



ODonnell Consent Decree



What is the ODonnell Consent Decree?

The ODonnell Consent Decree is a federal court-ordered mandate that changed how Harris County handles misdemeanor bail. It ensures that people are not jailed simply because they cannot afford bail, protecting constitutional rights and promoting fairness in the justice system.



Why Does It Matter?

Before ODonnell, individuals were detained for minor offenses solely due to their financial situation. The decree prioritizes public safety and due process, making sure release decisions are based on risk, not wealth.



Who Benefits?

The decree impacts misdemeanor defendants, their families, and the broader community by reducing unnecessary pretrial detention, helping people keep jobs, housing, and family stability, and ensuring fair treatment under the law.

How Can You Learn More?

Visit the ODonnell Website



Scan the QR code or visit:
bit.ly/ODonnellConsent

Follow Us on Social Media



@HarrisCountyOCA

Attend Meetings

Attend biannual public meetings to receive updates and provide community input.

Harris County is committed to a safer, fairer, and more just community. The ODonnell Consent Decree advances this by increasing transparency, reducing unnecessary detention, and addressing disparities in the legal system. Your voice matters—join the conversation and help shape a justice system that works for all.



ODonnell Consent Decree 8th Monitor Report Overview

What is the Monitor Report?

The ODonnell Consent Decree requires compliance oversight through external management and support. A Monitor Team was selected to oversee compliance and assess the progress of Consent Decree mandates. The Monitor Team produces an annual report to provide oversight and accountability and contribute to transparency on all mandate updates.

Key Progress Since the Seventh Report

- **Enhanced Court Appearance Resources:** The **MyHarrisCountyCase.com** website now makes it easier for people to check their court dates.
- **More Transparency & Data Tracking:** Harris County's **public data portal** now tracks **homelessness, mental health**, and pretrial supervision trends.
- **Better Training for Court Officials:** Refreshed annual training for judges, magistrates, and attorneys improves bail decisions and ensures fair hearings.
- **Declining Misdemeanor Arrests & Recidivism:** Misdemeanor arrests have dropped **15% since 2015**. In most cases, individuals **do not re-offend** after release.
- **More People Getting Court Reminders:** More defendants now receive **text and email reminders**, helping them **avoid missing court dates**.

Milestones in Progress

- **Pretrial Release Delays:** Working to identify ways to **decrease time spent in jail** while awaiting trial.
- **Lack of Early Access to Lawyers:** Some defendants can **wait over a week** before getting a public defender.
- **Court Notifications Aren't Reaching Everyone:** Individuals released on secured bonds **often don't get court reminders**.
- **Racial Disparities in Arrests:** African Americans continue to be **arrested at higher rates** for misdemeanors.
- **More Misdemeanor Cases Are Ineligible for General Order Bonds:** The number of individuals in **carve-out categories** has **increased to 40%**.

To read the report, visit:
oca.harriscountytexas.gov/ODonnell-Consent-Decree