

Jail Safety: Using Mixed Methods to Audit a Changing Environment

AUDIT REPORT
Jail Safety
Denver Sheriff Department
March 2019



Office of the Auditor
Audit Services Division
City and County of Denver
Timothy M. O'Brien, CPA
Denver Auditor

- **Darrell Finke**, CGAP, Senior Auditor
- **Robert Persichitte**, CPA, CFE, Senior Data Analytics Auditor
- **Samuel Gallaher**, PhD, Audit Analytics Supervisor

Team members not present:

- LaKeshia Allen-Horner, MPA, Audit Supervisor
- Shaun Wysong, MA, Senior Auditor
- Daniel Summers, Staff Auditor

Presentation Objectives

- Identify the challenges of auditing a sensationalized, dynamic, and culturally-closed environment.
- Discuss qualitative and quantitative methods used to address those challenges.
- Review the utility of mixed-methods approach to auditing challenging auditees.



Denver Jail Safety Audit Objective

To assess the effectiveness of Denver Sheriff Department efforts to ensure the safe and secure operation of the City and County of Denver's jails – including an examination of operational trends and management practices that affect the safety and security of the jails for the public, staff, and inmates.



A Range of Methods Applied

Research and analysis

- Reform efforts
- Leading best practices
- Department strategic planning and risk management documentation
- Department policies and procedures
- Department training course content

Interviews

- External stakeholders
- Department command staff
- Department supervisors and deputies
- Department training staff
- Department special unit supervisors

Walkthrough and observation

- Facility familiarization
- Targeted areas of facility
- Pre-service Training Academy
- Field Training Officer
- Specialty training

Data review and analysis

- Classification/Housing
- Incident reports
- Inmate grievance
- Inmate disciplinary
- Internal Affairs



Challenges to Meeting Our Objective

Jail External
Pressure

Jail
Management

Jail Culture

Jail
Environment



Jail External Pressure

High-profile media coverage

- 2 deaths resulted in payments over \$10 million
- Allegations of excessive/inappropriate use of force
- Inmate on deputy assaults causing serious injury



Jail External Pressure

Research and analysis

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- Leading best practices
- Department training course content

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- Department training staff
- Department special unit supervisors

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Data review and analysis

- Classification/Housing
- Incident reports



Jail Management

Lengthy reform efforts

- August 2014 to June 2018 - multiple task forces
- Senior leadership changes
- Reviews of jail operations, including Denver Auditor

Undefined strategies & tactics

- Risk management and integration of new units
- Convergence of multiple tactics

Changing policies and procedures

- 300+ documents, inconsistent or duplicative content
- Revisions during audit



Jail Management

Research and analysis

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Data review and analysis

- Classification/Housing
- Incident reports



Jail Culture

Fatigue to scrutiny

- Evasiveness or not cooperative
- Not receptive to recommendations

Lack of trust and credibility

- Weak relationships with department
- Questioning of audit team subject matter expertise



Jail Culture

Research and analysis

- Leading best practices
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Jail Environment

Assaults and fights

- 2 serious inmate on deputy assaults
- Several serious inmate fights

Distractions and dangers to audit team

- Disruptive inmates
- Use-of-force incident
- Staff incident response



Jail Environment

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- Department training course content

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Data review and analysis

- Classification
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Data Solutions



