



BUNCOMBE COUNTY STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

JUSTICE RESOURCE SUPPORT



PRIORITY: Coordinate a justice system that is efficient, effective, equitable and protects our public safety while holistically addressing the needs of people involved in the system.

BACKGROUND: The Buncombe County Detention Facility housed more than 7,500 people in 2016, and more than 70 percent of the 13,000 bookings were for low-level, nonviolent offenses. In addition, over 670 people return to Buncombe County each year after a period of incarceration in a North Carolina state prison. Fifty-one jail beds a day are occupied by individuals receiving treatment for a serious mental illness, and nearly 800 inmates were monitored for substance withdrawal in 2016, an almost 30 percent increase from 2015. Women are the fastest growing population in local jail – up about 30 percent from 2015 to 2016. Nationally, 95 percent of women who have been incarcerated have a history of trauma. Involvement in the criminal justice system can have lifelong effects for individuals and their families, including barriers to accessing housing, employment, education and financial assistance. In Buncombe County in 2016, African-Americans made up 5.6 percent of the general population yet comprised 28 percent of those jailed in the local detention facility. It is estimated that there are over 3,400 domestic violence victimizations in Buncombe County each year, and over 670 people seek services for sexual assault.

GOALS:

- Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.
- Focus on law enforcement approaches informed by best practices for serving people impacted by mental illness, addiction, homelessness, poverty and trauma.
- Offer diversion and alternatives to incarceration for low-level, first-time nonviolent offenders and people with mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Focus on community-based pretrial justice solutions while prioritizing safety and offender accountability.
- Support people who are incarcerated and those re-entering the community from incarceration.
- Offer trauma-informed support for victims of crime, including domestic violence and sexual assault.

