



Final Report to the General Assembly

Legislative Oversight Committee for Colorado Jail Standards
December 2024 | Research Publication 830



Legislative Oversight Committee for Colorado Jail Standards

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December | 2024



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This report is also available online at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/legislative-oversight-committee-concerning-colorado-jail-standards/2024-regular-session>

Committee Charge

Pursuant to Section 2-3-1901, C.R.S, the Legislative Oversight Committee for Colorado Jail Standards (committee) is responsible for adopting and revising standards for Colorado jails. The committee adopted [a set of jail standards](#) in 2023. Pursuant to Section 2-3-1901.5, C.R.S, jails must comply with the standards by July 1, 2026.

Committee Activities

The committee held three meetings during the 2024 interim. The committee received updates regarding funding for jails to implement jail standards and to improve jail facilities. The committee also appointed members to, and received an update on the activities of, the Jail Standards Advisory Committee, which is responsible for inspecting jail facilities in Colorado. Finally, the committee discussed the communications needs of persons in custody.

Funding to Implement Jail Standards and Improve Jail Facilities

The committee heard presentations from representatives of County Sheriffs of Colorado and Lake County regarding the need to identify a stable source of funding to assist jails in complying with the standards adopted by the committee. Representatives of Lake County spoke to the difficulty in constructing modern jail facilities, especially in rural and less populous counties. Some counties, including Lake County, have worked with larger counties that have facilities that are better equipped for detaining individuals for more than a short period of time.

Committee recommendations. As a result of its discussions, the committee recommends Bill A, which expands the charge of the Underfunded Courthouse Facility Cash Fund Commission to include making grants to counties to improve jail facilities.

The committee also recommends Bill B, which allows counties to enter an intergovernmental agreement with another county to operate a multijurisdictional county jail. The bill also creates the Regional Jail Approach Grant Program to provide grants to counties that participate in a multijurisdictional jail program.

Communication with Persons in Custody

The committee heard a presentation from a representative of the Colorado Office of the State Public Defender regarding the communication needs of persons in county jails. While current law allows persons in custody to place phone calls, the ability of persons in custody to receive phone calls or other communications varies by facility. The representative of the Public Defender's Office shared the difficulties this can cause for individuals who are trying to communicate with attorneys and family members.

Committee recommendations. As a result of its discussions, the committee recommends Bill C. Current law allows such individuals the right to communicate with attorneys or family members through telephone or other reasonable means. The bill creates the right of persons in custody to also receive phone calls and to communicate through interactive audiovisual conferencing, if available.

Summary of Recommendations

As a result of the committee's activities, the committee recommended three bills for introduction in the 2025 legislative session. The approved bills are described below.

Bill A — Financial Assistance for County Jails

Currently, the Underfunded Courthouse Facility Cash Funds Commission (commission) issues grants to counties to improve underfunded courthouse facilities. Bill A expands the charge of the commission to include making grants to jails in addition to court facilities. The bill also allows grants to be issued for up to 50 percent of a county's annual voter-approved debt service on any county-approved financing of the construction or remodeling costs of a court or jail facility.

Bill B — Incentives for Regional Jail Approach

Colorado counties with a population of 2,000 or more are required by Colorado law to maintain a county jail. Bill B exempts a county from this requirement if it enters into an intergovernmental agreement with another county to operate a multijurisdictional county jail. Bill B also creates the Regional Jail Approach Grant Program within the Division of Criminal Justice in the Department of Public Safety, funded with a \$1 million transfer from the General Fund. Grants may be awarded to counties that enter into an intergovernmental agreement. Finally, Bill B authorizes counties entering into an intergovernmental agreement pursuant to the bill to be covered under the state's risk management program.

Bill C — Communication Rights for Persons in Custody

The bill creates the right for a person who is committed, imprisoned, or arrested to receive a reasonable number of telephone calls or other communications from family members and attorneys, and to communicate through interactive audiovisual conferencing, if available.

Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the committee and contain all handouts provided to the committee. The summaries of meetings and attachments are available at the Division of Archives, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver (303-866-2055). The listing below contains the dates of committee meetings and the topics discussed at those meetings. Meeting summaries are also available on our website at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/content/committees>

Meetings and Topics Discussed

June 27, 2024

- Approval of appointments to the Jail Standards Advisory Committee
- Update on implementation of Colorado Jail Standards

September 11, 2024

- Update on the Jail Standards Advisory Committee
- County needs related to jail facilities
- Communications needs of persons in custody
- Requests for draft bills

November 20, 2024

- Approval of draft bills