



A REPORT FROM

SHERIFF RUBEN MARTÉ

MONROE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



INCREASED TRENDS IN JAIL POPULATION

ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN

PREPARED FOR:

- MONROE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
- MONROE COUNTY COUNCIL
- MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF JUDGES
- ACLU OF INDIANA

JULY 2026



MONROE COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS



MONROE COUNTY
COUNCIL



MONROE COUNTY
BOARD OF JUDGES



ACLU OF
INDIANA

Message from the Sheriff

For more than seventeen years, Monroe County has faced the challenge of jail overcrowding. This is not a new issue, nor is it one that has gone unnoticed. Over that period, county officials, elected leaders, consultants, architects, and community stakeholders have invested significant time and resources studying solutions. Properties have been identified, evaluated, selected, and later discarded. In some cases, previously rejected sites have been revisited and studied again. Despite years of discussion and planning, the political process has not produced a final site selection or a path forward for a replacement facility.

As those discussions have continued, the realities within the existing jail have become increasingly difficult to ignore. The inmate population continues to trend upward while the facility itself continues to age and deteriorate. The challenges associated with housing, medical care, programming space, infrastructure, and operational capacity have grown more significant with each passing year. Regardless of future decisions regarding a new facility, Monroe County remains legally and morally obligated to provide safe, secure, and constitutional care to every individual entrusted to our custody.

This report is intended to provide an analysis of current population trends, operational challenges, and facility limitations. More importantly, it outlines the actions that I have determined must be taken in the near future to ensure that constitutional standards of care are maintained. These actions will require substantial financial investment, additional personnel, vehicles, and operational resources. While the costs will be significant, our responsibility is clear. We must take the necessary steps to protect public safety, meet our constitutional obligations, and ensure that individuals in our custody are housed in conditions that meet the standards required by law.

Sheriff Ruben Martí
Monroe County Sheriff's Office

Executive Summary

The Monroe County Jail is an aging detention facility that has exceeded both its structural and functional life cycle. Although the facility reports a total bed count of 294,

that number is misleading as it does not reflect the jail's functional capacity. Trustee housing, segregation cells, a padded cell, holding cells, and J Block—which has been repurposed entirely for inmates with significant mental health needs—cannot be treated as available general-population housing. After excluding those specialized and non-general housing areas, the jail has approximately 233 available general housing beds. Applying the accepted correctional planning principle that a jail is functionally full at 80 percent of available capacity, the Monroe County Jail's true functional capacity is 186 beds.

Current population reports demonstrate that Monroe County routinely exceeds that functional capacity. Daily population reports provided to Mr. Falk for January through June 2026 show monthly average populations of 238, 237, 231, 244, 251, and 260 inmates, respectively. The combined average daily population during that period was approximately 244 inmates, meaning the jail operated approximately 58 inmates above functional capacity on an average day. The population reached 272 inmates in May and 275 inmates in June, 2026, exceeding functional capacity by approximately 86 to 89 inmates respectively.

This overcapacity is not merely a numerical concern. It directly impairs the staff's ability to safely classify inmates, separate vulnerable inmates, manage inmates with serious mental illness, provide adequate medical and mental health care, and maintain constitutional conditions of confinement. The Monroe County Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study concluded that the jail "cannot ensure consistent provision of Constitutional levels of inmate care and custody" and that immediate steps are required to reduce the jail population to within functional bed capacity.

The facility was built in 1984 and originally designed to house approximately 128 inmates. Over time, bed counts increased through double-bunking and conversion of non-housing space, but those measures did not correct the facility's structural limitations, inadequate classification capacity, insufficient medical and mental health space, or deteriorating infrastructure. Multiple independent reviews, including the Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study, the RQAW Justice Study, the Richardson Settlement Agreement, and Mr. Falk's correspondence, all recognize that the current facility is obsolete, overcrowded, and incapable of reliably supporting constitutional jail operations.

Because a replacement jail remains years away from occupancy, Monroe County must implement interim measures to maintain constitutional conditions. These measures include maintaining the jail population at or below functional capacity, expanding diversion and release alternatives, continuing critical infrastructure stabilization, and—when population exceeds functional capacity—transporting and housing inmates in other county facilities. Given recent population levels, Monroe County should be prepared to manage approximately 50 to 100 inmates in out-of-county housing during periods of elevated population.

Critical Issues

1. Physical Plant

A. Age and Obsolescence of the Facility

The Monroe County Jail was constructed in 1984 and originally designed for approximately 128 inmates. The facility is now approximately forty years old and has exceeded its useful life as a correctional facility. The Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study 2020 concluded that, at 36 years old, the jail had “exceeded its structural and functional life cycle” and lacked sufficient bed capacity and inmate housing areas to consistently ensure constitutional levels of inmate care, custody, or services from intake to discharge.

