

## Sonoma County Pretrial Electronic Monitoring Summary Evaluation Plan

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### 1. Evaluation Purpose & Context

Sonoma County uses electronic monitoring (EM) as one component of pretrial monitoring. The purpose of this evaluation is to understand how pretrial EM is currently used, the outcomes associated with its use, and whether monitoring could be used more strategically while maintaining public safety and court appearance. The evaluation is intended to provide practical evidence to inform County policy, operational practice, and judicial decision-making. In particular, it will examine whether individuals are being supervised at an appropriate level and whether some individuals could be safely monitored at a lower level or for a shorter duration without adversely affecting public safety or court appearance.

The evaluation will therefore address three connected system goals:

1. Ensure public safety and court reappearance;
2. Use the appropriate level and duration of monitoring based on risk and legal circumstances;
3. Use County resources efficiently and avoid unnecessary restrictions or costs where outcomes can be maintained with less intensive monitoring.

#### *Central Evaluation Question:*

*How can Sonoma County use pretrial EM at the appropriate level and for the appropriate amount of time while maintaining public safety and court appearance and minimizing unnecessary restrictions, workload, and cost?*

The study will examine pretrial EM use from approximately **2018 through 2025**. Because court operations and pretrial practices changed substantially during the COVID-19 period, trends will be interpreted in relation to major policy and operational changes rather than treating the entire eight-year period as one uniform system.

### **Sonoma County Pre-Trial EM Background and Need for the Evaluation**

Electronic monitoring is one of several tools available to support community-based pretrial release. Its use occurs within a larger system of judicial decision-making, pretrial risk assessment, monitoring, court processing, and response to violations. Recent California case law, including *In re Humphrey* and *In re Kowalczyk*, reinforced individualized pretrial release decisions and use of conditions that are no more restrictive than necessary to address public safety and court appearance. These decisions do not prescribe who should receive EM, how long EM should continue, or when a person's conditions should be reduced. Those questions therefore remain largely dependent on local policy and decision-making.

Sonoma County uses the Public Safety Assessment (PSA) to assess risk and the Release Conditions Matrix to guide placement on monitoring levels, but PSA itself does not determine whether EM should be imposed. The County currently has limited local evidence about whether some individuals could be safely monitored at a lower level after demonstrating stability. National and California research does not provide one universal answer. Studies show that EM outcomes depend heavily on who receives monitoring, how it is implemented, the alternative being considered, and the outcomes used to define success. This makes a local Sonoma County evaluation particularly important. This evaluation will provide local evidence

about how EM is used, for whom, for how long, and whether structured review or step-down may be appropriate for some individuals.

## 2. Evaluation Approach

The evaluation will use a **mixed-methods** utilization- and outcomes-focused design, integrating administrative data analysis with policy review and focused stakeholder interviews. Quantitative analyses will examine **who receives EM, at what level, for how long, and with what outcomes, while qualitative and policy analyses will help explain how placement, monitoring, review, and step-down decisions are made in practice.** Together, they help identify not only what is happening but why patterns may be occurring and what they mean for policy and practice.

### *Data Sources & Methods*

| <b>Table 1. Evaluation Methods &amp; Data Sources</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <b>Method</b>                                         | <b>Data Sources/Participants</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>What We Will Examine</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Administrative Data Analysis</b>                   | Pretrial/Probation EM records; PSA/risk data; court/case data; jail booking/custody data; EM vendor/device data, where available<br><br>Analyze counts, percentages, rates, trends, and comparisons across participant and case groups. Advanced analyses to determine if differences remain after accounting for important case and risk characteristics, findings translated into clear and accessible results. | EM utilization; PSA/risk and monitoring level; charge and case characteristics; monitoring type; duration; completion/step-down/ termination; new criminal activity; FTA; violations; return to custody; equity; and costs |
| <b>Policy &amp; Document Review</b>                   | Release Conditions Matrix, Pretrial Bench Guide; EM policies/procedures; relevant court guidance; vendor procedures; historical policy changes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | How EM placement, monitoring, review, response, and removal are intended to operate; help establish how EM is intended to operate and identify where formal policy leaves room for professional or judicial discretion.    |
| <b>Key Stakeholder Interviews</b>                     | Pretrial/Probation staff; judicial officers; DA's office; defense representatives; Other EM implementation partners.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | EM Placement decisions; factors influencing monitoring; monitoring intensity; case review; alert/violation response; continuation, removal and step-down; definitions of successful EM                                     |
| <b>Participant Interviews – if feasible</b>           | Small purposive sample of individuals with recent pretrial EM experience (TBD)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Experiences with monitoring, restrictions, barriers involving work, housing, healthcare, caregiving, technology and transportation; perceived burdens and opportunities for improvement                                    |

Final analyses will depend on the availability and quality of County records. Anticipated sources include:

- BI electronic monitoring and participation and violation event records.

