



## **PRETRIAL RELEASE PROGRAM**

"CITIZENS RIGHT-TO-KNOW ACT"

Section 907.043 Florida Statutes

### **2023 Annual Report**

***Based on statistical data tracked for period:  
1/1/2023 - 12/31/2023***

**Office Location:**

*St Lucie County Courthouse*

*218 S. 2nd Street*

*Ft. Pierce, FL 34950*

*Telephone: (772) 462-6772*

*Fax: (772) 462-1102*

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The St Lucie County Pretrial Release Program is funded through the St Lucie County Board of County Commissioners, under the office of the County Attorney, with direct supervision of the St Lucie County Criminal Justice Director. In addition, Okeechobee County has contracted with St. Lucie County to provide pretrial and GPS monitoring services.

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# **ST. LUCIE COUNTY PRETRIAL PROGRAM**

## **2023 ANNUAL REPORT (PER F.S. 907.043)**

### **(1/1/2023 – 12/31/2023)**

**Section I.**      *Required questions and answers per F.S. 907.043 “Citizens Right-to-Know Act”*

**Section II.**      *Charts and graphs for statistical data required to provide answers to the questions in Section I. (Per F.S. 907.043) (Including separate data for the Programs in St. Lucie, and Okeechobee Counties)*

**Section III.**      *Summary and explanation of statistical data, services provided, required conditions, and plans for expansion and accomplishments of the St. Lucie County Pretrial Program*

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The St. Lucie County Pretrial Release Program ("Program") has been staffed by county employees since June 2007. The Program was initially started in order to provide supervision of pretrial defendants and to alleviate jail over-crowding. The Program has since been expanded to provide supervision of other cases when ordered by the Judiciary. As a result, defendants have been sanctioned to the program from Drug Court, Mental Health Court, while pending appeal, and/or while their cases are pending a hearing for Violation of Probation (County Court). In addition, due to the success of the Program, several of the County Court Judges requested that the Program take sentenced cases (misdemeanors only), as a condition of probation. The enhanced supervision conditions can include GPS monitoring, field visits (which are not provided by county probation services), along with house arrest and curfew requirements as an alternative to receiving a sentence to the county jail.

In the spring of 2015, Okeechobee County requested the St. Lucie Pretrial Program assist them with their jail overcrowding issues. As a result of the request, Okeechobee County developed a Public Safety Coordinating Council. A recommendation was made that they create a Pretrial Release Program with St. Lucie County's assistance. An interlocal agreement was drafted and presented to the Board of County Commissioners in both counties, which was approved. In August 2015, the St. Lucie County Pretrial Program began supervising the first cases in Okeechobee County.

In 2023, the Program provided significant savings in St. Lucie County and in Okeechobee County. A basic inmate (not including any medical costs) initially cost St. Lucie County \$80.81 per day. This rate later increased to \$93.27. As a direct result of the Program, approximately 43,131 "bed days" were saved from jail incarceration during 2023. The projected savings (again, not including medical costs) are approximately \$3,634,847.00. It is estimated that over 50% of the cases supervised have medical conditions that require treatment that could easily add several million dollars in additional savings since the St. Lucie County Jail is not responsible for medical costs once a defendant is released.

In Okeechobee County, a basic inmate (not including any medical costs) costs the County \$78.57 per day. As a result of the Program, approximately 5,954 “bed days” were saved from jail incarceration during 2023. The projected savings (again, not including medical costs) is approximately \$467,806.00. It is estimated that over 50% of the cases supervised in Okeechobee County also have medical conditions that require treatment that could easily add several hundred thousand dollars in additional savings, since the Okeechobee County Jail is not responsible for the medical cost once a defendant is released.

## Requirements for Pretrial Release Program per Florida Law

The following data provides the specific information required by Section 907.043 (4) (a), Florida Statutes (2023) for the annual report. There will be additional information (not required by Section 907.043) in other sections.

**(4) (a)** No later than March 31 of every year, each pretrial release program must submit an annual report for the previous calendar year to the governing body and to the clerk of the circuit court in the county where the pretrial release program is located. The annual report must be readily accessible to the public.

**(b)** The annual report must contain:

1. The name, location, and funding sources of the pretrial release program, including the amount of public funds, if any, received by the pretrial release program.

**The St. Lucie County Pretrial Program is located in the St. Lucie County Courthouse, 218 South Second St., Fort Pierce, FL 34950, and is fully funded by the St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners.**

- ❖ The Program is funded through the Fine and Forfeiture Fund. The total 2023 Pretrial Program budget was \$1,792,801.45.