The facility’s age is significant because the building was not designed for modern correctional practices, current medical and mental health demands, contemporary classification requirements, gender separation needs, programming expectations, or the volume and acuity of the present inmate population.

B. Design and Layout Deficiencies

The jail’s design creates continuing operational and safety problems. The facility is housed within the Justice Building on multiple floors, requiring substantial reliance on a single elevator for inmate movement, staff movement, meals, laundry, supplies, medical care, and court transport operations. RQAW identified elevator dependence as a major operational concern and noted that the current site provides no meaningful opportunity for expansion without land acquisition, disruption of surrounding streets, or major structural modification.

The design is fragmented and limits efficient oversight. Prior expert review described the jail as staff-intensive, lacking direct sightlines, and not conducive to good management and supervision. Inadequate sightlines and fragmented housing areas increase staffing demands and reduce the ability to monitor inmates safely and efficiently.

C. Infrastructure Failures

The facility suffers from substantial infrastructure deterioration. Identified deficiencies include aging HVAC systems, water boilers and mixers, leaking pipes, exposed piping, inadequate storage, insufficient electrical capacity, deteriorating sprinkler systems, water infiltration, mold issues, and plumbing failures.

RQAW documented recurring overhead pipe leaks, exposed and corroding pipes, buckets placed under leaks in secure corridors, and infrastructure conditions that create security, sanitation, and maintenance concerns. The 2025 ACLU walkthrough materials similarly describe HVAC and air-handling systems that have surpassed their functional

life expectancy, resulting in temperature instability and insufficient fresh air in multiple areas. Additionally, some air ducts to individual cells have become disconnected and cannot be reconnected due to inaccessibility.

These problems are not cosmetic. They affect inmate health, sanitation, staff safety, operational continuity, and constitutional compliance.

D. Lack of Expansion Capacity

The current site is constrained. RQAW found that the facility has no space for meaningful expansion without land acquisition, that nearby streets would be affected by expansion, and that vertical expansion would require extensive structural upgrades and disruption of jail operations. These limitations support the conclusion that the existing facility cannot realistically be renovated into a constitutionally adequate long-term correctional facility.

2. Services

A. Medical Services

The jail lacks adequate space and infrastructure to provide modern correctional medical care. The Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study identified inadequate medical interview areas, inadequate medical treatment space, limited ability to separate contagious inmates, no sick beds, and insufficient isolation capacity. Mr. Falk's December 2025 correspondence specifically noted lack of medical interview areas, treatment space, suicide cells, sick beds, and medical isolation resources.

The 2025 ACLU walkthrough materials similarly state that the facility lacks adequate medical interview areas, treatment spaces, isolation cells with reverse airflow, appropriate infirmary beds, padded cells, and mental health counseling rooms necessary to robustly provide services.

These deficiencies directly affect the jail's ability to manage chronic medical conditions, detoxification, infectious disease, emergency care, medication continuity, and medically vulnerable inmates.

B. Mental Health Services

Mental illness is one of the most significant operational challenges facing the jail. The Monroe County Jail functions as the largest mental health facility in Monroe County and surrounding areas. A significant portion of the jail population suffers from serious mental illness, substance use disorders, homelessness, or co-occurring conditions.

The facility lacks adequate counseling space, mental health treatment rooms, suicide observation cells, padded cells, therapeutic housing capacity, and group programming space. J Block has now been repurposed entirely to accommodate inmates with

significant mental health needs, which confirms both the severity of the mental health demand and the lack of adequate specialized space elsewhere in the facility.

This repurposing also has a direct impact on capacity. J Block's 32 beds can no longer be treated as available general-population housing because they serve a specialized mental health function.

C. Programming and Reentry Services

The jail provides educational, religious, recovery, library, reentry, and treatment programming, but the physical plant significantly restricts program delivery. The Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study identified inadequate program space and insufficient multipurpose rooms for the average daily population. The facility's only programming area must be shared among education providers, mental health staff, substance use counselors, clergy, attorneys, community partners, and volunteers.

Lack of programming space undermines rehabilitation, reentry planning, treatment continuity, and recidivism reduction. It also limits the County's ability to expand diversion-oriented and therapeutic programming during the interim period before a new jail is available.

3. Overcrowding

A. Functional Overcrowding and True Operational Capacity

A central issue in evaluating overcrowding at the Monroe County Jail is the distinction between rated capacity and functional capacity.

