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Worcester County Sheriff's Office Safekeep Program Delivers Public Safety Support and Significant Cost Savings

5 Years, 2,700 Detainees, \$1,000,000 in Taxpayer Savings

[West Boylston, MA] — After decades of requests from local law enforcement agencies to house individuals arrested by municipal and state police departments, the Worcester County Sheriff's Office officially opened the first cells dedicated to its Safekeep Program in 2021. The Worcester County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) Safekeep Program has since delivered measurable public safety improvements and meaningful cost savings to communities across Worcester County and throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The program operates from the Sheriff's Office Intake and Medical Unit in West Boylston, a modern, purpose-built facility designed to centralize intake, medical screening, and short-term housing for individuals in custody. The facility operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provides a secure environment for pre-arraignment detainees transferred from municipal police departments and the Massachusetts State Police.

By allowing local and state agencies to transfer custody of eligible detainees to the Sheriff's Office, the program enables officers to return more quickly to patrol, investigations, and emergency response duties instead of remaining assigned to station-based detainee supervision, a major resource draw for local and state police departments.

“The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office specializes in the care, custody, and control of detainees,” commented Worcester County Sheriff Lew Evangelidis. “I’m grateful that the Baker-Polito administration believed in this project and the potential it had to benefit the hardworking police departments of Massachusetts.”

Estimated \$1 Million in Taxpayer Savings

The Safekeep Program is estimated to have saved approximately \$1,000,000 in personnel and operational costs for Worcester County municipal police departments and the Massachusetts State Police. These savings are achieved through:

- Reduced overtime expenses
- Fewer officers assigned to extended detainee watch
- Decreased need for local holding capacity
- Consolidated and efficient court transport procedures
- Cost-cutting through avoiding providing meals, medical resources, etc.

By centralizing short-term custody operations at the Intake and Medical Unit, the Sheriff’s Office helps law enforcement agencies operate more efficiently while reducing the financial burden on Massachusetts taxpayers.

Webster Police Chief Michael Shaw stated that the Safekeep program takes the burden off the officers and dispatchers. It allows these individuals to focus on more relevant tasks as opposed to monitoring, feeding, and ensuring the overall safety of arrestees.

Chief Shaw stated that, “Having this program in place is a huge relief to our agency, which, like many others, is facing staffing difficulties. We are grateful for our partnership with the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office, not just for its Safekeep program, but the commitment to helping police departments across Worcester County.”

Program Activity (July 2021 – June 2026)

- 2,720 successful Safekeeps placements
- 178 denials based on medical, safety, or eligibility criteria
- Municipal departments with the highest number of successful safekeeps include:
Shrewsbury (202), Westborough (180), Milford (104), Auburn (99), Rutland (94), Barre (85), Lunenburg (83), Leominster (75), Fitchburg (58), and Blackstone (52)
- The Massachusetts State Police represents the largest single user of the program

These figures highlight both the strong demand for the safekeep Program and the Sheriff's Office's commitment to maintaining careful screening and responsible custody decisions.

Chief Ryan Malatos of the Leominster Police Department explained that the Worcester County Sheriff's Office Safekeep Program has been an invaluable resource for his department, particularly when a detainee is unlikely to make bail or when call volume and community needs require him to reassign officers quickly.

Chief Malatos went on to explain that, "by providing a secure option for continued detention, the program allows us to return a uniformed officer back to the road rather than requiring that officer to assist with a detainee. This helps us maintain patrol coverage and respond more effectively to calls for service."

Maintaining Safety and Professional Standards

All detainees must meet established medical, mental health, and classification standards before being accepted into the program, in accordance with formal agreements between the Sheriff's Office and participating agencies. These requirements ensure the safety of staff and detainees while upholding professional standards of care, custody, and oversight

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office Safekeep Program demonstrates how regional collaboration and modern infrastructure can enhance public safety, improve operational efficiency, and provide meaningful cost savings to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth.

For more information on the Worcester County Sheriff's Office, visit www.WorcesterCountySheriff.com or follow the Sheriff's Office on social media for updates.