

Jail Population Reduction Program

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the need to ensure the safety of the public, jail staff, and inmates at the La Plata County Jail, the Sixth Judicial District has instituted a jail population reduction program for the La Plata County Jail, the only jail currently functioning in the district. This program has been developed in collaboration with the La Plata County Jail, the District Attorney's Office of the Sixth Judicial District, and the Public Defender's Office for the Sixth and Twenty-Second Judicial Districts. To that end, the inmates on work release have been furloughed and will complete the balance of their sentences when the danger from the pandemic has subsided. Any inmates whose age or health issues place them at higher risk than other inmates will have their bonds or sentences reviewed and, so long as they do not pose a risk to public safety, are being given personal recognizance bonds or furloughs from their sentences. The judges in the district, when setting bonds for new arrestees, have greatly increased the number of personal recognizance bonds being issued and, unless a new arrestee poses a risk to public safety, the presumption has been to grant a personal recognizance bond. The judges are in the process of reviewing outstanding bench warrants issued since January 1, 2018, and are ordering, in appropriate cases, that warrants be temporarily made inactive to reduce the number of new inmates being brought into the jail. The probation department has significantly reduced its requests for the issuance of bench warrants and the filing of motions to revoke probationary sentences, making such requests only in the cases of public safety concerns and when required by law. The District Attorney's Office has instituted a new policy of issuing summonses for many individuals who were previously subject to arrest. Law enforcement agencies in the district are significantly reducing the number of arrests being made, again focusing on public safety issues in making the decision as to whether to warn, summons, or arrest individuals suspected of criminal activity.

The La Plata County Jail has the capability to isolate/quarantine 42 jail inmates who show symptoms of COVID-19 in single-bunk cells in a separate wing of the jail, separate from the general population of the jail. Jail officials believe that they can safely house up to 150 inmates during this epidemic. Since the jail population reduction program has taken effect until the posting of this document on April 1, 2020, the population of the La Plata County Jail has been reduced from 201 inmates and has fluctuated between 121 and 135 inmates.

District Attorney Christian Champagne, Office Head of the Durango Public Defender's Office Justin Bogan, and Chief Judge Jeff Wilson meet every week to discuss criminal justice issues that may affect public health and to review the jail population and determine if additional measures need to be taken to protect the health of the public, litigants, and attorneys in the Sixth Judicial District.