



# CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND: STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

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## The First Four Articles In This Staffing Series:

Defined the scope of the current jail staffing crisis and presented comments from a May 2022 workshop (*Managing the Jail Staffing Crisis*, September/October 2022);

Explored ways to supplement jail staffing with outside resources (*Increasing Supply by Outsourcing Supply*, November/December 2022);

Identified the potential benefits of creative scheduling (*Attracting and Retaining Staff with Informed Scheduling*, January/February 2023); and

Reviewed research on the health and performance impact of "shift work." (*Shift Work, Sleep Deprivation, and Jail Schedules*, March/April 2023).

**In this issue, we outline the wide range of actions employed by jail managers and stakeholders to reduce the gap between demand (what needs to be accomplished on a shift), and supply (employees who show up to work). We focus on changing operations to make the best use of available staffing resources.**

### Short- And Long-Term Responses

Most jails face *long-term* challenges that make it difficult to assemble and retain sufficient staffing resources to meet evolving demands. Solutions require strategies that build sustainable resources and staffing over time.



Many jails also face immediate crises that require quick and effective responses.

Each agency should define the nature and scope of staffing challenges, providing a framework for short- and longer-term changes.

Some jails follow written protocols triggered by agency-defined understaffing, measured at the beginning of each shift. These protocols usually describe a series of actions that reduce staffing demand by suspending some programs, services, and other less-essential operational functions. Suspending outdoor recreation, requiring in-person visits to be conducted using video technology or Zoom, providing some programs remotely or remote programming opportunities, tablet technology for self-paced learning, and similar *temporary* changes reduce staffing demand during a shift.

But the magnitude of staffing shortfalls often requires more drastic *temporary* changes in operations. Managers and supervisors are guided by this imperative: “If it can’t be done safely, don’t do it on this shift.” These contingencies are reviewed at the beginning of the next shift and adjusted to respond to changes in staffing supply.

### Declaring a Staffing Emergency

The scope of the current staffing crisis often requires more aggressive responses to ensure safety and security for incarcerated persons, staff, and other stakeholders. Many jails report uniformed staff vacancy rates of 50% or more; at the same time, jail occupancy is not decreasing, and in many instances Average Daily Population (ADP) increases.

When the gap between supply and demand consistently creates serious risks, with no relief in sight, a temporary state of emergency might be declared. Wide-ranging changes in operations

## GOOD STAFFING RESPONDS TO THE EBB AND FLOW OF DAILY ACTIVITIES AND TO THE RELATIVE RISKS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THESE ACTIVITIES.

and corresponding staffing practices should be developed and implemented until the gap eases. A staffing emergency declaration should include:

1. A concise *statement of the problem* and the unprecedented risk posed to staff, incarcerated persons, and others.
2. A specific “*trigger*” that prompts implementation of emergency protocols, such as *one or more* of the following:
  - a. An overall vacancy rate for uniformed staff.
  - b. The number of uniformed staff available to be scheduled for regular shifts.
  - c. Increase in the incarcerated person population.
  - d. Changes in the risks posed by incarcerated persons.
  - e. Increased demand for medical care and/or mental health services.
  - f. An increase in serious incidents.
  - g. An increased contraband discovered in the facility.
3. *Regular review* of conditions to ensure prompt return to regular operations when possible.
4. *Clear definition of operational changes* to be implemented until the emergency ends.
5. *Periodic review of operations*, incidents, grievances, injuries, and other indicators to determine if emergency measures are working as intended, and to identify the need to revise protocols.

Some jails declared a “state of emergency” over a year ago and that gap between demand and supply continues to warrant these measures.

Emergency protocols might include replacing uniformed staff with non-uniformed employees on posts that do not have contact with incarcerated persons, prompting increased hiring of non-uniformed staff. Other examples include increased hiring of part-time personnel, retirees, and temporarily assigning non-security personnel to selected security posts. For example, one facility allows front office staff to work control rooms as overtime, after they receive training for the post.

Such *temporary* changes must be revisited when staffing supply improves; some changes may be incorporated into ongoing operations if proven effective and efficient.

### Range of Approaches

When we identified more than 150 strategies and tactics employed by managers to reduce the gap, they fell into nine categories:

1. Change operations.
2. Expand the effective use of technology.
3. Collect and analyze data to inform operations.
4. Alter the facility to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
5. Use non-uniformed staff for some posts.
6. Assign some uniformed staff tasks to non-uniformed staff.
7. Expand the use of contract resources.
8. Develop partnerships.
9. Safely reduce occupancy.

