Jail Collaborative
ALLEGHENY COUNTY

2026 Strategic Plan

November 2026

ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE

The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative (ACJC) is an alliance of government agencies and nonprofit groups dedicated to addressing the needs of people in the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ) and those returning from the Jail to the community. For more than 25 years, the ACJC has influenced system change and implemented evidence-based programming to achieve its mission of increasing community safety and reducing recidivism for people involved in the criminal justice system in Allegheny County. The Collaborative owes much of its success to the ongoing commitment of the Allegheny County Department of Human Service (ACDHS), Fifth Judicial District including Adult Probation and Pretrial Services, and the ACJ. Over the years, its work has been supported by multiple funding sources, including ACDHS, local and national foundations, and federal and state grants.

Key functions of the ACJC include strategic vision-setting, gap analysis, program development and monitoring , cross-system improvement efforts related to diversion and post-release interventions, and a range of programs and services offered to people while in the ACJ and after return to the community.

The reentry program of the ACJC sparked wide interest during its early years, both locally and nationally, particularly after an Urban Institute Evaluation found that it both reduced incidences of and prolonged time to re-arrest among participants.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point for the ACJC and its operations in the ACJ. Strict limits on face-to-face interactions and decreased access for providers and other visitors caused disruptions to services within the Jail and for those who returned to the community. By the time pandemic restrictions were lifted, the ACJ population had decreased and their demographics had changed. Whereas reentry program participation had once been as high as 400 to 500, there were now only about 100 individuals who met the criteria for the program.

The ACJC and its partners took this opportunity to revisit the original model and redesign it to more closely align with the current and somewhat different realities. They underwent a new visioning process, incorporating the ACJ's separate (but complementary) vision, use of predictive analytics for planning and prioritization of need, and an emphasis on improving outcomes for a broader range of people as well as their families.

This report covers ACJC's strategy to serve people from the time of ACJ entry to the time of exit. Although many services are in place to prevent Jail entry and to support people once they leave ACJ, those services are not within the scope of this report.

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WHO DOES THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY JAIL COLLABORATIVE SERVE?

As of July 6, 2026, there were 1,852 people in the ACJ.[1] On average (from July 8, 2023 through July 6, 2026), the ACJ held 1,904 individuals each day. Although the ACJ population has declined in recent years, it still represents a significant component of the criminal-legal system. In Fiscal Year 2025-2026, ACDHS spent more than $11 million on ACJC administration, programming and provider contracts. This total includes some services not directly referenced in this publication.

Only a small percentage of the ACJ population is actually serving a sentence. A plurality (47%) are awaiting a trial and more than a third (36%) are being held on a County or PA probation detainer, meaning they are alleged to have violated a condition of their probation. A person can be held for more than one reason, which may change over time. The length of time of holds can vary significantly and is hard to predict.

On average, 40-50% of those who enter ACJ are booked into the Jail. For those booked during 2025, stays ranged from one day to two years, but the median length of stay was 21 days and the average was 64 days. These and other ACJ data can be found at the ACJ population dashboard.

Research indicates that even a brief stay in jail—as short as 24 to 72 hours—can trigger a "cascading effect" of negative life outcomes. In *The Difference a Day Makes: How Spending Even One Day in Jail Can Have Devastating Consequences*, the Harvard Kennedy School Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management found that "within just the first week of detention, each day the very fact of incapacitation and these harsh conditions of confinement yield 1) accumulated material losses (jobs, housing, cars, debt); 2) lost or weakened connections with conventional ties and strengthened bonds with nonconventional ties; 3) a growing sense of procedural injustices that feed a deep distrust in the legal system and legal authorities; and 4) diminished emotional and psychological well-being." The study explains how these negative social, psychological, and economic health and welfare effects may be further exacerbated for individuals with substance use or other issues that make their lives precarious even outside of jail.

These potential mechanisms highlight the importance of finding strategies to reduce bookings while preserving community safety, avoid delays in processing, and provide opportunities for training, education, programming, behavioral health treatment and transition back into the community for everyone in the ACJ, regardless of their length of stay.

2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In 2026, the ACJC is focusing its efforts on three strategic priorities: 1) Diversion and Front-End Supports; 2) Programming; and 3) Transition and Release Coordination. The strategic plan includes monitoring and evaluating each component individually and in combination as well as monitoring post-release outcomes such as recidivism, mental health crises and physical health emergencies, homelessness and mortality. Given the diversity of the population's holding status and length of stay, creating a standardized flow and timeline for service coordination, programming and discharge planning requires communication, creativity and flexibility.

ACJC programming is supplemented by key programs, classes and services offered by external organizations that receive their funding from sources other than ACDHS. Together with ACJC services, the offerings provided by these organizations form a continuum of support designed to create a positive learning environment for people while in the Jail and—for many—when they return to their community. A list of current providers can be found in the Appendix.

