

*Innovations in Criminal Justice Summit III  
Program Summaries  
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**Mesa County Evidence-Based Pretrial Reform**



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**Program Start Date:** 2012

**Website:** n/a

**Description:** Mesa County has implemented evidence-based pretrial reforms with technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections. On July 1, 2012, Mesa County was the first county in Colorado to implement the Colorado Pretrial Assessment Tool (CPAT), which was released by the Pretrial Institute in conjunction with the JFA Institute. After a few years of research and successful implementation, Mesa County modified its bond guidelines to be data-driven and not include money ranges or amounts.

**Criminal Justice Partners:** Mesa County has a Criminal Justice Leadership Group that includes the Chief Judge, District Attorney, head of the Public Defender's Office, private defense lawyers, Police Chief, Sheriff, Probation Chief, and other key leaders. In 2010, this group formed an Executive Committee to specifically focus on the area of evidence-based decision making in the local criminal justice system and in this process, a Pretrial Committee, which has led this reform, was appointed. Members of the Pretrial Committee included judges, public defenders, district attorneys, private defense lawyers, pretrial services officials, Mesa County jail officials, and victim advocates.

**Evaluation/Research:** Mesa County has seen a decrease in the pretrial jail population without a negative effect on public safety rates. Personal recognizance bonds have doubled in Mesa County, while there has also been an increase in high cash bonds used to hold more dangerous defendants. Approximately 80% of the county's jail population is in the higher risk categories on their pretrial risk assessment; this has created more challenges for the jail in managing higher risk individuals but is a key outcome. Lower risk defendants are rarely being held in jail just because they can't buy their way out. Judges are making more targeted hold/release decisions based on empirical information, which Mesa County identified as a more legal and rational approach to making pretrial release decisions.

**Implementation Guide:** [Click Here](#)

