

# Brooklyn Justice Initiatives

Brooklyn Justice Initiatives seeks to forge a new response to misdemeanor and non-violent felony defendants in Brooklyn, New York. By providing meaningful pre-trial supervised release and post-plea sentencing options, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives seeks to use an arrest as a window of opportunity to change the direction of a defendant's life and avoid the harmful effects of incarceration.

## Caseload

In 2015, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives handled almost 800 cases. The most frequent charges were assault, theft, and prostitution. Social workers at Brooklyn Justice Initiatives made almost 700 referrals to voluntary services, including drug treatment, job training, and counseling in 2015. Brooklyn Justice Initiatives has four principal program components.

## Reducing the Use of Jail

Brooklyn Justice Initiatives seeks to reduce judges' reliance on bail and pre-trial detention by offering meaningful supervised release options for eligible defendants. The supervised release program is designed to ensure public safety while minimizing the harmful impact of Rikers Island. Participants receive rigorous monitoring and reminders to ensure that they attend their court appearances.

An evaluation found that Brooklyn Justice Initiatives significantly reduced pre-trial detention. Program participants were far more likely than a comparison group to remain in the community before trial (77 percent for participants compared to 12 percent for the comparison group). Participants were almost twice as likely to avoid a criminal conviction and three times as likely to avoid jail time.

The supervised release program at Brooklyn Justice Initiatives was launched in 2013 as a pilot

program for misdemeanor defendants. With support from the New York City Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives in March 2016 expanded to include eligible non-violent felony offenses.

## Helping Young Adults

In addition to providing alternatives to bail, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives provides special alternatives to incarceration for misdemeanor defendants ages 16-24. Participants receive a range of alternative sanctions, including onsite counseling and referrals to community-based services such as drug treatment, GED classes, and job training. The goal is to improve case outcomes and reduce the use of incarceration for young adults.

In 2015, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives served over 500 young adults, with 94 percent of participants successfully completing their court mandates.

## Addressing Human Trafficking

Brooklyn Justice Initiatives seeks to break the cycle of exploitation and arrest for victims of trafficking. The goal is to link participants with services, including mental health counseling and drug treatment. Typically, charges will be dismissed following completion of services. In 2015, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives handled 176 cases involving victims of trafficking.

### **Improving Mental Health**

Brooklyn Justice Initiatives offers judges a range of alternatives for defendants with mental illness, both pre- and post-plea. The program seeks to divert participants from jail by providing them with onsite services such as mental health and substance use assessment, treatment plan development, case management, and psychiatric care, as well as referrals to community-based mental health treatment. Program participants receive community supervision while awaiting trial or as an alternative sentence.

### **Further Reading**

Hahn, Josephine. 2016. An Experiment in Bail Reform: Examining the Impact of the Brooklyn Supervised Release Program. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation.

### **For More Information**

Visit: [courtinnovation.org/project/brooklyn-justice-initiatives](http://courtinnovation.org/project/brooklyn-justice-initiatives)

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