1 For purposes of this document, Allegheny County Jail data include the people in the facility at 950 2nd Avenue as well as those in alternative housing. Alternative housing provides opportunities for treatment, work release and other activities that support rehabilitation.

Although this report focuses on these three priorities, the reader should know that people who have left the ACJ, particularly those involved in the reentry program, have access to many services and resources, ranging from visits with probation officers to ongoing one-to-one support—including concrete goods—from reentry program and other community provider staff.

Strategy 1. Diversion and Front-End Supports

Entering jail is a traumatic experience. Individuals may be in the midst of a behavioral health crisis, experiencing withdrawal and/or awaiting a hearing—regardless, it can be overwhelming. By assessing an individual's behavioral and/or physical health issues, family and work situation, and availability of community supports, diversion coordinators can make informed recommendations to the Magisterial District Judge at the preliminary arraignment and—for individuals not released at that time—Jail staff can be prepared to address their needs.

Pre-Arraignment Diversion

The Allegheny County Pre-Arraignment Diversion (PAD) program provides a community-based alternative to booking for certain individuals charged with a crime. One of five diversion coordinators screens individuals at intake. looking at factors such as type of crime, family situation, and behavioral health and/or physical health issues to determine whether they may be eligible for and better served by "diversion" to community-based services and supports. When they identify someone who meets PAD criteria, they create a "diversion plan" that provides information and recommendations for review by the Magisterial District Judge at the individual's bail hearing. The Magisterial District Judge uses the information in the diversion plan—in combination with other factors—to decide whether to proceed with jail booking or to approve the diversion plan with specific community-based services (e.g., shelter, peer support, behavioral health treatment, job training).

Currently, an average of 22% of individuals entering the Jail for arraignment are being screened for pre-arraignment diversion; the goal is to increase this percentage to 100% of people screened prior to arraignment. PAD is an effective way to safely reduce the Jail population and, by receiving treatment and supports instead of jail time, eligible individuals get the help they need, avoid the negative long-term impact of even a short stay, and reduce the risk of a return to the criminal-legal system.

Mobile Competency Restoration and Support

Sometimes, based on medical testimony, a judge will determine that an individual is not competent to stand trial. Addressing this issue and restoring competency, when possible, is a lengthy and complicated process. The Mobile Competency Restoration and Support Program (MCRST) was designed to improve and accelerate this process.

In too many cases, individuals with serious mental illness, cognitive delays or conditions like dementia are not able to understand court proceedings or assist in their own defense. When a judge determines that someone is not competent to stand trial (221 people in 2025), the person has to remain in the Jail until their competency is restored or alternative solutions are in place; previously, the only alternative was waiting in the Jail for an available bed at Torrance State Hospital, a state-operated facility with limited capacity and long waiting lists. From 2018 through 2024, individuals committed to Torrance for competency restoration waited in the ACJ an average of 82 days—even though almost half (49%) had only been charged with a misdemeanor.

MCRST, launched in 2025, provides another alternative and reduces jail time for these individuals. MCRST, the only mobile competency restoration team in Pennsylvania that offers both clinical treatment and psychoeducational support in a community-based model, provides a less restrictive and faster alternative that gives individuals the care and respect they deserve.

In MCRST's first year, the median time from commitment to admission to Torrance decreased to 43 days, shortening the time spent waiting In the ACJ by an average of about five weeks. During that same first year, the team diverted 55 people from going to Torrance by: 1) successfully intervening to have the commitments of 23 rescinded and 2) making it possible for another 32 to be directly referred to MCRST without first going to Torrance. These outcomes would not have been possible prior to implementation of this service.

Strategy 2. Programming

In its early years, the flagship program of the ACJC—the Reentry Program—underwent independent evaluation, earning national recognition for its strong outcomes. Even with the Reentry Program's strong foundation, the staffing and service disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many people leaving the ACJ without access to necessary community supports. Improvements to the Reentry Program post-COVID represent a recommitment to supporting people while in the ACJ and improving outcomes (e.g., reduced recidivism, improved quality of life) for those who have exited. The ACJC is also ensuring the success of the program by using data to track reentry outcomes such as recidivism, behavioral and physical health crises, homelessness and mortality.

The ACJC is attempting to meet the needs of the Jail's disparate populations by:



Offering service coordination and priority enrollment in high quality, evidence-based services for the subset of individuals who are likely to stay in the ACJ longer and who are at risk of returning to ACJ after release.



Offering curriculum-based classes to a larger group of people who are interested in building their skills, knowledge and competencies, making the most of their time in the ACJ and ensuring a smoother transition back to their community.



Providing a variety of educational, physical and social activities available to everyone in the ACJ.

