

Strike Order Court for Missed Appearances: Implementation Guide

When people miss court, a common response is to have them arrested. This is appropriate in some situations, but doing so in all cases can result in unnecessary incarceration and strain limited court and law enforcement resources. Strike Order Courts, also known as warrant resolution courts, allow people to appear in court and have outstanding failure to appear arrest orders resolved. Use this implementation guide to establish a Strike Order Court in your jurisdiction.

- 1 Establish a team of stakeholders.** Identify and include all impacted stakeholders, such as clerks of court, judges, prosecutors, and defenders.
- 2 Assess space and staff capacity.** This will help you determine how frequently you can hold strike order court (e.g., weekly, monthly, etc.). Decide who will staff hearings, where hearings will take place, and who will oversee general operations.

EXAMPLE

In Orange County, NC, Strike Order Court is held weekly on Thursday mornings and is a collaboration between the Clerk of Court and Pretrial Services. Pretrial services staff also provide educational resources and referrals to attendees.

- 3 Decide on criteria.** Who is eligible to have their arrest orders resolved through strike order court? Do people need to give a reason for missing court? Will your program only be for failure to appear arrest orders, or will you expand it to other arrest orders?
- 4 Codify the policy.** Once you have decided on criteria, staffing, and scheduling formalize the procedures in your local court policies. In North Carolina, this would be done through an administrative order.
- 5 Training.** Train all court personnel on the new procedures and have a plan to train new people as they come on board.
- 6 Notify the community.** Have a plan to tell the public about the new strike order court. Training for the defense bar, social media posts, local news, and printed materials in the courthouse may be helpful communications strategies.
- 7 Hold hearings and adjust if needed.** Feedback from court users and stakeholders can point to areas for improvement. Data collection can help you determine the policy's impact.