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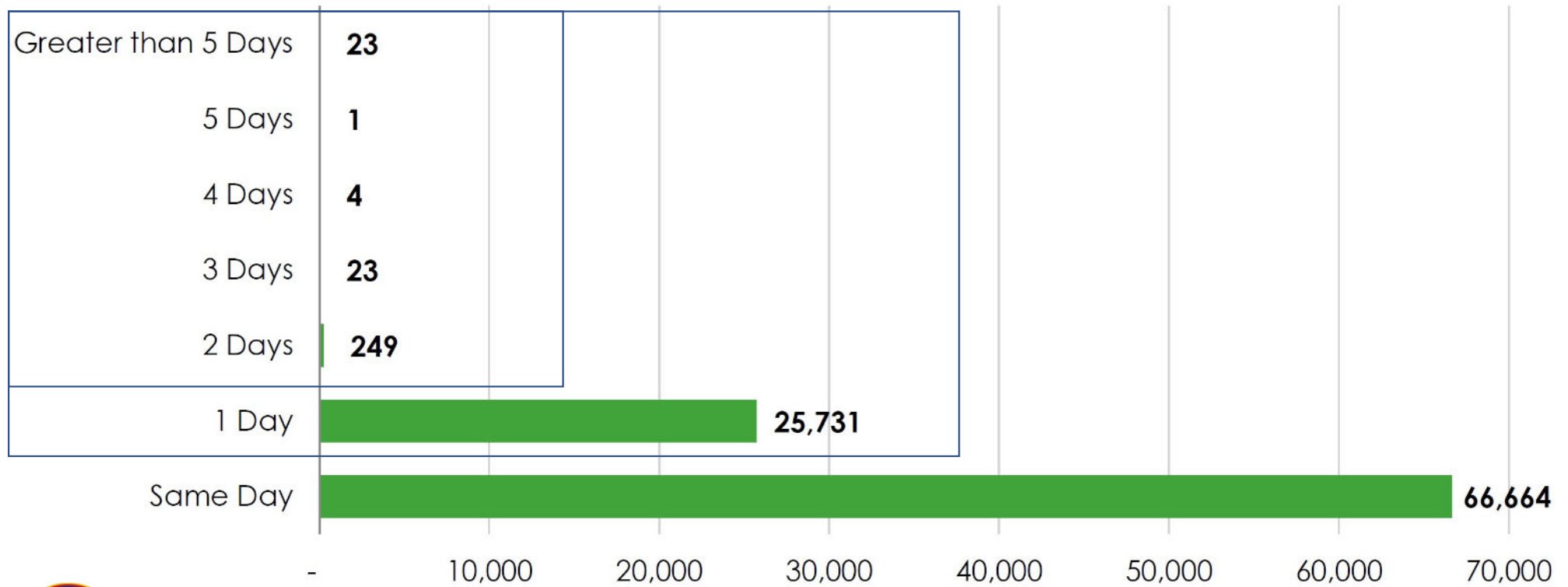
Jail External Pressure and Culture

