

SAFETY + JUSTICE CHALLENGE
PRETRIAL EQUITY TRANSFORMATION (PET) NETWORK

EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE:
**AUTOMATED COURT
REMINDER SYSTEMS**



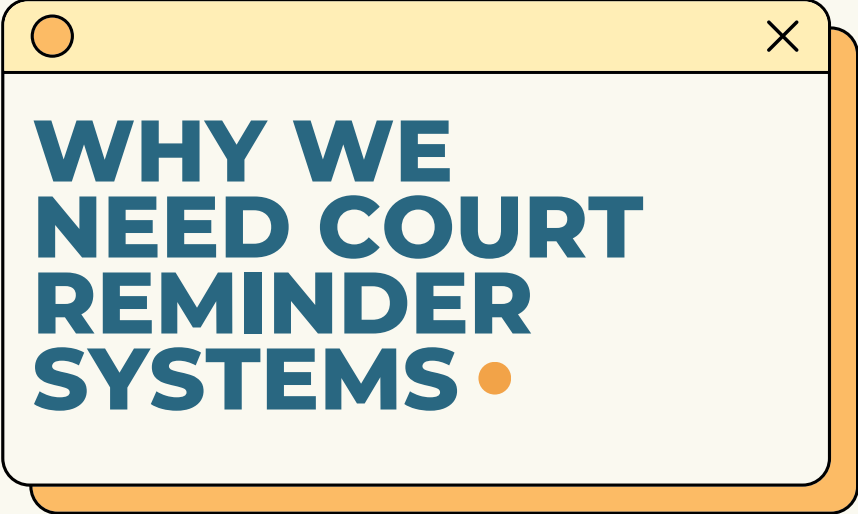
this series

The Evaluating the Evidence series highlights key pretrial release supports and conditions: (1) automated court reminder systems; (2) pretrial supervision; (3) electronic monitoring or GPS monitoring, and; (4) urinalysis testing.

Each resource will provide key findings from the research about the effectiveness of the strategy to improve court appearance and reduce arrest while on pretrial release.

The resource will also discuss the strategy's impacts on worsening or improving disparities, and offer critical questions to help practitioners take an equity lens to their own pretrial release strategy.



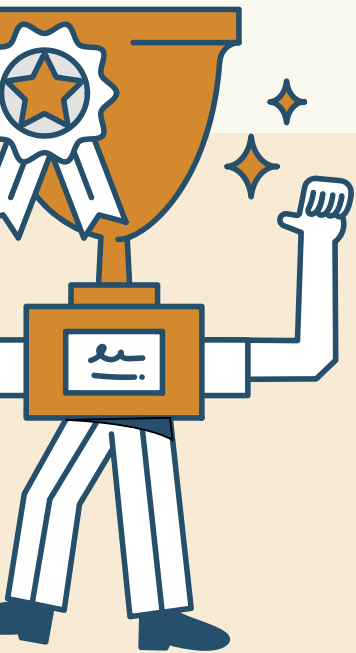


WHY WE NEED COURT REMINDER SYSTEMS ●

When an individual misses court for any reason, a judge can issue a warrant for an individual's arrest. If the individual encounters police, even during a minor traffic stop, the warrant requires police to arrest the individual and return them to jail. Individuals remanded in jail can remain detained for the entirety of their case processing. Returning to jail can create immediate and compounding challenges for individuals, including losing income, a job, and shelter.

Systematic disinvestment across minoritized neighborhoods has left many of these communities without the proper resources to help individuals get to court (i.e., inaccessible or limited: public transit, affordable childcare, jobs with flexible hours). As a result, bench warrants for court absence are a driver of rising jail populations across the country and disproportionately impacts Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and other minoritized and poor populations. Reducing jail populations and disparate returns requires helping individuals attend their court appointments.

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?



AUTOMATED COURT NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Court reminder systems can include any of the following: postcards, text-messages, e-mail reminders, automated calls, live-calls, or a combination of any of these methods.

Court notification systems are among the most **well researched** and effective pretrial innovations. Research across courts in Louisiana, Nebraska, New York, and Oregon show court reminder systems can significantly improve appearance in court.



However, a **Kentucky study** found individuals who do not get a reminder appear at similar rates compared to individuals who do get reminders. *This Kentucky study suggests reminder systems do not guarantee court appearance.*

An **Indiana study** found collecting contact information at initial jail intake and sending a notification reminder close to the initial hearing date may improve court attendance for initial hearings if the initial hearing is conducted reasonably soon after release from jail.



Research shows the **most successful notification** programs are those which notify individuals close to their court hearing, notify individuals multiple ways, provide multiple notifications, provide the address and time of the hearing, encourage individuals to consider the arrangements they need to make to attend court, and explain the consequence for missing court. The research suggests that while reminder systems may vastly improve attendance, using a reminder system does not guarantee attendance.

taking an **EQUITY LENS** to **AUTOMATED COURT REMINDER SYSTEMS**

Automated court reminder systems can help reduce the number of people returning to jail for missing court. However, there are still ways to improve even the best reminder systems. The questions below can help you and your agency take an equity lens to your court reminder system.

- Where in the court process does an individual first have an opportunity to enroll in an automated court reminder system? Who might be systematically excluded from this opportunity based upon where in the court process individuals enroll?
- Are there other opportunities to enroll in an automated court reminder system? Can you advertise this service at every hearing? Can individuals enroll new contact information to the system? Have you provided individuals instructions for updating their contact information?
- If the court itself is the enrolling agency, how might this affect participation? In what ways does your agency investigate or learn more about why people are not enrolling in the service? In what ways do you analyze this data based upon the intersection of race, sex, and disability (e.g., Black men, Deaf white woman)?
- In what ways does your reminder system accommodate individuals with disabilities or individuals who understand best in other languages?
- How does your court system allow for flexibility if someone cannot get to court as scheduled? Do you describe to individuals how they can contact the court when/if they need to reschedule? In what ways do these instructions consider individuals with disabilities or who understand best in other languages?







SAFETY+JUSTICE CHALLENGE

Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

This resource guide was created with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which seeks to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Core to the Challenge is the need to reduce the over-reliance on jails, with a particular focus on addressing disproportionate impact on low-income individuals and communities of color.

www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org