Example: Key Findings from a Jail Analysis in One County

One EBDM site enlisted the help of an outside expert to conduct an analysis of the jail population. The consultant looked at a sample that consisted of 10% of the inmates released from the jail during 2010 (N = 533). As a result of the analysis, a number of observations and recommendations for reducing the jail population were presented, including the following:

- 60% of all jail bed days were being used by those who had a probation violation associated with their booking. Officials should examine current policies and procedures for dealing with probation violation cases with the goal of trying to reduce, if possible, the time required to resolve them.
- Defendants released on signature bonds had an average length of stay of 7 days and consumed 87% of the jail bed days for the pretrial release population. Jail officials should determine how they can ensure that signature bond decisions will be made on the first day in order to have a significant impact on the overall jail population.
- While Native Americans released during the pretrial period represented 4% of all those released pre-trial, they consumed 20% of all jail bed days used by all inmates released pretrial. Officials should look into whether this population has higher Failure to Appear (FTA) rates; if so, they may benefit from implementing court date reminder procedures, which have been very effective in reducing failure-to-appear rates in other jurisdictions**.**

A key finding from this analysis led to a recommendation to improve the collection of baseline data in the jail. The county jail, like many across the country, overwrites the legal status at booking (e.g., pretrial, probation violation, sentenced) when the status changes. Therefore, important data is lost regarding the reason individuals are initially booked into jail. This finding led to a relatively easy fix: developing a field for "legal status at booking" and a separate field for "current legal status."