Respond to attempts to downplay issues

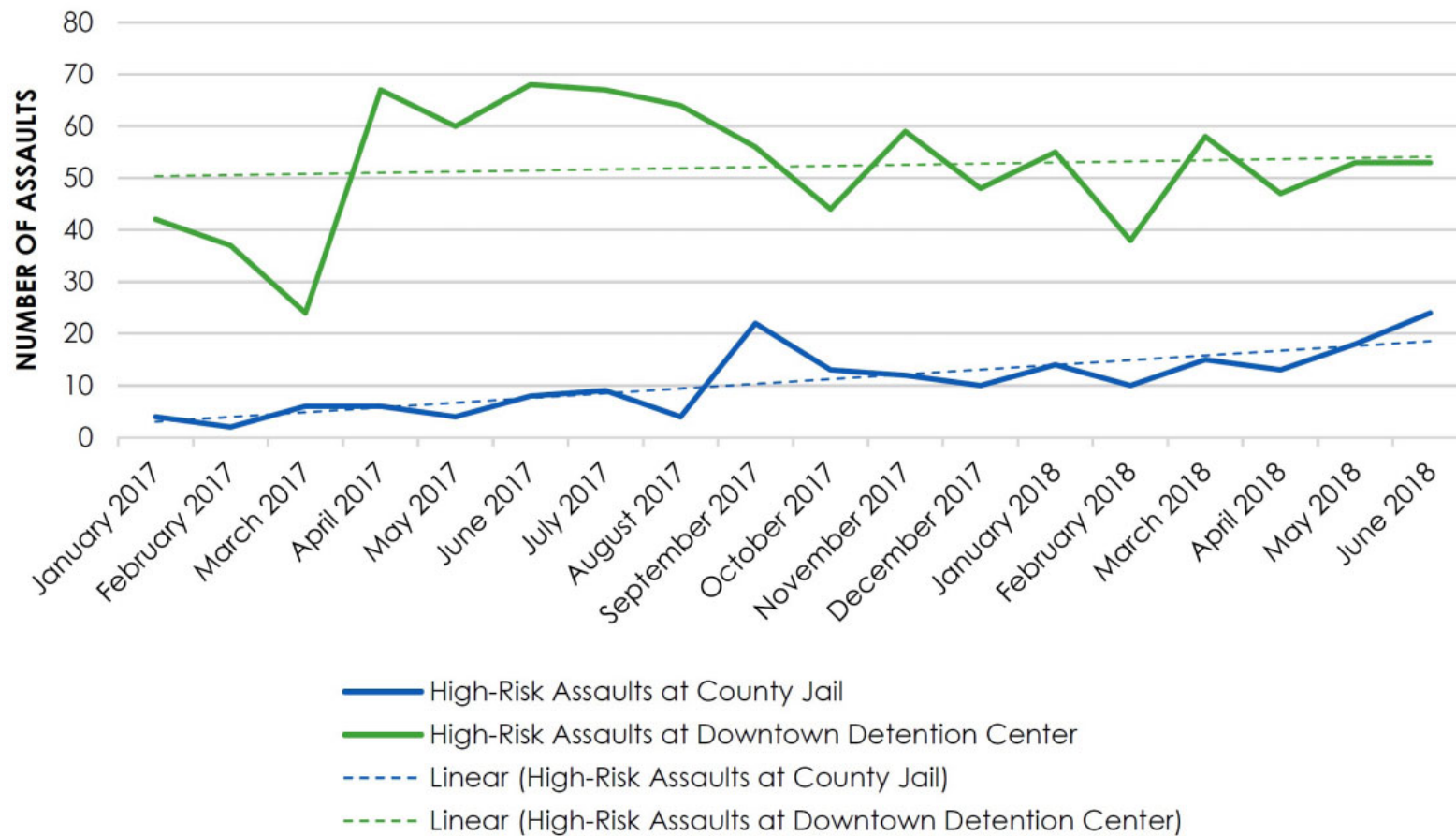
Use data to overcome objections