2. The operating and capital budget of each pretrial release program receiving public funds.

### St Lucie County Pretrial Program Budget

Expenses	Budget	Actual
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	\$1,792,801.45	\$1,497,046.58
<b>Capital Expenses</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	\$1,792,801.45	\$1,497,046.58

- 3.

**3a.** The percentage of the pretrial release program's total budget represents receipt of public funds.

**The Pretrial Program in St. Lucie County is 100% St. Lucie County funded with contributions from Okeechobee County to fund the pretrial program Okeechobee County.**

**3b.** The percentage of the total budget which is allocated to assisting defendants obtain release through a non- publicly funded program.

**Currently, the Pretrial Program in St. Lucie County (including the GPS monitoring cost) is fully funded by St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners with contributions from Okeechobee County.**

**3c.** The amount of fees paid by defendants to the pretrial release program.

**In some instances, defendants have been ordered by the Court to pay toward their Supervision/GPS monitoring cost. For the year 2023 the amount collected was \$0.00.**

**4.** The number of persons employed by the pretrial release program.

**St. Lucie County Pretrial Program professional staff consists of 16 positions: Program Manager, two (2) supervisors, two (2) senior pretrial officers and eight (8) pretrial officers, two (2) case managers and one (1) Staff Assistant.**

**5.** The number of defendants assessed and interviewed for pretrial release.

**In St. Lucie and Okeechobee Counties assessments and interviews are conducted in court by the presiding judge to determine pretrial suitability. Therefore, there were not any defendants assessed and interviewed for pretrial release.**

**6.** The number of defendants recommended for pretrial release.

**The St. Lucie County Pretrial Program does not make recommendations but can review cases to determine if they meet criteria or court-ordered conditions (per occasional request of judges). Therefore, there were not any defendants recommended for pretrial release.**

**7.** The number of defendants for whom the pretrial release program recommended against non-secured release.

**The St. Lucie County Pretrial Program does not recommend whether the release should be secured or non-secured. The Judiciary makes that decision. Therefore, there were not any defendants for whom the program recommended against non-secured release.**

**8.** The number of defendants granted non-secured release after the pretrial release program recommended non-secured release.

**The St. Lucie County Pretrial Program does not recommend whether the release should be secured or non-secured. The Judiciary makes that decision. Therefore, there were not any defendants granted non-secured release after the program recommended non-secured release.**

9. The number of defendants assessed and interviewed for pretrial release who were declared indigent by the court.

**In St. Lucie and Okeechobee Counties assessments and interviews are conducted in court by the presiding judge to determine pretrial suitability. Therefore, there were not any defendants assessed and interviewed for pretrial release that were declared indigent by the court.**

**Indigent Defendants:**

St. Lucie	418
Okeechobee	45

10. The name and case number of each person granted non-secured release (ROR) who:

- a. Failed to attend a scheduled court appearance.

St. Lucie	0
Okeechobee	0

- b. Was issued a warrant for failing to appear.

St. Lucie	0
Okeechobee	0

- c. Was arrested for any offense while on release through the pretrial release program.

St. Lucie	0
Okeechobee	0

11. Number of defendants charged with dangerous crimes as defined in 907.041.

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
671	100

**12. Number of defendants charged with non-violent felonies. (Includes all felonies except commission, attempt to commit or collaborate to commit the crimes listed below).**

**a.** An offense enumerated in s. 775.084(1)(c);

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
3	0

**b.** An offense that requires a person to register as a sexual predator in accordance with s. 775.21 or as a sexual offender in accordance with s. 943.0435

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
7	0

**c.** Failure to register as a sexual predator in violation of s. 775.21 or as a sexual offender in violation of s. 943.0435;

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
7	0

**d.** Facilitating or furthering terrorism in violation of s. 775.31;

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
0	0

**e.** A forcible felony as described in s. 776.08;

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
0	0

**f.** False imprisonment in violation of s. 787.02;

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
6	0

**g. Burglary of a dwelling or residence in violation of s. 810.02(3);**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
27	2

**h. Abuse, aggravated abuse, and neglect of an elderly person or disabled adult in violation of s. 825.102;**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
2	0

**i. Abuse, aggravated abuse, and neglect of a child in violation of s. 827.03;**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
16	2

**j. Poisoning of food or water in violation of s. 859.01;**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
0	0

**k. Abuse of a dead human body in violation of s. 872.06;**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
0	0

**l. A capital offense in violation of chapter 893;**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
383	7

**m. An offense that results in serious bodily injury or death to another human; or**

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
81	7



- n. A felony offense in which the defendant used a weapon or firearm in the commission of the offense.

