

Audio Transcript for [“How One County Screens and Connects People in Jail to Housing”](#)

Tucker Samuelson (00:11):

The Jail Dashboard is a daily interactive dashboard that gives you information about the people who are currently in the Salt Lake County Jail. It refreshes every night, and gives a live look at how many people there are, along with information about them, such as their demographic information, and their charge information, and their criminal history.

Tucker Samuelson (00:34):

So for instance, if you wanted to know how many people in the jail were homeless, or who were a particular gender, a particular race, or who were charged with a particular charge, you could pull up the Jail Dashboard to see that information on a more or less live look and see how many people are in the jail with those characteristics at any given moment.

Tucker Samuelson (00:56):

Everyone in the jail is asked for their home address when they're initially booked. What we found was that a lot of people were giving the address of a well-known homeless shelter in Salt Lake County. So we essentially wrote an algorithm that just collects all of those addresses, and it assumes that if we ask for your home address and you give us the address of a homeless shelter, what you're really telling us is that you're homeless, and we're able to do that and get a pretty good estimate of the number of people in the jail who were homeless at the time that they were booked.

Charly Swett (01:37):

We were awarded a number of emergency housing vouchers from HUD, from the federal government, and we were given some local flexibility on who to use these vouchers to serve. Part of the direction we got was to look at those who are involved with justice system and find a way to use these vouchers to create some housing stability for that group. Because of the data, even more specifically than the dashboard data, but the by name information the jail was already collecting from individuals who reported being homeless and other details about their criminal justice history, mental health needs, things like that, we were really quickly able to identify people who would be appropriate candidates for these vouchers, and to create even a screening tool beyond that to further identify those that are appropriate referrals to connect those individuals from the jail directly to this housing program, and it was really instrumental in making that successful.

Jojo Liu (02:42):

Since us having the Jail Dashboard, which was launched in 2019, I think the biggest change in our system has been really a wholesale change in expectation that criminal justice is and should be a data-driven endeavor. I think it really has redefined what is possible because it's one thing to have broad policy consensus that we should, for example, decriminalize mental illness and homelessness, have the jail operate as a robust intercept point to services, it's another thing to have the informational infrastructure to actually accomplish it.

Jeannie Edens (03:18):

Thanks to our Office of Criminal Justice initiatives through Tucker and Jojo and their amazing work with the jail data, we've seen dramatic changes in a group that I facilitate. We've been doing this for about 15 years, but over the years, we would have to manually go in and look at somebody in the jail OMS system

and find out the jail data. We have a behavioral health provider on the meeting and they see the court cases displayed there, and then we pop it in another smart sheet they created for us that everybody can access. We can create a summary for each client that has a full release, of course, allowing us to do this. When they know where the court cases are, then that assertive community treatment team can actually help their client then make it to court, or call in and arrange a court hearing date and time. Hopefully a warrant gets withdrawn in that manner. Preventing an individual from possibly losing their housing in that process, et cetera, can be very destabilizing, and so knowing court dates in that real-time situation is really beneficial.