

National Association of Counties

Adopted July 15, 2012

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUOUS ALCOHOL MONITORING FOR PRE-TRIAL POPULATIONS

Issue: Address jail overcrowding and jail costs for Pre-Trial defendants.

Proposed Policy: NACo supports the use of continuous alcohol monitoring with house arrest as an effective alternative to incarceration for pre-trial defendants.

Background: With significant decline in reported crime rates, shrinking budgets, growing jail populations and a stagnant economy, counties across the nation are facing difficult decisions on how to more effectively manage criminal justice costs while preserving public safety. "Jails primarily house pretrial defendants. According to national estimates, two-thirds of jail inmates are in pretrial status"¹ Local jail populations are mostly comprised of non-violent offenders who are unable to meet bail or bond requirements.

Consequently courts, judges and other stakeholders are seeking solutions that will help ease jail overcrowding while maintaining public safety. By using continuous alcohol monitoring with house arrest during the pre-trial phase, courts can allow less dangerous alcohol offenders safely back into the community. Nonviolent offender can be safely supervised in the community when they are being continuously monitored for alcohol (and also confined to their homes during critical hours of the day, if needed). Continuous alcohol monitoring also helps offenders achieve sustained sobriety which is much more effective in producing short and long-term behavioral change.

With regard to pre-trial supervision, continuous alcohol monitoring:

- Provides counties with a cost-effective alternative to incarceration for those jail prisoners who may not pose a threat to the community;
- Allows offenders to earn jail credit for time served under continuous alcohol monitoring;
- Provides judges and prosecutors with comprehensive, fact based data that will enable more informed bail decisions;
- Provides a vehicle to help offenders safely re-enter the community;
- Provides an option to the courts for those alcohol offenders who would be ordered back to jail on technical violations;
- Protects public safety at little to no cost to taxpayers, since offenders pay their own supervision / monitoring fees; and
- Allows offenders to hold jobs, support their families, and contribute positively to the community while abstaining from alcohol.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: Urban and rural counties will benefit equally by using continuous alcohol monitoring for non-violent alcohol offenders. On average continuous alcohol monitoring devices cost \$12/day as compared to jail at \$50-75/day. Offenders who are released on continuous alcohol monitoring devices are responsible for the daily cost of monitoring and/or supervision.

Sponsor: Commissioner Judy Shiprack, Multnomah County, OR.

¹ United States. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Assistance. National Association of Counties. Pretrial Justice Institute. (2009). *Jail Population Management: Elected County Officials' Guide to Pretrial Services*. P.23