphasized the importance of data-driven decision making, engaging system stakeholders and community organizations, and effectively allocating resources to improve outcomes.

Panel conversations with local leaders in pretrial and behavioral health led to new connections across agencies and jurisdictions. The panels varied by region but generally focused on innovative, data-driven strategies implemented by counties to ensure the best possible outcomes for their communities. Event-specific information may be found by exploring the links on the bottom of this page.

Topics Included:



Creation of pretrial services agencies in Davidson, Knox and Hamilton Counties



Bail system changes in Shelby County



Innovative partnerships between state and county criminal justice and behavioral health agencies

Representatives from General Sessions Courts, Pretrial Services, the Tennessee Corrections Institute, Pathways Behavioral Health, and the Lifeline Peer Project spoke about what worked for their jurisdictions, discussed lessons learned, and offered advice for others who are seeking to implement positive change. The panelists all agreed that, although challenging, data-driven and collaborative work to improve outcomes for individuals, systems, and communities is well worth the effort.