Jail managers exert control over some of these strategies, such as “changing operations.” But most changes require support from others, such as county officials, employee unions, the broader



**Figure 1: Sample Worksheet from Activities Program.**

Intermittent Activities in Order of Start Time	Start (0000-2400)	End (0000-2400)	Weight	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Count 1	100	145	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 2	300	345	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 3	500	545	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Breakfast	500	600	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Supervisor Shift Change	600	700	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Receiving New Intakes	600	2200	1	x	x	x	x	x		
Courts Exiting Facility	600	1000	1	x	x	x	x	x		
Shift Change (7-3)	700	730	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 4	700	745	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Inside/Outside Recreation	800	2200	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Attorney Visits	900	2100	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Social Visit 7-3 Shift	900	1400	1						x	x
Library	900	1200	1		x					
Yoga For Males	930	1100	1	x						
English is Easy	930	1130	1							x
Narcotics Anonymous Female	1000	1130	1						x	
Lunch	1100	1200	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Court Returns	1100	1900	1	x	x	x	x	x		
Social Visit 7-3 Shift	1100	1400	1	x			x	x		
Life Skills	1200	1330	1			x				
Yoga For Females	1215	1330	1		x					
Supervisor Shift Change	1400	1500	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 5	1400	1445	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Shift Change 3-11 Shift	1500	1530	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 6	1500	1545	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Social Visits (3-11)	1530	2030	1	x			x	x	x	x
Dinner	1600	1700	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Commissary	1600	2300	2				x			
Spec Housing Insulin 1st Shift	1700	1900	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Daily Meds/Narcotics 3rd Shift	1900	2100	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Alcoholics Anonymous	1900	2100	1					x		
Celebrate Recovery Male	1900	2100	1							x
Celebrate Recovery Female	1900	2100	1				x			
Narcotics Anonymous Male	1900	2100	1						x	
Supervisor Shift Change	2200	2300	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 7	2200	2245	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Shift Change 11-7 Shift	2300	2330	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Count 8	2300	2345	3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Housing Insulin 3rd Shift	0400	0600	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Chronic Care Clinic	0800	1600	1	x	x	x	x	x		
P/A Sick Call/Intake	0800	1630	1	x		x		x		
Dental	0830	1630	1	x	x	x	x	x		
Daily Meds/Narcotics 1st Shift	0830	1400	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fathering Program	1000	1200	1		x					
GED	1730	2045	1	x		x				
Sick Call	1900	2000	2	x	x	x	x	x		

criminal justice community, and other local stakeholders.

**Taking Control of Your Daily Activities**

Staffing is a means to an end. Good staffing responds to the ebb and flow of daily activities and to the relative risks that are associated with these activities.

There are some aspects of daily jail operations over which the sheriff and jail manager do not have control, such as when arrestees are brought by local police for initial processing and detention, and when the courts order inmates to be present for proceedings.

By stepping back and looking at the current patterns of activities, it is possible to identify how current practices create staffing problems and inefficiencies, and subsequently allowing us to address these *without adding staff*. Some managers call this “working smarter.”

The first part of this step involves identifying all the programs, activities, support services, and security functions that take place intermittently in the jail and charting the times they occur over the course of a typical week (7 days). This step does not record continuous activities, such as supervising inmates or booking and releasing inmates.

A new excel-based tool was developed for the Third Edition, that makes it easy to record, graph, and analyze activities. Similar tools address coverage and scheduling. Figure 1 presents a sample list of activities recorded in the autopost format.

The autopost program converts the worksheet (Figure 1) into a seven-day, half-hour spreadsheet. From this, graphs are generated for a full week, and for each day of the week. Figure 2 provides a sample graph of activity levels (the sum of weights for each half-hour), for Monday, from the activities shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Graph of Monday Activity Levels.

