

million in jail costs in one year by increasing the pretrial release rate by 5 percent, resulting in nearly 11,000 additional people released pretrial. Supervision costs in Kentucky are between two and 10 percent of detention costs.²⁷

Federal Courts

In the federal system in 2012, pretrial detention for a defendant was nearly 10 times more expensive (\$26,654.69 as compared to \$2,643.50) than the cost of supervision by a pretrial services officer. The cost of supervision has actually declined in recent years because the Judiciary had less funding to invest in community supervision. Probation and pretrial services officers focused the cuts on cases presenting the lowest relative risk and preserved resources, as much as possible, to mitigate the risk of the remaining higher-risk defendants and probationers. For example, officers established low activity supervision caseloads for low risk people who had not yet met the criteria for early termination.²⁸

The use of alternatives to detention for the appropriate pretrial population in the Southern District of Iowa not only improved outcomes, but also resulted in cost avoidance and true cost savings. The average cost of detaining a defendant pending trial is \$19,253, while the average cost of releasing a defendant pending trial to the alternatives to detention program (including cost of supervision, alternatives to detention, and fugitive recovery) is \$3,860.²⁹

Conclusion

Evidence shows current pretrial practices—especially those that rely on money bail and over-use jail beds and other scarce resources for lower risk people—are needlessly expensive and do not produce positive results.³⁰ A relatively small upfront investment in a pretrial services program often produces significant cost savings. These savings come from freeing up jail space and saving on the costs associated with incarceration, such as food, housing, building maintenance, and staff. More importantly, pretrial services programs hold defendants accountable, while also creating safer communities.

²⁷ PJI, 2017, p. 5.

²⁸ United States Courts, “Supervision Costs Significantly Less than Incarceration in Federal System,” July 18, 2013, <http://www.uscourts.gov/news/2013/07/18/supervision-costs-significantly-less-incarceration-federal-system>.

²⁹ VanNostrand, 2010, p. 10.

³⁰ PJI, 2017, p. 6.