

Overview 25 words: The Plumas County Alternative Sentencing Program coordinates an innovative early intervention and reintegration approach to criminal justice, benefitting offenders and the community.

Challenge: In 2011, Public Safety Realignment (AB109) stood to substantially impact local criminal justice systems and communities. At the time, Plumas County—a small, rural county in Northeast California—faced a decided lack of resources for its criminal justice system. In the face of this “sea change,” Plumas County needed to implement evidence-based programming to reduce recidivism for low-level offenders while navigating often competing state and local expectations.

Solution: In response, Plumas County District Attorney David Hollister—with the Superior Court, defense bar, Sheriff’s Office, and other stakeholders—created the Alternative Sentencing Program (ASP). Led by ASP Coordinator Stephanie Tanaka, ASP oversees Plumas County’s response to Realignment and assists defendants in becoming sober, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community. Stakeholders designed ASP as an integrated structure—with a pretrial release program, community justice court, mental health court, and reentry program. ASP’s pretrial release program (PTR) is the crucial starting point, providing early intervention, assessment and referral, and services to avoid reoffending. Individuals gain the opportunity to retain employment and housing and reduce time in custody. Consequently, ASP provides high cost savings to Plumas County, safeguards our community, and implements significant changes to lower recidivism.

Innovation: Plumas County is a small, rural county with three stop lights and less than 20,000 residents. What works in California’s urban centers is unlikely to work in Plumas County. Plumas County’s successful ASP program offers the following areas of innovation: **Basing ASP in the (elected) DA’s Office** provides for a level of independence, buy-in, and insulation crucial to the success of rehabilitative programs; **ASP’s hands-on pretrial release program** enables early intervention and assessment to create a roadmap for an offender’s rehabilitative success by identifying appropriate

services at a time when an offender is most likely to accept help; **ASP's coordination of the Superior Court's Community Justice Court** marshals Plumas County's limited resources to bring our highest level of service to those most in need and most at risk of reoffending.

Results: Both offenders and the community have benefited from ASP services, particularly the PTR. In 2019, the PTR received 784 referrals. 201 of these individuals were eligible for pretrial release and received services. PTR removes costs associated with jail and court, creating a high net savings. 40% of eligible participants were released from jail within 24 hours. This saved the jail over \$18,000, the Superior Court almost \$10,000, and the District Attorney's Office almost \$10,000. Additionally, 36% of eligible participants qualified for pretrial release programs on the first day. This saved the jail, Superior Court, and the District Attorney's Office almost \$9,000 each. These and other savings offset the costs of ASP to add to a grand total of \$94,902 of annual savings for Plumas County. These numbers stand for 2019 alone. In 2018, the total savings were \$79,290; in 2017, the total savings were \$102,543. In three years, ASP has saved Plumas County hundreds of thousands of dollars. More crucial than the county's monetary savings, ASP's PTR marks the start of an offender's rehabilitation, reunification with family, and transformation to a valued, and law-abiding, member of the community.

Replicability: The "sea change" to California's criminal justice system, beginning with AB 109 in 2011, necessitated different approaches in different counties. While likely inapplicable to larger counties, our structure of creating ASP as an integrated response—utilizing pretrial release and specialty courts—can benefit California's 20+ rural counties. The commonality in California's rural counties is they are each uncommon and unique. ASPs structured response allows for modification consistent with each county's strengths and needs while providing a model meeting the direction of the state and expectations of the county's residents.

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