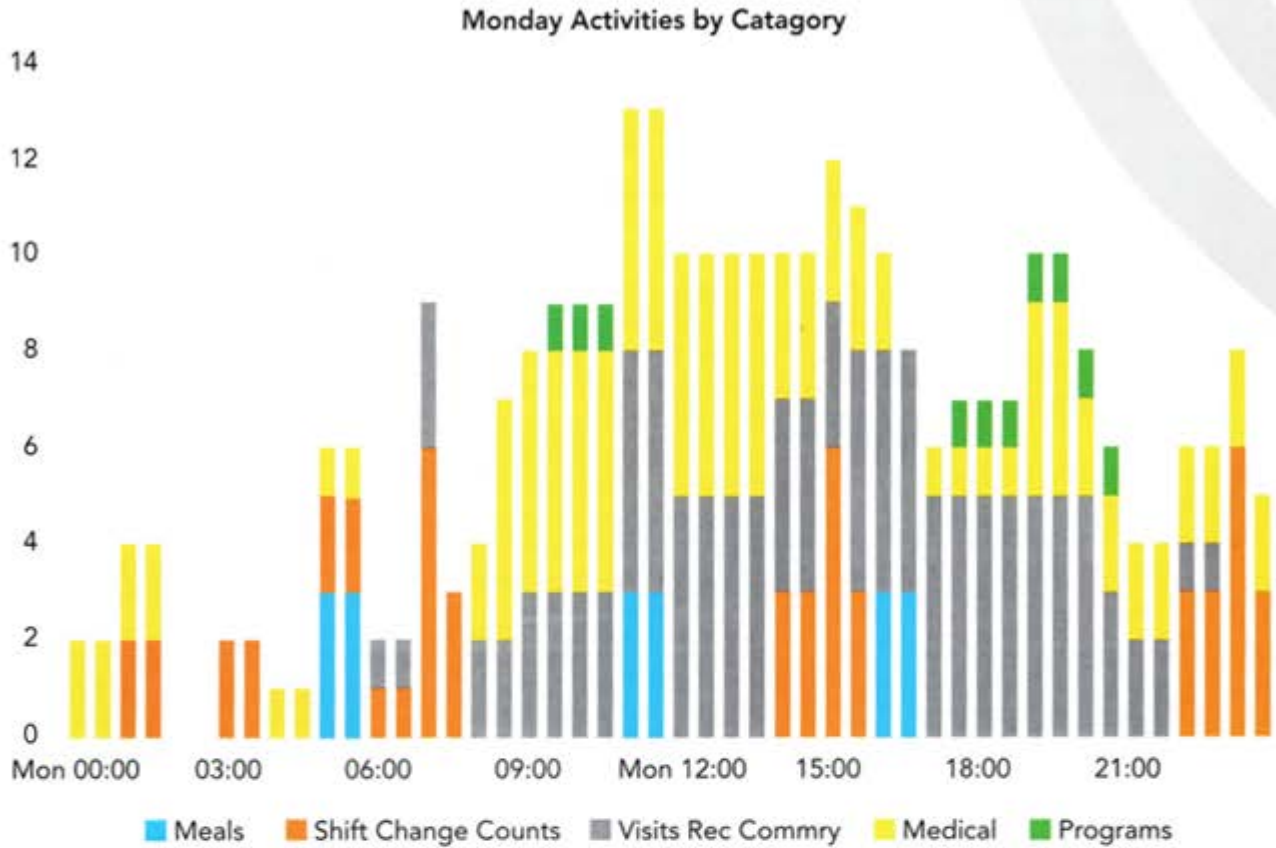
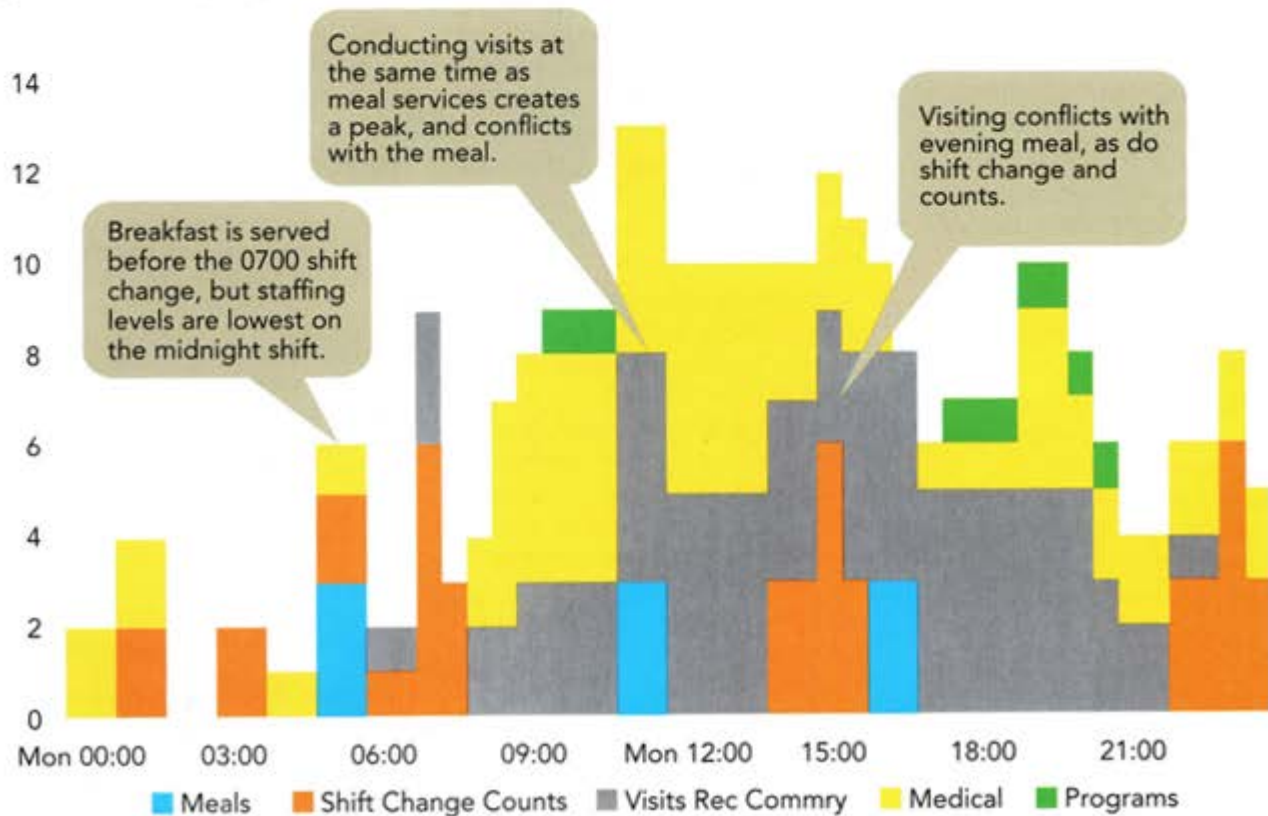