The 2025 Annual Jail Report identifies the facility's total bed count as 294. However, that figure includes multiple housing areas that are not available for routine inmate housing or classification. Trustee housing, segregation, the padded cell, and holding cells serve specialized operational purposes and should not be treated as general-population housing. J Block, with 32 beds, has been repurposed in its entirety for inmates with significant mental health needs and is therefore unavailable as general classification housing.

The bed calculation is as follows:

Reported Total Bed Count: 294

Less Trustee Housing: 22
Less Segregation: 4
Less Padded Cell: 1
Less Holding Cells: 2
Less J Block Mental Health Unit: 32

Available General Housing Beds: 233

Correctional planning recognizes that a jail is operationally full before every bed is occupied. Adequate classification requires empty beds and housing flexibility so inmates can be separated by gender, risk level, vulnerability, medical condition, mental health need, disciplinary status, protective custody need, and other operational factors. Mr. Falk's September 9, 2024, letter cited correctional authority for the principle that a jail is overcrowded long before reaching rated (maximum) bed capacity because sufficient space is necessary to classify inmates safely.

Applying the industry standard of the 80 percent functional capacity principle to the Monroe County Jail's actual general housing inventory produces the following calculation:

233 available general housing beds \times 80% = 186 beds.

Accordingly, the Monroe County Jail's realistic functional capacity is 186 beds.

B. Current Population Compared to Functional Capacity

Daily population reports provided to Mr. Falk for January through May 2026 demonstrate that the jail routinely exceeds functional capacity.

January 2026 Average Daily Population: 238
February 2026 Average Daily Population: 237
March 2026 Average Daily Population: 231
April 2026 Average Daily Population: 244
May 2026 Average Daily Population: 251
June 2026 Average Daily Population: 260

Combined Average Daily Population, January-June 2026: approximately 244 inmates

Average Daily Population Over Functional Capacity: $244 - 186 = 58$ inmates

The peak population during this period reached 275 inmates in June 2026.

Peak Over Functional Capacity: $275 - 186 = 89$ inmates

These figures demonstrate that overcrowding is persistent, structural, and ongoing. The jail is not occasionally exceeding functional capacity; it is operating dozens of inmates above functional capacity on a daily basis.

C. Classification Failures and Safety Risks

Overcrowding reduces the ability to classify and separate inmates safely. Current facility limitations impair the jail's ability to consistently separate:

- Minimum, medium, and maximum security inmates;
- Vulnerable inmates from predatory inmates;
- Inmates with serious mental illness;
- Serious violent inmates;
- Inmates experiencing withdrawal;
- Inmates requiring suicide watch or close observation;
- Medical and infectious disease populations;
- Pregnant inmates;
- Transgender inmates;
- ADA and mobility-impaired inmates;
- Protective custody populations;
- Administrative segregation inmates;
- Disciplinary segregation inmates;
- Female inmates requiring separate and specialized housing;
- Inmates with conflicts, gang issues, or co-defendant separation needs.

The Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study found that the jail has not had adequate bed capacity to ensure consistent and adequate classification and housing since at least 2004. The 2025 ACLU walkthrough materials similarly state that the lack of sufficient housing units makes separation of minimum, medium, and maximum-security inmates untenable and increases the risk of predatory behavior and violence.

D. Constitutional Consequences of Overcrowding

The consequence of operating above functional capacity is not simply crowding. It directly affects constitutional care. Overcrowding reduces housing flexibility, strains supervision, limits access to medical and mental health services, increases the risk of violence and victimization, and forces staff to use spaces for purposes for which they were not designed.

The Criminal Justice & Incarceration Study concluded that immediate steps are required to reduce the jail population to a level consistently within functional bed capacity. That conclusion is directly supported by current population reports showing the facility averaging approximately 58 inmates above functional capacity.

Operational Requirements for Out-of-County Housing and Transportation

Maintaining the Monroe County Jail population at or below its practical functional capacity of 186 beds will require routine use of out-of-county detention facilities whenever local inmate populations exceed that threshold.

Based on January-June 2026 population reports, Monroe County operated approximately 58 inmates above functional capacity on an average day and as many as 89 inmates above functional capacity on peak days. Accordingly, Monroe County should anticipate the need to house approximately 50 to 100 inmates in neighboring county facilities during periods of elevated population.

Out-of-county housing is not simply a matter of paying another county a daily housing rate. It creates significant staffing, transportation, security, administrative, medical, and financial obligations.

