



**Superior Court of California
County of Sonoma**

Gary Nadler
Presiding Judge

ACCESS, SERVICE, JUSTICE

Arlene D. Junior
Court Executive Officer

Bradford DeMeo
Assistant Presiding Judge

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

On August 9, 2019, the Judicial Council awarded Sonoma County Superior Court a grant for \$5.7 million dollars as part of a statewide initiative to pilot expanded and enhanced criminal pretrial release services. Sonoma County Superior Court was awarded this grant along with 15 other counties – a total of 31 counties applied for the grant. The Superior Court, along with the Probation Department, will implement the pilot program.

“The grant will allow Sonoma County to expand and develop evidence-based pretrial assessments”, said Presiding Judge Gary Nadler. “It is a great honor to be selected to pilot such an important initiative,” Judge Nadler added.

As part of the Budget Act of 2019, the Legislature allocated \$75 million to fund the implementation, operation, and evaluation of programs to develop a risk based assessment pretrial release versus releases based on bail. Key to implementing this program is Sonoma County Probation Department’s development of a new risk assessment tool that will allow judicial officers to make pretrial release decision based on, among other things, public safety, the level of risk that the defendant will reoffend if released, the defendant’s risk to the community, and the likelihood that the defendant will fail to appear at their next hearing. “The ability to make bail, and be released from custody pending the outcome of the case, has long been dependent upon the ability to afford the bail. Those with resources were released, while those without remained in custody. This is unfair to those without the ability to pay, and thwarted the primary purpose of the old bail system” according to Presiding Judge Gary Nadler.

The new risk assessment tool is intended to eliminate bias in assessing a defendant’s risk. In implementing the pilot program, Probation will conduct all pretrial risk assessments of those defendants held in the Sonoma County Jail. – these risk assessments are currently performed by Sonoma County Sheriff’s Department jail staff. Further, the pilot program will fund necessary improvements to the Court’s case management system and IT infrastructure that will streamline communication between the Court and its justice partners. This necessary upgrade will position the Court and its justice partners to seamlessly and timely share vital pretrial release risk information.

“This pilot highlights the collaborative efforts of the Court and the Sonoma County justice partners to bring effective evidence based criminal justice reform to Sonoma County,” said David Koch, Chief Probation Officer for Sonoma County. “The joint effort that brought the pilot to Sonoma County will serve the justice partners in implementing this challenging and exciting program; kudos to all of the hard work put in by the Court and Probation teams,” noted Chief Koch.

“Updating and increasing the efficiency of the Court’s IT infrastructure will allow the Court to provide the judicial officers with more timely and accurate information,” said Arlene D. Junior, Court Executive Officer. Ms. Junior further commented: “Implementing the pilot is an exciting step forward for not only the Court, but also for the citizens of Sonoma County.”

For more information about the pretrial pilot program, please go to <https://newsroom.courts.ca.gov/news/judicial-council-funds-16-pretrial-pilot-programs>.

Locations:

Hall of Justice
600 Administration Drive
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Empire Annex Courthouse
3035 Cleveland Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Civil & Family Law Courthouse
3055 Cleveland Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Juvenile Justice Center
7425 Rancho Los Guilicos
Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

Phones:

Main Information
(707) 521-6500

Administration
(707) 521-6501