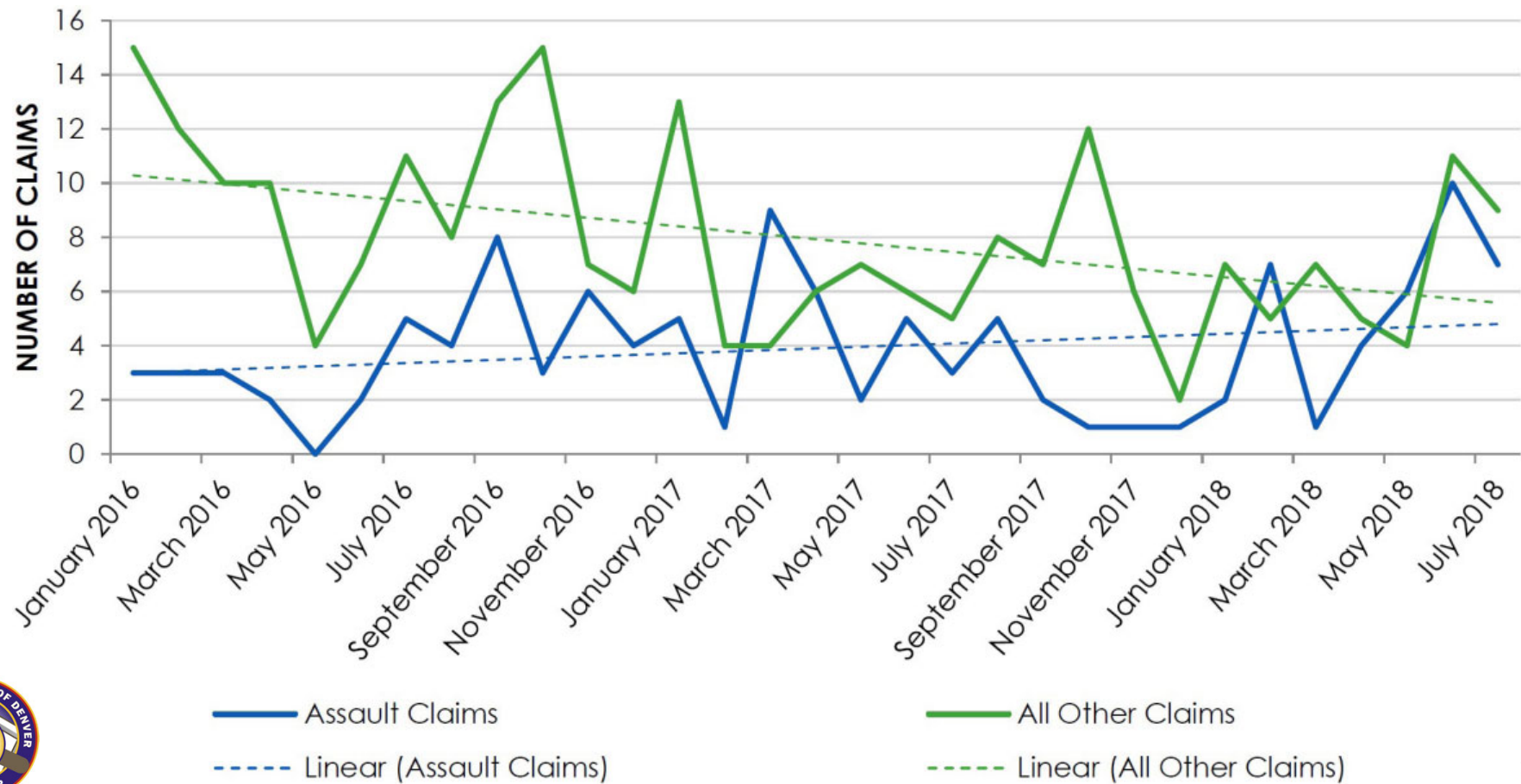
Number of Bookings for Intake Records by Calendar Day



