



Fulton County Jail Reform



Find the full decree at justice.gov/crt or by scanning above

Background

On January 3, 2025, the United States Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia agreed to a proposed consent decree with Fulton County and the Fulton County Sheriff. A federal judge approved the consent decree and entered it as a court order. The decree addresses the DOJ's finding that conditions inside the Fulton County Jail violate the constitutional and federal statutory rights of incarcerated people.

What is a Consent Decree?

A consent decree is a legally binding and detailed agreement that outlines what the County and the Sheriff's Office must do to fix the problems within the Jail and protect the rights of the people incarcerated there. This agreement will be overseen by a federal court judge and independent monitor.

Key Reforms in the Consent Decree

Protection from Harm

- Develop plans and policies to keep people safe from violence.
- Improve supervision and staffing.

Excessive Force

- Require staff to use force in line with constitutional standards.

Inhumane and unsafe conditions

- Keep doors and locks in working order.
- Ensure that the Jail is clean, sanitary, and free of pests.

Special Education

- Facilitate adequate special education services to children with disabilities in the Jail.

Medical and Mental Health Care

- Take steps to protect people at risk of suicide and ensure that people receive adequate medical and mental health care.

Restrictive Housing Conditions

- Stop housing vulnerable people in isolation who are at substantial risk of self-harm and other negative outcomes.

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Understanding the Fulton County Jail Consent Decree

On January 3, 2025, the United States Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Georgia agreed to a proposed consent decree with Fulton County and the Fulton County Sheriff. A federal judge has approved the consent decree and entered it as a court order. The decree addresses the DOJ’s finding that conditions inside the Fulton County Jail violate the constitutional and federal statutory rights of incarcerated people.

Q. What is a consent decree?

This consent decree is a legally binding agreement that was negotiated between the DOJ, the Sheriff, and the County to fix problems at the Jail and protect the rights of the people incarcerated there. This decree will be overseen by a federal judge and an independent monitor.

Q. How will the consent decree make change at the Jail?

The consent decree is a set of court-enforceable rules that will govern the Jail. The County and Sheriff are required to develop and implement policies to comply with the consent decree’s terms. The Sheriff must train staff at the Jail on the consent decree and its requirements. The County must make available the resources needed to enable the Sheriff to perform his duties under the consent decree. The Monitor and DOJ will inspect the Jail facilities and records for proof of compliance.

Q. What are the key terms of this consent decree?

The consent decree includes provisions to address each of the DOJ’s findings of constitutional and statutory violations. The consent decree has provisions to protect people incarcerated at the Jail from violence, prevent excessive force by deputies and detention officers, provide humane living conditions and adequate nutrition, provide constitutionally adequate medical and mental health care, reform restrictive housing (also known as solitary confinement) practices, and comply with federal law that requires the provision of special education services for eligible detainees, including eligible 17-year-olds.

Q. How long will it take for changes to happen?

Some changes will happen quickly, while others will take longer to achieve. The consent decree requires the County and Sheriff to develop a schedule for the first year of the consent decree’s implementation, with concrete deadlines for drafting or revising policies and procedures, completing a staffing analysis, and developing and implementing trainings.

Q. Who will the monitor be and what will their role be?

The parties will jointly select a monitor and ask the court to approve the selection. The monitor will be appointed for a renewable two-year term. Their role will be to assess compliance with the decree and to provide technical assistance to the County and Sheriff’s Office. To do this, the monitor will conduct site visits to the Jail every six months and submit reports based on those visits. The monitor can communicate with incarcerated people, family members, and relevant community members to assist with assessing Jail conditions. The monitor’s reports will be made public to provide transparency.

Q. What happens if the consent decree isn't followed and serious problems persist?

If DOJ determines that the County and Sheriff have not made material progress toward a significant obligation of the consent decree, DOJ may begin enforcement proceedings in federal court. We will work with the County and the Sheriff to avoid enforcement actions by notifying them of issues and working collaboratively to fix implementation problems.

Q. Do the consent decree provisions reflect the input of those with lived experiences?

Since we opened this investigation in July 2023, we have heard directly from impacted persons, their families, and their advocates about their experiences with the Jail. Their thoughtful ideas for reform are reflected in the consent decree remedies. Under the consent decree, the Sheriff will make all new policies and procedures adopted under the consent decree available to the public and the incarcerated population, so long as there is not a legitimate security risk from doing so.

Q. How long will the decree last?

There is no prescribed timeline. The decree will remain in effect until the County reaches, demonstrates, and sustains for a minimum of two reporting periods (one full year) substantial compliance with every provision of the decree. The County and Sheriff will develop an ongoing quality assurance program to ensure that the changes brought about by the consent decree are lasting.

Q. How much will these reforms cost and who will pay for it?

The cost of reform is difficult to forecast. As part of the consent decree, the County has agreed to make available the resources necessary to enable the Sheriff to perform his duties under the consent decree. We understand and appreciate the fiscal impact this decree may have on the County, and there are provisions intended to keep costs down. For example, the monitor will submit a proposed monitoring budget annually to the parties for comment, and to the court for approval.

Q. Does the consent decree require a new Jail?

The decree does not require the County to build a new Jail. If the County decides to build a new jail to replace or supplement the current jail facilities, the provisions of the consent decree would apply to the new jail.

Q. How is this consent decree different from past attempts at reform?

This is DOJ's first consent decree with the Fulton County Jail. We hope to turn the page to begin a new era at the Jail. The County and Sheriff demonstrated commitment to putting these remedies in place. We hope that this will translate into action in implementing those remedies.

Q. What role will DOJ have going forward?

DOJ remains involved in the implementation of consent decrees to make sure the reforms required are carried out. We frequently work collaboratively with jurisdictions to ensure they are effectively implementing consent decrees and to overcome barriers. This includes on-site inspections inside facilities. We expect to continue to review conditions inside the Jail to see firsthand the improvements we expect the Jail to make.

Q. How can people stay involved and in-the-know about the consent decree?

The consent decree requires that the monitor host a public website with DOJ's findings report, all monitoring reports, and all material, public court filings. The monitor's website will include information about how family members and advocates can contact the monitor to raise concerns about implementation of the consent decree. Additionally, the consent decree requires that the Sheriff provide ways for incarcerated people to report information related to the consent decree directly to the monitor, free of cost.

Q. How can people report issues at the Jail to DOJ?

Please contact us by phone at 1-888-473-4092 (toll-free) or by email at FultonCountyJail@usdoj.gov.