A. Transportation Operations

Monroe County would remain responsible for transporting inmates between outside housing facilities and Monroe County for:

- Initial transfers;
- Court appearances;
- Jury trials;
- Sentencing hearings;
- Attorney conferences;
- Probation proceedings;
- Specialty court appearances;
- Community Corrections matters;
- Medical appointments;
- Hospital admissions;
- Mental health evaluations;
- Competency evaluations;
- Diagnostic testing;
- Classification/discipline returns;
- Furloughs;
- Return transports.

Depending on the number and location of outside facilities, transportation demands could involve hundreds of inmate movements each month.

B. Staffing Requirements

A sustained out-of-county housing program will require dedicated transportation personnel beyond existing jail staffing.

*Initial minimum estimated transportation staffing needs include:

- 1 Transport Operations Captain;
- 1 Transport Liaison Sergeant;
- 2 Transport Sergeants;
- 14 to 17 full-time Transportation Officers;¹
 - Relief coverage for leave, illness, training, and vacancies;
 - Additional officers for high-risk, medical, or multi-inmate transports.
- 2 dedicated clerical support position to manage administrative obligations. (See Section F below)

Additional jail operations staffing will also be necessary because existing staff cannot be repeatedly removed from jail posts to locate, collect, and process inmates for out-of-county transports.

Additional jail staffing needs include:

- 1 additional Jail Sergeant;
- 2 additional Jail Officers.

**All staffing estimates are subject to operational review and needs assessments.*

C. Transportation Fleet Requirements

A large-scale out-of-county housing operation will require dedicated transportation equipment, including:²

- Two large-capacity secure inmate transport vans or buses;
- One reserve transport large capacity van;
- Three light-duty, multiple passenger transport vehicles;
- Specialty transport capability for medical or mobility-impaired inmates.

Supporting vehicle equipment should include:

¹ Assumptions used for this calculation include utilizing up to 3 out-of-county facilities, transporting 20 inmates a day, Officers receiving approximately 37 days of county benefit time, 2 officer transport teams, simultaneous court and medical transports, emergency response capabilities and coverage for leave, training, vacancies and court schedule fluctuations. Calculations include using a relief factor of 1.6 commonly used for public safety staffing analysis. Day shift 5-6 officers, Evening shift 2-3 officers, Overnight shift 2 officers.

² Assumptions used to determine the number of transport vehicles includes initially moving between 50-100 inmates to outside facilities and thereafter moving approximately 20 inmates a day between up to 3 facilities with 24/7 capabilities.

- Mobile radios;
- Intercom;
- Vehicle cameras;
- GPS tracking systems;
- Secure partitions;
- Restraint systems;
- First-aid and medical transport supplies;
- Emergency equipment.

D. Overtime and Personnel Costs

Transportation operations may generate significant overtime obligations because court schedules, medical emergencies, hospital watches, and long-distance transfers do not always occur within regular staffing patterns.

Overtime hours may include:

- Emergency medical transports;
- Hospital security details;
- Long-distance transfers;
- Multi-county pickup and return schedules;
- Staffing shortages;
- Court delays;
- Jury trial schedules.

E. Medical and Mental Health Transportation

Many inmates housed outside Monroe County will continue to require medical and mental health services connected to Monroe County courts, providers, or case obligations. Transport needs may include:

- Psychiatric evaluations;
- Competency proceedings;
- Involuntary commitment proceedings;
- Specialty medical appointments;
- Surgical procedures;
- Hospital admissions;
- Emergency room visits;
- Medication continuity issues;
- Substance use treatment coordination.

Inmates with serious mental illness or medical fragility often require more than standard transport staffing and may require specialized vehicles or additional restraints, supervision, or medical coordination.

F. Administrative Requirements

Out-of-county housing also creates significant administrative obligations, including:

- Housing contracts;
- Per diem billing review;
- Population tracking;
- Classification reviews;
- Court scheduling;
- Attorney access coordination;
- Medical records transfer;
- Medical billing;
- Medication coordination;
- Family communication;
- Grievance management;
- Transport scheduling;
- Route planning;
- Incident reporting;
- Release coordination.

Monroe County will require dedicated administrative support to manage these responsibilities.

G. General Fiscal Considerations

The fiscal impact of out-of-county housing will include:

- Per diem housing fees (range of \$42 through \$73.55, per day, per transferee, depending on facility);³
- Additional correctional officers;
- Additional supervisory personnel;
- Transport vehicles;
- Vehicle maintenance;
- Fuel;
- Overtime;

³ Possible costs of housing inmates outside Monroe County:

IDOC rate \$42 a day.
50 inmates per year \$766,500
100 inmates per year \$1,533,000

Morgan County rate \$73.55
50 inmates per year \$1,342,287
100 inmates per year \$2,684,575

- Equipment purchases;
- Administrative staffing;
- Hospital watch costs;
- Emergency transport expenses;
- Vehicle replacement costs.