High-Risk Assaults, by Facility



Workers' Compensation Claims for Denver Sheriff Department



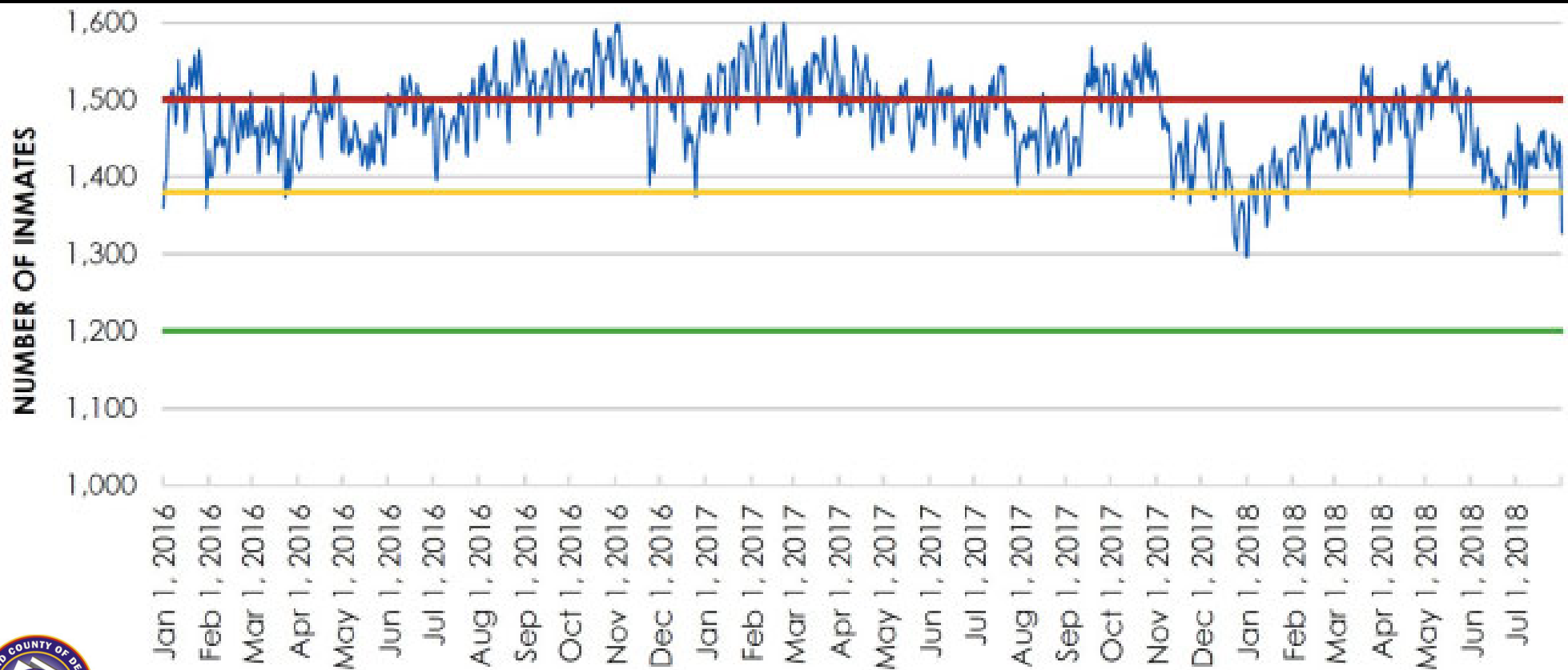
Jail Management

Consistency in a changing environment

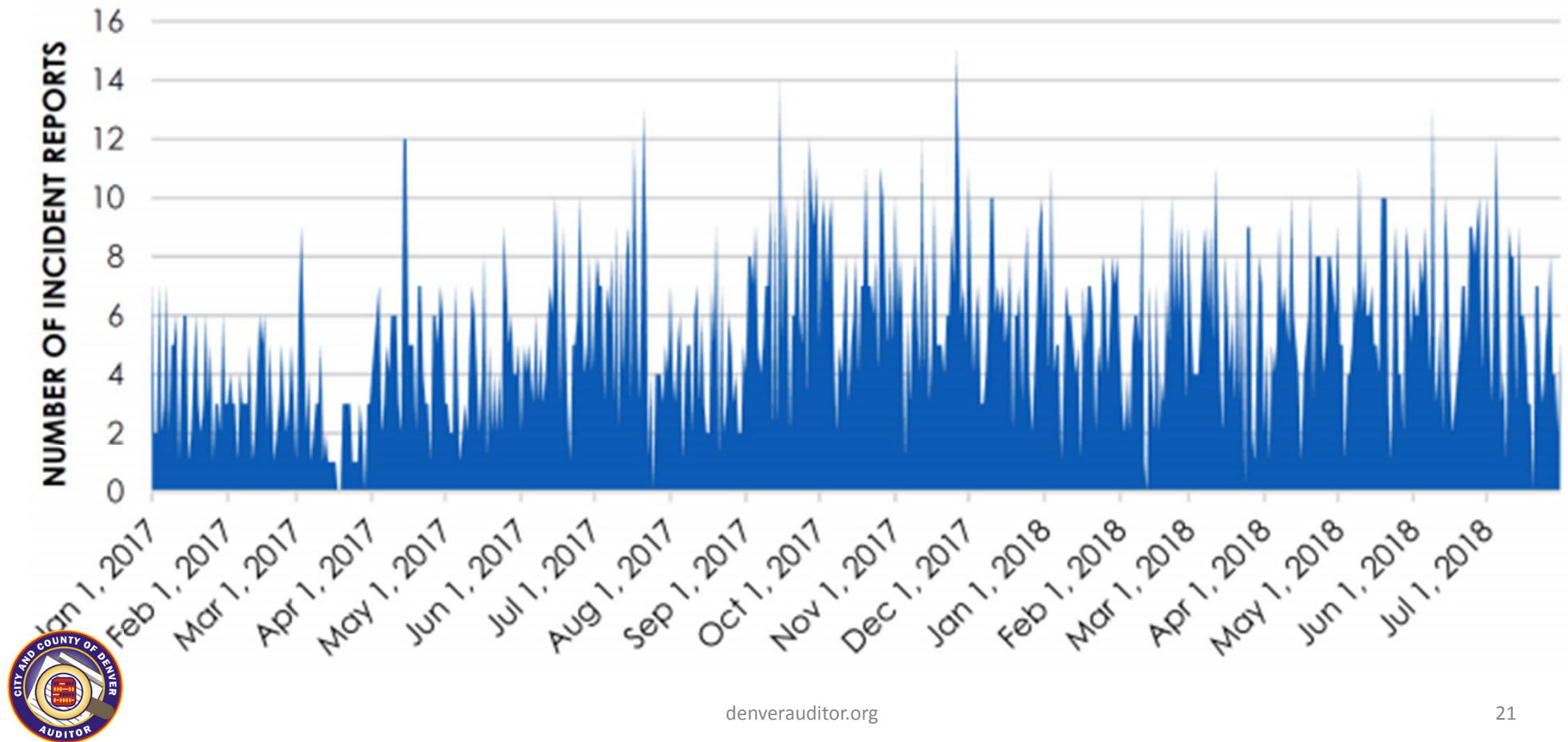
Understanding impact of changes



Daily Jail Population and Capacity for the Downtown Detention Center



Frequency of Incident Reports by Day



Jail Environment

Identification of risk areas

