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Vera Partnerships with Prosecutors' Offices Drive Reforms in the Criminal Legal System

The Reshaping Prosecution initiative provided prosecutors with policy expertise, data analysis, and educational tools to address public safety in their communities.

[New York] - Vera Institute of Justice [announces the successful completion](#) of its partnerships with prosecutors' offices in six jurisdictions: Boulder County, Colorado; Contra Costa County, California; DeKalb County, Georgia; Ingham County, Michigan; Ramsey County, Minnesota; and Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

The three guiding goals of these partnerships were to reduce mass incarceration, address racial disparities, and enhance accountability to communities most impacted by the criminal legal system. Working closely with prosecutors, Vera looked at charging decisions and explored ways to reduce harms, especially at the charging stage where their discretion is most significant.

Taking a systemic approach to addressing racial disparities, Vera's analysis focused on broader trends, highlighting the disproportionate impact of the criminal legal system on certain communities. For instance, in DeKalb County, Georgia, Black individuals comprised a significant majority of the caseload, underscoring the need for broader discussions on historical and societal factors contributing to these disparities.

In addition to addressing disparities, Vera aimed to foster a stronger connection between prosecutors and the communities they serve. Many communities lack awareness of their elected prosecutors and the impact of their decisions on community safety. Through data-sharing initiatives, Vera facilitated public access to information, allowing communities to examine racial disparities and engage in policy discussions to address them.

Despite facing political challenges and false narratives surrounding reform efforts, the partnerships yielded substantial progress. Ramsey County, Minnesota, introduced a groundbreaking policy aimed at deterring non-public safety (pretextual) traffic stops, inspired by the tragic death of Philando Castile. Beyond explicit policy changes, the engagements prompted significant shifts in how prosecutors approached cases, sparking new discussions and greater mindfulness in charging decisions.

Vera remains committed to driving positive change in the criminal legal system, focusing on equitable and evidence-based practices. By fostering collaboration between prosecutors and communities, Vera seeks to build a fairer and more just society.

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About the Vera Institute of Justice

The Vera Institute of Justice is powered by hundreds of advocates, researchers, and policy experts working to transform the criminal legal and immigration systems until they're fair for all. Founded in 1961 to advocate for alternatives to money bail in New York City, Vera is now a national organization that partners with impacted communities and government leaders for change. We develop just, antiracist solutions so that money doesn't determine freedom; fewer people are in jails, prisons, and immigration detention; and everyone is treated with dignity. Vera's headquarters is in Brooklyn, New York, with offices in Washington, DC, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. For more information, visit vera.org.