Once a week, ACDHS analysts provide ACJ reentry staff a list of individuals newly booked in the ACJ. This list helps reentry staff and probation officers identify people eligible for service coordination and/or classes and other supports. Jail staff and probation officers can also refer specific individuals to service coordination or structured courses.

Service Coordination

Service coordination services provide intensive programming and ongoing supports, continuing through transition home and into the community, for people who are expected to have longer stays in the ACJ and/or who are at highest risk of re-offending. Service coordination participation is voluntary; participants are paired with a service coordinator who assesses their needs and works with them to develop—and follow—an individualized service plan and a community-based reentry plan. Service coordinators also offer family support and information about employment, housing, counseling and a range of other services that can be accessed in the community. Participants receive priority enrollment in structured curriculum-based courses. This regular and ongoing relationship with a service coordinator is a primary benefit of the reentry program.

On average, 121 people are active in reentry service coordination each month; 131 people were enrolled in service coordination at the beginning of July 2026.

Another key component of service coordination is the development of a strong relationship between the participants and dedicated reentry probation officers. People enrolled in service coordination have the advantage of developing a relationship with the a reentry probation officer—while still in ACJ—who who will continue with them into to community. The reentry probation officer reaches out to the participant and maintains ongoing, regular contact. This relationship—and the connections probation officers have in the community—can play a strong role in successful community reentry. A probation officer who knows the individual well is a valuable asset when it comes to accessing services in the community.

Structured Curriculum-Based Courses

Those with long stays who choose not to participate in service coordination may still participate in structured curriculum-based and skill-building classes in the Reentry Center, including job training, mental and physical health programming, and parenting, relationships and other issue-focused groups that engage them and their families while preparing them for transition back home. Participation in certain structured courses is a requirement for those in service coordination and strongly encouraged for others.

Recovery-Oriented Cognitive Therapy (CT-R) is an evidence-based approach to cognitive behavioral therapy that offers concrete actionable strategies to promote recovery, resilience and empowerment. Participation in this program is required for those in service coordination and encouraged for all. The Beck Institute, a nationally recognized leader in cognitive behavioral therapy, developed CT-R and provides training in its implementation to ACJC partners offering CT-R groups as well as those teaching other skills who can nonetheless incorporate cognitive behavioral approaches into their facilitation (see list of providers in the **Appendix**). The ACJC plans to expand and conduct a randomized controlled study of community-based CT-R in the next year.

Individuals with children are also encouraged to participate in the family support program, which provides activities and resources for and with their families. A 2019 Urban Institute publication, "Model Practices for Parents in Prisons and Jails: Reducing Barriers to Family Connections" cites this program and references its model as a best practice in family visiting and parent–child communication.

From June 2025 through June 2026, 936 people enrolled in one or more reentry classes.

Productive Experience for All While in ACJ

The ACJC strategic plan reflects the belief that engagement in accessible and less structured activities can support purpose and connection, sustain hope, and provide a more predictable and supportive environment for everyone in the Jail, regardless of the reason for their booking or their length of stay. The theory behind this evolving strategy is that consistent opportunities to engage—even during short stays—can encourage constructive use of time, foster connection, and reduce the boredom and downtime that often contribute to disruptive behavior. Further, the ACJC believes that providing these opportunities on housing units will help create a calmer, more engaging atmosphere for both residents and staff.

The goal is for activity coordinators to offer at least one meaningful facilitated activity every day on every unit. Examples of activities (which can be offered directly or by eligible volunteers) include games and hobbies, kickball, yoga, line dancing, sports trivia games, arts & crafts, improv workshops, movie nights and music history classes. In addition, almost everyone in the ACJ receives a tablet with appropriate educational and recreational content.

In conjunction with its focus on improving the Jail experience for everyone regardless of holding status, length of stay and risk factors, the Jail is implementing a new approach to housing unit management. This approach, which aims to reduce conflict and behavioral incidents, emphasizes improved communication (among staff and with people in the Jail), consistency and accountability.

Special Populations

Because of their specific needs, the ACJC strategic plan includes a particular focus on two distinct populations of residents: People with Substance Use Disorders and Youth Under 18.

People with Substance Use Disorder

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) are major drivers of criminal justice involvement. Individuals with SUD/OUD often enter jail in acute distress, experiencing a cascade of physiological effects — the onset of withdrawal, reduced tolerance and a heightened risk of overdose. For people with SUD, medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and Medication for Opioid Use Disorders (MOUD) are best practices that deliver evidence-based care and help them safely navigate withdrawal and stabilization within a secure, medically supervised environment. The 2025 opening of a licensed Opioid Treatment Medication Unit in the Jail means that people now have access to the full range of MOUD, including medication induction that allows them to begin treatment even if they did not have a prior prescription.