Auditing remotely



Identify Risks



Mixed-Methods to Address Uncertainty

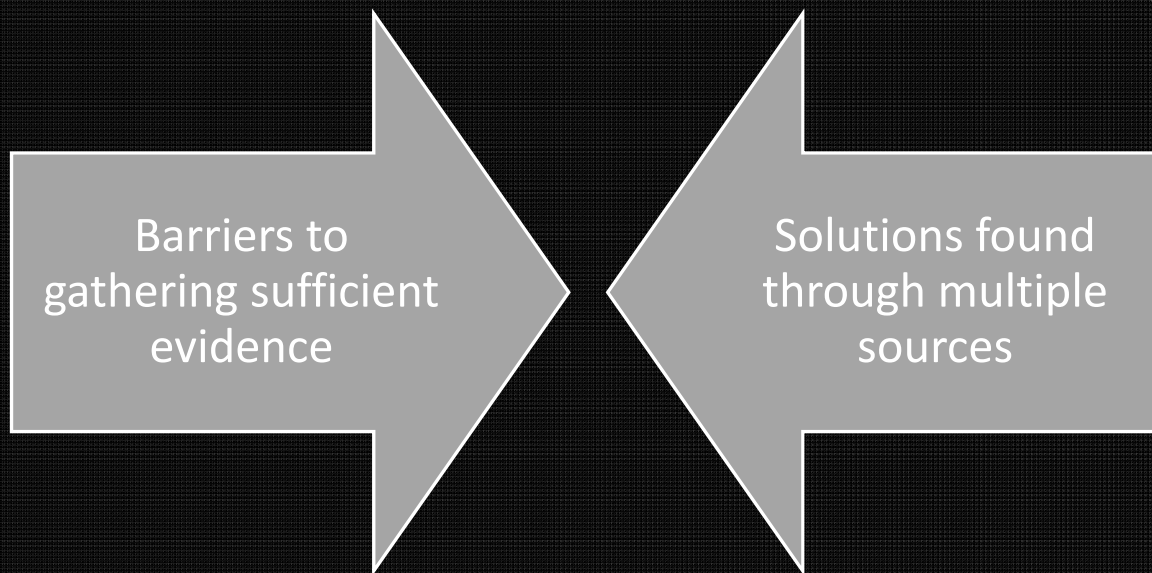
How to Get 247% More People to Read Your Content

by NEIL PATEL on NOVEMBER 19, 2014

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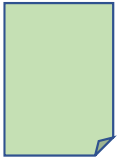


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Sources of Information and Evidence



Law, Policy,
Rule, etc.



