

## BI CASE STUDY: Broward County, Florida

*The Broward County Sheriff's Office operates one of the largest jail systems nationwide. While keeping in mind its top priority – public safety – the county has pursued alternatives to detention – including use of GPS tracking – to better manage community-based offenders and achieve savings.*

### **Broward County Pretrial Services program offers cost-effective alternative to incarceration, increased community supervision**



#### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Faced with jail overcrowding, County decides to expand Pretrial Services programs
- County's approach includes wide range of alternatives to detention to enhance public safety and reduce jail costs, which average \$115/day for inmates
- Pretrial Services monitors about 1,000 defendants on BI electronic monitoring technologies, including GPS tracking
- For each 100 inmates the county diverts to community supervision, it estimates it can save \$4 million annually.

## THE PROGRAM

Located in southeast Florida, Broward County is one of the most populated (1.8 million residents), fastest-growing, and densely populated counties nationwide. Such rapid growth and change in resident demographic make-up has presented challenges to the local criminal justice system. In particular, the Broward County jail system, under the management of the Broward County Sheriff's Office, has been under pressure for several years with annual population growth of 6%.

The Broward County Sheriff's Office administers the largest fully accredited sheriff's office in the nation, with 5,800 employees and an annual operating budget of almost \$650 million. The Sheriff's Office has two distinct functions – law enforcement and detention. Within detention, the Sheriff's office operates five correctional facilities, located in Fort Lauderdale and Pompano Beach. These jails have an overall capacity of 5,722 beds, and typically they operate near capacity. Local officials say that optimal operating capacity is approximately 85%, which allows space for handling new inmates and special population needs, such as mentally ill inmates.

In addition to managing jail beds, the Sheriff's Office operates one of the more sophisticated community supervision programs. Under the management of the Department of Detention and Community Control, these programs include Day Reporting, Probation, Employment Services, and a very large Pretrial Services Division. The Department of Community Control also oversees treatment options, such as a Drug Court, In-Custody Treatment Program and a Mental Health Program. This department has two clear priorities: maintaining public safety first, then saving taxpayers through use of some of these less costly alternatives when appropriate.

The Sheriff's Office has been a proponent of using technology to aid in managing community-based offenders for more than a decade. As jail overcrowding has persisted, the County has expanded the use of technology to help reduce costs, increase the level of information about community-based offenders, and allow for diversion of individuals to home detention. The Pretrial Services Program has expanded significantly over the last decade, aided in part by the use of electronic supervision technology.

## BROWARD'S PRETRIAL SERVICES HELPS REDUCE JAIL COSTS, PRESSURE

In 2007 a Public Safety Coordinating Committee recommended expanding the Pretrial Services Division. A more costly alternative for coping with jail overcrowding – adding a new jail with \$70 million in construction fees and \$35 million in annual operational costs – was discussed and postponed in favor of expanding alternatives to incarceration.

Broward County's Pretrial Services Division helps divert criminal defendants from pretrial incarceration, thereby keeping beds open for serious offenders. Additionally, the program supervises pretrial defendants in the community in partnership with law enforcement and outside agencies, ensuring that mandated conditions and court-ordered special requirements are satisfied.

The Pretrial Services Division has grown into one of the nation's largest of its kind, supervising almost 1,600 pretrial defendants daily. The agency strives to:

- Provide complete and accurate information to judges within the 17th Judicial Circuit

- Improve the release and detention decisions
- Actively supervise pre-trial defendants and ensure that agency-mandated conditions and court-ordered requirements are satisfied
- Maintain the integrity of the judicial process while promoting public safety

The division developed a low-, medium- and high-risk scale for defendants, factoring in criminal history with current charges. Based on the assessment results, the agency develops a release or detention recommendation that is provided to the presiding magistrate. If release is recommended, defendants are referred to one of three options – standard supervision, day reporting, or electronic home monitoring. At any one time, about one-quarter of pretrial defendants are released to electronic monitoring.

## GPS TRACKING INCLUDED AS ELECTRONIC MONITORING TOOL

BI has worked with Broward County's Pretrial Services Division since the agency for more than 15 years. Today, BI provides many technologies applicable for different defendant risk levels. When the Board of County Commissioners approved the expansion of Pretrial Services early in 2008, officers were added and more technology – including additional active GPS tracking systems – was obtained from BI.

The Pretrial Services Division uses the following BI technologies:

- **BI ExacuTrack® AT**, an active GPS tracking system that allows the agency to accurately monitor pretrial defendants as they move about the community and ensure they remain within certain boundaries and avoid other

areas. This system also monitors compliance with curfews. The highest risk defendants, including individuals charged in domestic violence, robberies or sex offense crimes, are released to GPS tracking.

- **BI HomeGuard® 200**, a radio frequency electronic monitoring system monitors the absence or presence of an offender in their residence for compliance to court-ordered schedules and curfews.

- **BI GroupGuard® Plus**, a group supervision system that enables corrections agencies to accurately monitor compliance for up to 75 offenders living in one residence, such as group homes and halfway houses.
- **BI VoiceID®, powered by AnyTrax**, uses “voiceprinting” to verify that the offender is at a specified location through a series of random or scheduled inbound and outbound

phone calls to different locations throughout the day.

- **Drive-BI®**, a portable device that allows supervising officers to verify an offender’s presence from outside the offender’s residence, workplace, or other authorized location.

Broward County officials also use BI’s national monitoring center, BI GuardCenter®, for 24/7 monitoring support services.

## THE RESULTS

On many levels, the Broward County Sheriff’s Office Pretrial Services Division’s use of technology has been a success.

- The Pretrial Service Division is managing almost 1,600 defendants today, about one-fourth of which are on electronic supervision.
- By incorporating several sophisticated electronic supervision technologies, including GPS tracking, the county is able to more closely monitor defendants released to community supervision.
- BI’s continuum of technologies at varying price levels allows the agency to use a mix of tools that best match the risks and needs of the defendant.
- The County is saving money through the use of Pretrial Services. The daily cost to house an inmate in Broward County’s jail (an inmate with no special needs) is more than \$115/day. Defendants in Pretrial Services on electronic supervision (including county administration, staffing, and equipment) cost an average of \$12/day.
- For each 100 inmates the county diverts to community supervision, it estimates it can save \$4 million annually.
- By expanding Pretrial Services, costly expansion of the Broward County Jail system has been temporarily delayed. At an estimated \$70 million construction price tag and ongoing operational costs of \$35 million to manage these extra beds, the county is incurring significant savings by looking to alternatives to detention.

- By expanding Pretrial Services, supplemented by electronic monitoring, the jail capacity is reduced to more manageable average daily population levels (ADP). When the ADP is high, staff overtime, operational and many other costs rise quickly.
- Through the use of electronic monitoring systems, Pretrial Services is better able to provide judges with objective data on defendants’ compliance to court requirements. In addition, the use of technology and related monitoring services has helped supervising officers to cover more territory efficiently and ensure verifiable accountability while defendants are in the community.
- The county is pleased with the technology and support it receives from BI. The equipment is reliable, accurate, and if issues do arise, BI addresses them quickly. Agency officials say the number of “false” alerts has all but been eliminated.

## TECHNOLOGY:

- BI ExacuTrack® AT
- BI HomeGuard® 200
- BI GroupGuard®
- BI VoiceID®, powered by AnyTrax
- BI Drive-BI®
- BI GuardCenter®