St. Lucie	Okeechobee
83	8

13. Number of defendants entered into the pretrial program with no prior criminal conviction:

St. Lucie	419
Okeechobee	27
Total	446

14. Number of defendants who paid a surety cash or bail bond:

St. Lucie	402
Okeechobee	35
Total	437

15. The number of defendants for whom a risk assessment tool was used in determining whether a defendant should be released pending the disposition of the case and the number of defendants for whom a risk assessment tool was not used.

**The St. Lucie Pretrial Program does not use a risk assessment tool to determine defendants' eligibility. However, the program is governed by the Administrative Order to compile information on the defendant, should the Judge need it.**

16. Any additional information deemed necessary by the governing body to assess the performance and cost efficiency of the pretrial release program.

**2023 Annual Report and Summary - SLC Pretrial Program**

The St. Lucie County Pretrial Program is a County-funded program, providing both pretrial and post-trial supervision by court order. Supervision is varied and can include GPS monitoring with house arrest, curfews, enrollink applications, furloughs, medical releases, and exclusion zones in cases involving a victim. Drug and alcohol testing are conducted through the St. Lucie County Drug Lab and other various labs, weekly reporting (or more often) to the office. Along with field work and residence checks that are conducted seven (7) days a week including holidays, and weekends, pretrial officers also respond to GPS alerts as needed. Pretrial is also required, as a condition of release, to ensure compliance with court orders.

In 2023, the Judiciary ordered new defendants to each one of the county's Pretrial Program,

while each county also continued to supervise a number of existing defendants that the Judiciary ordered to the program in 2023. The number of bed days saved, the rate per day, and estimated savings vary from county to county.

In St. Lucie County in 2023, 457 new defendants entered the program. There were 109 carry-overs from 2022 so that a total of 776 defendants were supervised in 2023. There were 6,552 field/residence checks conducted during the year. Approximately 43,141 “bed days” were saved at the rate of \$93.27 (excluding medical costs), for an estimated savings of \$3,634,847.00.

In Okeechobee County in 2023, the St. Lucie County Pretrial program supervised 72 new pretrial defendants. There were 27 carry-overs from 2022, so that a total of 99 defendants were supervised in 2023. There were 814 field/residence checks conducted during the year. Approximately 5,954 “bed days” were saved at the rate of \$78.57 per day (excluding medical costs), for an estimated savings of \$467,806.00.

The Program has continuously provided an alternative solution to incarceration by use of GPS tracking devices and enhanced supervision techniques. These methods are exceptionally helpful for defendants experiencing medical issues; thereby, significantly reducing taxpayer funded medical expenses (reduced cost for on-going treatment, surgical procedures, and terminal defendants). The daily GPS cost per unit is now \$3.10 (down from \$8.00 per day in 2007), which provides for significant savings to taxpayers when an inmate could cost several thousand dollars a day for medical care.

The St. Lucie County Pretrial Program utilizes four (3) different lab locations for drug testing:

- 218 South 2nd St. Fort Pierce, FL
- 1680 Lyngate Drive Port St. Lucie, FL
- 406 NW 3rd Avenue, Okeechobee, FL

In 2023, the total number of drug tests ordered and conducted was 1,539.

The Program initially started strictly for “pretrial supervision”, as an alternative to jail incarceration. The program provides the court with options for supervision of defendants pending disposition of criminal cases both in County and Circuit Court. While jail overcrowding was one factor that was of main concern at the time, jail medical cases increased. The cost of jail medical care and treatment was another major concern. Releasing specific defendants to pretrial supervision permits them to continue medical treatment or surgery relieves the county of this exorbitant financial burden. (Defendants not in custody must use their own insurance or resources to cover medical expenses).

In addition, the County Court Judges requested consideration of the Program providing enhanced supervision (as a condition of probation), to allow specific type cases to serve their sentence without incarceration (not losing their job, providing for their family, and at times receiving treatment and care for substance abuse, medical and mental health issues). More recently, the Program has been used as a diversion or intervention mechanism for the purpose of getting a defendant “back on track”. At times, a defendant may need resources such as relocation of residence (especially in the instance of a domestic situation involving a victim), referral to services for substance abuse or mental health evaluations and treatment, drug

testing, employment referral or even veteran's services. The Program provides the Court with an option to offer appropriate services, while still providing public safety