Figure Three: Analyzing Intermittent Activities.





Before creating a staffing plan to implement continuous and intermittent activities, step back and ask, “how can we change our activities to make staffing demands more efficient?” Figure 3 identifies opportunities to improve daily operations.

Many managers have reduced staffing demands by:

- Lowering demand during short-term peak demand.
- Leveling demand during each shift, avoiding peaks that require more staffing.
- Reducing demand during the night shift, allowing more staff to be assigned during the day.

To accomplish this, managers and staff look at:

- When tasks are implemented (such as adjusting timing to reduce peak levels of demand caused by traffic jams).
- How tasks are implemented (for example, providing a bag breakfast).
- How technology might reduce demand (such as using technology to record staff “rounds”).
- How changes in the facility could reduce demand (for example, increasing physical security).

In the next staffing analysis step (“coverage plan”) determines *who* implements activities and tasks.

Refining daily activities makes operations more fair, efficient, and effective.

Staffing is a means to an end, and by being proactive and creative with our management of jail operations, we pave the way for the best staffing practices. Remember, control the daily schedule, don’t let the schedule control you!

### Creative Solutions to Consider Change the Facility

The creative approaches described as “change the facility” at the end of Step 1 are also applicable

to this step of the staffing analysis process. For example, adding one or more controlled gates to a central circulation corridor might make it possible to let more inmates move internally without staff escort.

### Change Daily Operations and Programs

Staffing practices *should* respond to many characteristics of the jail setting. While some aspects of the jail are difficult to control, others can be altered by jail managers. Many aspects of the daily operation of the jail are subject to change. When staffing is chronically short on certain days or times of day, it may be time to rethink the overall schedule of activities and programs for the jail. Some changes may involve fundamental policies and philosophies that are the foundation for jail operation; these should be considered with extra caution and should involve input from policymakers and stakeholders.

*Rescheduling* activities often presents the simplest solution. Many inmate activities, such as visitation and exercise, may be scheduled differently without compromising the operations of the jail. Some jails have worked with local judges and court personnel to develop new practices that ease demands on the jail by coordinating the movement of inmates between the courts and the jail.

*Relocating* activities may result in more efficient staffing. For example, moving an inmate program (such as Alcoholics Anonymous) from a special room where a staff member is required to supervise the meeting to a housing unit’s dayroom may allow the existing housing unit officer to supervise the meeting. Recently, many jails started to use tablets to deliver a variety of programs and services, further reducing supervision demands.

*Consolidating* activities may be an efficient option. A multipurpose space might accommodate a variety

of activities—from reading to recreation—under the supervision of a single staff member. Centralizing some activities may reduce redundancy and replication.

*Reevaluating current practices* often reveals opportunities for changes in inmate movement and supervision, improving efficiency and security.

For more information on the latest jail staffing analysis text and tools, go to [staffinganalysis.org](http://staffinganalysis.org).

The next staffing article presents more operational changes used to reduce the gap between demand and supply. ■

### Endnotes

1. For example, one large urban jail suspended all use of central gymnasiums for the duration of the emergency.
2. Adapted from *Jail Staffing Analysis, Third Edition*, funded by the National Institute of Corrections. Rod Miller, James M. Hart, and John Wetzel. 2016. Available at no cost at [staffinganalysis.org](http://staffinganalysis.org).
3. Continuous activities are address in Steps Three and Four, in the “coverage plan.”
4. These “autopost” programs are available at no cost at [staffinganalysis.org](http://staffinganalysis.org).

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