

Santa Barbara Pretrial Services Program

Program Information

Santa Barbara launched its pretrial services program in 2017. In January 2020, responsibility for conducting pretrial risk assessments shifted from the Court to Probation under AB 74, as part of the Council's pretrial pilot program.

Assessment Process

In Santa Barbara County, non-sworn Pretrial Service Specialists who work out of the county jails use the validated VPRAI-R tool to assess an individual's likelihood of returning to court and potential risk and prepare pretrial release reports for the Court at arraignment. Additionally, they screen and submit appropriate defendants to the Courts for prearrest release consideration. Sworn Pretrial Compliance Officers monitor individuals placed on pretrial release through two regional units serving the north and south of the county.

Supporting Success Through Pretrial Services

Since FY 2023–24, the program has reported an average check-in rate of 89.87% (individuals checking in with Probation for monitoring conditions), a court appearance rate of 82.86% (individuals attending scheduled court dates), and a public safety rate of 95.15% (individuals not committing new offenses while released pretrial). Probation also provides VPRAI-R training to the bench as needed. Santa Barbara County also uses contracted Pretrial Service Navigators, who support individuals with release planning, community support, resource referrals and linkages, as well as provide advocacy during court hearings.

For questions, contact:
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Program Challenges

Probation has faced ongoing challenges with hiring and retaining pretrial officers, making it difficult to manage staffing demands. At the same time, the program has significantly reduced its reliance on Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor (SCRAM) release conditions—dropping from 60% of the pretrial population in FY 23–24 to 24% by the end of FY 24–25. This reduction is the result of the development of standardized SCRAM guidelines and collaboration between the bench and justice partners.



County Background

- Approx. 436K (US Census 2020). 20th most populous county in California.
- Located in Southern California—borders the Pacific Ocean and south of San Luis Obispo.
- Medium court with 21 authorized Judgeships covering 9 court facilities.