



**Montana Sheriffs & Peace Officers Association**  
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TO: Law and Justice Interim Committee Members  
FR: Nanette Gilbertson, Executive Director  
RE: Local Detention Facility Data

I apologize for the delay in getting detention data to you, but I was hoping to hear back from more facilities. The information included below is what I have to report. While it is a small sample, it is representative of rural/urban, east/west and the overall efforts made across the state by Sheriffs and Detention Commanders to mitigate for COVID-19 and put protocols in place to reduce the introduction of the virus in the secure facilities. However, you are all aware that there are currently two facilities with COVID-19 outbreaks. Both facilities are taking additional measures to stop the spread of infection, test inmates, and provide appropriate healthcare to the entire inmate population. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have questions: 459-9892.

I asked Detention Commanders the questions below and their responses are in red:

- **During the initial COVID stages did your agency take any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe.**
- **As of today, is your agency taking any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe.**
- **Did the number of inmates decrease during the stay-at-home order or since March 16?**
- **Have the number of inmates increased in the past two months?**
- **Average daily population in February 2020?**
- **Average daily population in April/May 2020?**
- **Average daily population in July 2020?**

### **Yellowstone County Detention Facility**

- During the initial COVID stages did your agency take any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **We were already having to take steps to reduce our population before Covid due to overcrowding.**
- As of today, is your agency taking any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **We currently are only taking offenders if they pose a danger to community or based on the circumstances of the arrest and statutory requirements.**
- Did the number of inmates decrease during the stay-at-home order or since March 16? **The courts released about 100 inmates so our population went down but we are overcrowded again.**
- Have the number of inmates increased in the past two months? **Yes.**

- **February 525**
- **March 470**
- **April 388**
- **May 420**
- **June 466**
- **July 503**
- **August 523**

### **Powell County Detention Facility**

- During the initial COVID stages did your agency take any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **Booking intake procedures changed and inmate classification changed. Doubled up inmates where necessary to allow for quarantine cells. Worked more closely with the Justice and District court Judges to release non-violent inmates earlier or with lower bond to free up cell space. Warrant arrests were handled differently depending on jurisdiction and transport availability.**
- As of today, is your agency taking any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **Above procedures are still in place.**
- Did the number of inmates decrease during the stay-at-home order or since March 16? **YES – In large part, due to our facility housing DOC transport inmates. When DOC stopped transports our numbers went down. Approximately 90% of our inmates were DOC holds that were not transported.**
- Have the number of inmates increased in the past two months? **NO**
- Average daily population in February 2020? **12**
- Average daily population in April/May 2020? **7**
- Average daily population in July 2020? **7**

### **Sanders County Detention Facility**

- During the initial COVID stages did your agency take any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **Sanders County reduced numbers by only allowing Violent Offenders, 2<sup>nd</sup> DUI's, PFMA's. Misdemeanors and non-violent traffic offences were not accepted into the facility.**
- As of today, is your agency taking any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **We are still not taking misdemeanor arrests, unless the Sheriff, or myself have preauthorized it. If we have the room, we are allowing some individuals to do their time owed to the court.**
- Did the number of inmates decrease during the stay-at-home order or since March 16? **Yes, the County Attorney released a couple inmates and since that time our numbers have dropped by about 10 inmates. We have also denied several arrests.**
- Have the number of inmates increased in the past two months? **No.**
- Average daily population in February 2020? **19**
- Average daily population in April/May 2020? **15 / 19**
- Average daily population in July 2020? **18**

### **Park County Detention Facility**

- During the initial COVID stages did your agency take any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **Our Detention Center would only take felony and violent misdemeanor offenders. We sent out memorandums to all agencies that we work with stating that we would not accept any new arrests unless they met this criteria. A statewide teletype was sent out to all Montana agencies from Sheriff Bichler asking that they not arrest on misdemeanor warrants for Park County as we**

would not be transporting from any other jurisdictions. I worked with our judges daily to keep inmates moving through the system. Most arrestees who were brought in were released within days unless it was deemed that they were a danger to public safety.

- As of today, is your agency taking any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe. **Not at this time.**
- Did the number of inmates decrease during the stay-at-home order or since March 16? **Yes.**
- Have the number of inmates increased in the past two months? **Yes**
- Average daily population in February 2020? **12.9**
- Average daily population in April/May 2020?  
**April – 4**  
**May – 8.8**
- Average daily population in July 2020? **11**

### **Flathead County Detention Facility**

- During the initial COVID stages did your agency take any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe.
  - **We did not do anything official, but we asked our local agencies to be mindful of who they brought into the facility. We asked them to carefully consider if the offender “needed” to be in the detention facility to protect public safety. We quit holding for other counties, such as Lake and Mineral Counties.**
- As of today, is your agency taking any steps to reduce intake of nonviolent offenders? Please describe.
  - **Same as above.**
- Did the number of inmates decrease during the stay-at-home order or since March 16?
  - **We had a temporary drop, but they went back up.**
- Have the number of inmates increased in the past two months?
  - **Our overall numbers have decreased. Part of that is our officers being cautious of who they are bringing into the facility. We also have seen our COVID numbers increase dramatically in our county over the last couple months, which has kept officers aware of who they are bringing into the facility.**
- Average daily population
  - **February 104**
  - **March 97**
  - **April 88**
  - **May 100**
  - **June 99**
  - **July 83**

### **Anaconda Deer Lodge**

- **In Anaconda we released all non-violent and misdemeanor offenders during the initial COVID stages and did not receive any prisoners unless it was for felony charges in our county only.**
- **Currently, we are accepting prisoners just like before the COVID crisis.**
- **When the stay at home orders came out by the governor, we reduced our population to 2 inmates (both felony charges).**
- **Our inmate population has steadily increased to a total of fifteen today.**
- **Our average population in February was 13, April was 3, May was 8, and July was 11.**