These costs should be viewed as necessary interim constitutional compliance costs pending construction and occupancy of a replacement jail.

H. Security and Liability Risks

Out-of-county housing introduces additional security and liability risks, including:

- Increased escape risk during transport;
- Increased vehicle accident exposure;
- Increased use-of-force risk during movement;
- Delayed medical care if coordination fails;
- Delayed court appearances;
- Attorney access complications;
- Medication continuity issues;
- Staff fatigue;
- Increased civil liability exposure.

Any court-approved or court-monitored population management plan should recognize these operational risks and provide Monroe County with sufficient staffing, funding, equipment, and flexibility to safely carry out out-of-county housing.

Actions Necessary to Maintain Constitutional Operations Pending Construction of a New Jail

Monroe County cannot wait until a replacement facility is complete to address constitutional concerns. The County must take interim action to maintain constitutional operations during the lengthy period before a new jail is ready for occupancy.

1. Maintain Population at or Below Functional Capacity

Monroe County should establish a working operational target of approximately 186 inmates. This number reflects the facility's functional capacity after excluding specialized beds and applying an 80 percent operational threshold.

2. Initiate Out-of-County Housing

Whenever the jail population exceeds functional capacity, Monroe County must be authorized and funded to transfer inmates to other Indiana detention facilities.

Out-of-county housing should be used to:

- Reduce population pressure;
- Preserve classification flexibility;
- Protect vulnerable inmates;
- Reduce violence risk;
- Allow for proper maintenance of an aging facility;
- Maintain mental health housing capacity;
- Avoid use of inappropriate temporary spaces;
- Maintain constitutional housing conditions.

3. Fund Transportation Staffing and Equipment

Because out-of-county housing requires extensive transportation, Monroe County Sheriff's Office must receive adequate resources for:

- Transport supervisors;
- Transport officers;
- Secure vehicles;
- Restraint systems;
- Radios and communications equipment;
- Overtime;
- Fuel and maintenance;
- Medical transport capacity.

4. Enhance Medical and Mental Health Services

Pending replacement of the jail, additional resources should be directed toward:

- Nursing coverage;
- Mental health staffing;
- Discharge planning;
- Programming and rehabilitation;
- Community treatment coordination;
- Psychiatric evaluation capacity.

5. Continue Critical Infrastructure Stabilization

Although renovation is not a permanent solution, Monroe County must continue stabilizing critical building systems, including:

- HVAC;
- Plumbing;
- Mold remediation;
- Water infiltration;
- Elevator reliability;
- Fire suppression;
- Security doors and locks;
- Lighting;
- Medical and mental health service areas.

Conclusion

Every major review of the Monroe County Jail has reached the same practical conclusion: the facility is obsolete, overcrowded, physically deteriorating, and incapable of reliably supporting constitutional levels of inmate care, custody, classification, medical treatment, mental health treatment, and programming.

Although the jail reports 294 total beds, that figure is misleading for operational purposes. When trustee housing, segregation, holding, the padded cell, and the J Block mental health unit are removed from the general housing inventory, the facility has approximately 233 available general housing beds. Applying the accepted 80 percent functional capacity threshold results in an operational capacity of 186 inmates.

Daily population reports from January through June 2026 show that Monroe County averaged approximately 244 inmates during that period, exceeding functional capacity by approximately 58 inmates per day. The population reached 272 inmates in May and 275 inmates in June, 2026, exceeding functional capacity by approximately 86 to 89 inmates respectively.

These overages make it extremely difficult for Monroe County to safely classify inmates, provide adequate medical and mental health care, protect vulnerable inmates, and maintain constitutionally acceptable conditions of confinement.

Construction of a replacement jail remains the long-term solution. Until that facility becomes operational, the Sheriff's Office must be funded and resourced to use population management strategies, diversion programs, out-of-county housing, transportation staffing, infrastructure stabilization, and enhanced medical and mental health services to maintain constitutional jail operations.

Key source support for the footnotes/citations: Richardson Settlement Agreement capacity, reporting, and transfer provisions: ; Criminal Justice Study findings on constitutional care, functional capacity, and facility life cycle: ; RQAW findings on space, site, elevators, piping, medical rooms, and isolation limitations: ; Falk September 9, 2024 overcrowding/classification analysis: ; Falk September 14, 2024

diversion and bed-capacity warning: ; Falk December 29, 2025 summary of facility deficiencies: ; 2025
ACLU walkthrough and Sheriff's statement regarding constitutional care concerns.