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Eau Claire County leads the way in new justice practices

By *Emma Wheeler* [CONNECT](#)

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Eau Claire (WQOW)- Since 2008, Eau Claire County has been transforming part of its justice system, including how to better manage jail populations. Now other departments across Wisconsin are starting to do the same.

At Tuesday's County Board meeting, District Attorney Gary King said that many counties throughout the state are going to be implementing the practices of Eau Claire County. Those practices are from a new technique called Evidence Based Decision Making (EBDM) and it's taking the guess work out of determining the most effective ways to get people through the justice system. Launched by the National Institute of Corrections, Eau Claire was just one of the three counties in the nation chosen to take part in the initiative.

It uses research and data analysis in order to implement the best practices, and to make the most of limited resources. This ensures that the County is able to spend money on things they know are going to work.

One example is how to manage jail population. The county started a diversion program for low risk, one time offenders.

"If you take the particular person and put them in the right place at the right time, and with the right dispositions, you will, in an aggregate sense, reduce recidivism of offenders across the board," said King.

The results of the program found that the number of re-offenders was cut in half since the program started in 2012, and the rate of recidivism was cut by over 10 percent.

A county data analyst position was also added to the department's arsenal in order to carry out this research. Sean Callister filled this role in 2013, and said analyzing jail population records is about more than getting people in and out of the justice system.

"If we don't know who's in the jail, we don't know what changes need to be made to keep people out," said Callister.

Chippewa County has already started their own diversion program in response to Eau Claire County's success. Waukesha and Lacrosse are just two of the six counties that are following suit.


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