

Prosecution and Transparency

Colorado District Attorneys Work Across the Aisle to Improve Community Safety

September 8, 2022, Denver – In Colorado, District Attorneys' (DA) offices are engaged in proactive responses to community problems, reduce disparities in justice outcomes, build greater trust through community engagement, and increase prosecutorial transparency and accountability. The public wants to know what their DA office is doing, especially given the increasing public scrutiny of law enforcement, prosecutors, and the justice system. There are valid concerns that the system treats people differently, often correlated to race, ethnicity, or wealth.

As elected District Attorneys, both Republican and Democrat across rural and urban districts, we believe robust data is needed to identify and prioritize the actions we can take to improve community safety, the justice system, reduce disparities, and make sure we are treating defendants and victims fairly. Until now, though, most DA offices have simply not had the ability to aggregate, review, make meaning of, or share information publicly.

This is why we partnered with the [Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver](#) and the national [Prosecutorial Performance Indicators](#) (PPI) project, including researchers from Loyola University of Chicago. Each of our offices is proud to unveil publicly-available dashboards with indicators we can use to assess prosecutorial progress toward three goals: community safety and well-being, fairness and justice, and the capacity and efficiency of our offices. The robust data in these dashboards also provide us with the solid evidence needed to inform policy changes that can benefit the community as a whole.

The dashboards make it possible for each DA's office to more systematically examine what we are doing well and where we can make improvements. We are looking inward to be sure we are serving our community in the best way possible. Our law enforcement agencies are also better served if we can provide case data to support policy changes and a sharper focus on troubling trends in our communities and the justice system.

Through community engagement over this past year, we understand that the communities we serve want to know how prosecutors address serious crime, minimize unnecessary punitiveness, and protect the well-being of all Coloradans. These dashboards provide information on the rate of cases filed by case level and case type (sex offense, drug, property, etc.) and display data on case resolution and types of sentences imposed, including efforts to minimize unnecessary punitiveness through alternatives to incarceration.

This new resource also strengthens our ability to ensure that people are not treated differently. The dashboards display disparities between race and ethnicity at various points of prosecutorial discretion, such as differences in felony cases filed, pleas taken, and incarceration imposed. We know that not all individuals are equally likely to come into contact with the justice system and we hope this information

can help us better consider effective prosecution strategies to see that cases are processed fairly, in light of systemic differences.

Our commitment to public safety requires us to maintain the trust of our communities. As prosecutors, it is our aim to protect community safety and well-being. We will continue to engage with the community, so that we have the input of lived experience alongside the data from cases handled.

The Colorado Prosecutorial Dashboards project is the first statewide initiative in the country for PPI, starting with our eight judicial districts. We are proud to be part of this historic initiative.

While this work is not easy, it is necessary. We cannot simply determine effectiveness through the outdated lens of the number of convictions. Success must be viewed through a multifaceted lens, focused on fairness, with assurances that the concerns of the community are not merely heard, but also addressed.

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