- PSA and pretrial monitoring information.
- Court case event records.
- Pretrial violation filings.
- Sheriff's Office jail booking and release records, with offense information for new arrests.
- Pretrial monitoring termination records.
- Program policies and procedures.
- Release Conditions Matrix and Bench Guide.
- EM vendor contracts and cost information.
- Available County fiscal information.
- Staff and stakeholder interviews.
- The evaluation plan will identify the information required at a program level. Sonoma County will use those requirements to develop the more detailed data-sharing agreements and specific data-element requests needed from individual agencies.
- Removal, completion, step-down, termination, and return-to-custody patterns where available.

### *Primary Evaluation Questions and Key Measures/Analysis*

| <b>Table 2. Primary Evaluation Questions and Measures</b>                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                            |
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| <b>Evaluation Question</b>                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Key Measures / Analysis</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>How Findings Will Be Used</b>                                                                                                           |
| 1. How is electronic monitoring utilized and administered in Sonoma County?                                                                                                             | Who receives EM; PSA/risk; monitoring level; charge; monitoring type; duration; trends 2018–2025; placement/removal decision-making                                                                                                                                                                            | Describe current practice and identify areas for greater consistency                                                                       |
| 2. Does the utilization and administration of electronic monitoring differ across participant or case groups, and what factors may explain those differences?                           | EM use, monitoring type, intensity, duration, violations, removal and outcomes differ by participant race/ethnicity, gender, age, PSA/risk, case factors, FTA and new arrest timelines, status at 30/60/90+ days.                                                                                              | Ensure EM is being applied equitably and as needed across groups and help us what factors may impact differences EM placement and outcomes |
| 3. What public-safety, court-compliance, and monitoring outcomes do participants experience while on electronic monitoring?                                                             | New criminal activity; FTA; verified violations; revocation/return to custody; comparison with similar non-EM cases where feasible. Examples of success include appearing at trial (absence of FTA; no new offense during supervision period, no revocation/return to custody due to violation of conditions). | Assess safety, court appearance and monitoring outcomes without combining different types of “failure”                                     |
| 4. What does electronic monitoring cost Sonoma County, how are those resources used, and how do costs compare with incarceration in cases where EM serves as an alternative to custody? | Cost/day; cost/episode; monitoring technology; duration; staff resources; comparison with jail costs where EM reasonably substitutes for custody                                                                                                                                                               | Identify opportunities to use monitoring resources more efficiently                                                                        |

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| 5. Are people being monitored at the correct level based on risk of public safety and court appearance? | Using all prior information, the final question will address whether or not pretrial EM is being applied appropriately, effectively, and contributing to public safety outcomes and where there may be room for revisions to pretrial policy and practice. | Identify potential structured review or step-down opportunities, meaningful disparities, and points where policy/practice warrant review |
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Before determining whether EM is effective or appropriately targeted, the County needs a clear picture of how the program actually operates. Understanding who receives EM, how long people remain on it, and what drives those decisions provides the foundation for interpreting outcomes and identifying opportunities for improvement.

### 3. Study Period & System Changes/COVID-19 Considerations

The study period is **2018–2025**. Because during COVID-era court operations/closures, emergency bail practices, and case processing delays substantially altered the pretrial environment (including number of people on EM, duration, court appearance, case resolution, jail utilization), results will be examined across relevant pre-COVID, COVID-affected, and more recent periods rather than assuming one uniform unaffected system. More recent years will receive greater emphasis when informing current operations and policy. The evaluation will also identify major local policy or operational changes—such as the end of the emergency bail schedule—that may help explain observed trends. More recent years may be emphasized when the goal is to inform current operations and fiscal decisions.

### 4. Evaluation Phases

| Table 3. Evaluation Phases and Key Activities       |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phase                                               | Key Activities                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>1. Policy, Data &amp; Process Review</b>         | Review policies and procedures, confirm data sources, construct EM episodes; conduct initial interviews; finalize feasible outcome and comparison design and measures          |
| <b>2. Utilization, Decision-Making &amp; Equity</b> | Examine who receives EM, monitoring level/type, duration, trends, decision-points, discretion, and differences across groups                                                   |
| <b>3. Outcomes, Duration &amp; Comparison</b>       | Examine public safety, FTA, violations and custody outcomes; timing of adverse events; potential review/step-down patterns; time-to-event and comparison groups where feasible |
| <b>4. Cost &amp; Resource Analysis</b>              | Examine EM costs, monitoring intensity and duration, resource use, and appropriate comparisons with jail costs                                                                 |
| <b>5. Synthesis &amp; Recommendations</b>           | Integrate findings and develop practical recommendations for policy, consistency, review/step-down, resource use, and data improvement                                         |

### 5. Deliverables

1. Literature Review/Landscape Analysis
2. Pretrial Evaluation Plan

3. Pretrial Electronic Monitoring Evaluation Report
4. Pretrial Electronic Monitoring Evaluation Executive Summary
5. Presentation of Key Findings and Recommendations

Interim findings and major evaluation decisions will be discussed with County leadership and relevant stakeholders throughout the project so that the evaluation remains responsive to operational priorities and emerging findings.