As part of the ACJC's strategic plan, ACJC is systematically tracking MOUD participation and related outcomes, using these data to better understand and improve treatment engagement, identify gaps and strengthen continuity of care. From June 2024 through May 2026, 3,142 people in the ACJ received MOUD treatment, averaging approximately 22% of the ACJ population. On June 1, 2026, 408 people were receiving MOUD. Significantly, 45% of this group had NOT received any SUD treatment in the six months prior to booking. For more information, see Allegheny County's dashboard: MOUD in the ACJ.

Treatment that continues uninterrupted upon return to the community can be the key to successful reentry. Prior to release, the program connects anyone receiving MAT/MOUD to a community provider and refers them to reentry peer support.

To learn more about Allegheny County's implementation of MOUD in the ACJ, read From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Delivering Lifesaving Opioid Use Disorder Treatment to People in the Allegheny County Jail.

Youth / Juvenile Housing Unit

The Juvenile Housing Unit offers a range of meaningful, developmentally appropriate activities, supports and services designed to meet the needs of youth under 18, including educational programming through the Intermediate Unit, social-emotional programming, peer mentoring and physical activities.

Services are provided by a dedicated Unit Manager and staff, all of whom are trained in trauma-informed interventions. As part of the strategic plan, the ACJC is committed to further strengthening these supports and ensuring that youth have consistent access to enriching opportunities that promote stability, growth and healthy connections during their time in custody. ACDHS staff has convened a group focusing on better release planning for this population, to ease their transition home.

Strategy 3. Transition and Release Coordination

Preparing for and facilitating release and post-release services is a critical piece of success for individuals reentering the community. Early and barrier-free engagement with community supports can address challenges to adjustment, prevent people from falling through the cracks—especially those with urgent health needs or quick releases outside of normal processing hours—and reduce the risk of recidivism and other negative outcomes.

The ACJC aims to develop Minimum Release Preparation Standards to ensure smooth release and transition back to the community for everyone leaving the Jail—regardless of timing, needs or exit pathway. At a minimum, these standards include ensuring that each person exiting the Jail leaves with their documents, medications, referrals, contact information for their probation officer (when applicable) and other items based on their specific needs. For those individuals connected to one of several providers offering one-to-one reentry support upon release, the ACJC will co-design protocols that ensure that these reentry service providers engage quickly, coordinate effectively with each other, when needed, and acquire or share information and resources that will help their clients succeed.

APPENDIX

The services and supports described in this report would not be possible without partnerships with community-based organizations that serve people while in the Jail and after they have returned to the community. If we have inadvertently left any partner out of the following list, we offer our apologies and our gratitude for your contributions.

ACDHS-CONTRACTED/FUNDED PROVIDERS	
Amachi Pittsburgh	Parenting Classes *"Roots and Wings: Family, Identity and Healing"*
Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU3)	Education Courses and Programs / Partnership with Duquesne University and Penn State University
Amachi Pittsburgh	Contact Visitation Support
Awaken Pittsburgh	Mind Training for Successful Reentry (Men)
Centurion's Mobile Competency Restoration and Support Team (MCRST)	Behavioral Health Treatment and Competency Restoration
Foundation of HOPE	Activities-Based Programming and Resources Coordination
JRS	Service Coordination and Release Planning
Maya Institute	Mindful Mental and Physical Health Course (Women)
Office of Developmental Supports (ACDHS)	Support for people in ACJ with intellectual disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorder
Prison Society	Relationship Building and Maintenance Classes
Reimagine Reentry	Job Training and Development *"Rumble Ready: My Skills, My Future, My Taking Control"*
ReCA	CT-R (in ACJ and in community) *"Our Futures Our Way"*
Unity Peers	Diversion and MOUD/MAT

ACJ & OTHER PROVIDERS, INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS	
ACJ Chaplaincy	Grief Groups/Bereavement Group
ACJ Diversion Team	Harm Reduction Classes (SUD)
ACJ Reentry Service Coordinators	Services to people in ACJ and post-release
Allegheny County Veteran's Services	Weekly Meetings / Resources and Information for Veterans
Animal Friends and ACJ	TAILS (Teaching Animals and Incarcerated Lifelong Skills) Animal Adoption Preparation Program
First Commonwealth Bank	Financial Literacy
PEACE	Workshops in Which Participants Explore Tools for Living (e.g., Inner Strength, Choice, Appreciation, Hope)
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR)	Trauma Group (Women), Addiction and Trauma Program
Pittsburgh Intermediate Unit (IU2)	High School Courses/Tutoring for Juveniles
Renewal Inc.	Alternative Housing Providing Physical/Behavioral Health Treatment, Education &Training, Job Readiness & Placement, and Family & Peer Support Services
Wesley Family Services	Battering Intervention Program (BIP)/Duluth Model (Men)