Observations



Interviews



Hand-coded
Incident Database



Workman's
Compensation
Database



Jail
Management
System



Findings

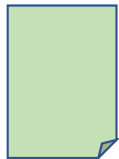
Compare,
interpret, and
integrate results

Analysis and
interpretation

Analysis and
interpretation

Qualitative

Quantitative



Law, Policy,
Rule, etc.



Observations



Interviews



Hand-coded
Incident Database



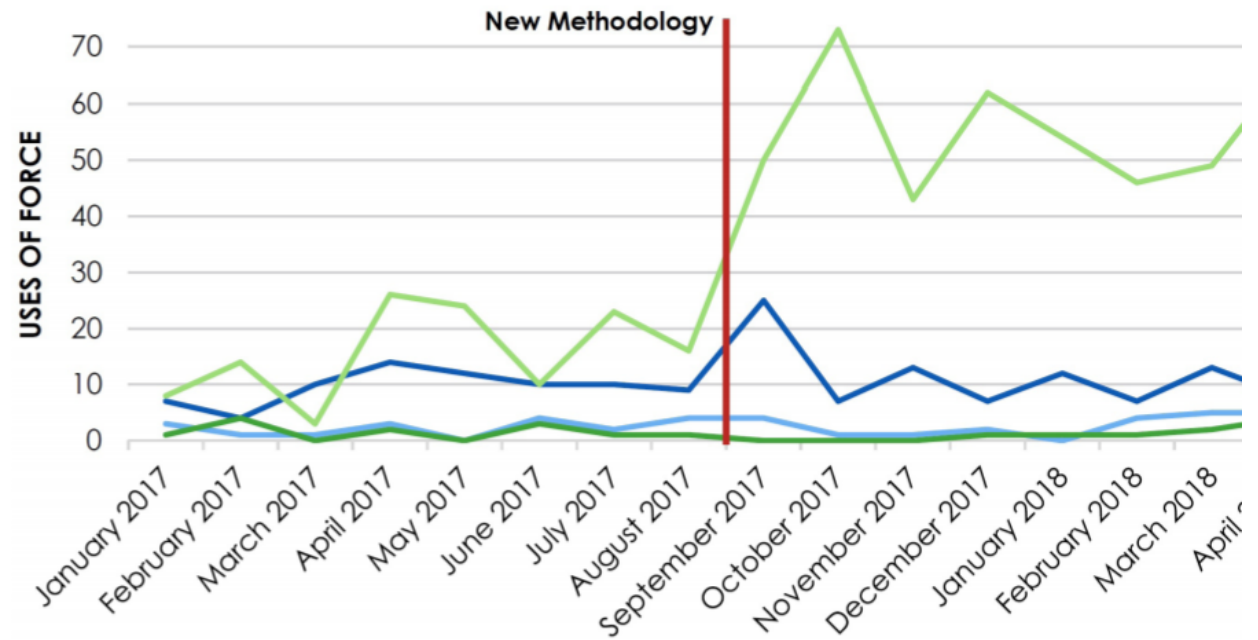
Workman's
Compensation
Database



Jail
Management
System



Risk Assessment



Source: Auditor's Office analysis of Denver Sheriff Department data.



Law, Policy,
Rule, etc.



Interviews



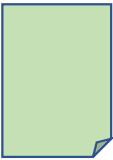
Hand-coded
Incident Database

Developing Fieldwork Methods

Progression of steps and methods

- Planned to observe
- Analyzed incidents by location
- Stratified on severity
- Planned risk-based observations
- Observed a use-of-force incident
- Contrasted observation to policy
- Resulted in sub-finding and recommendation




Law, Policy,
Rule, etc.


Observations


Interviews

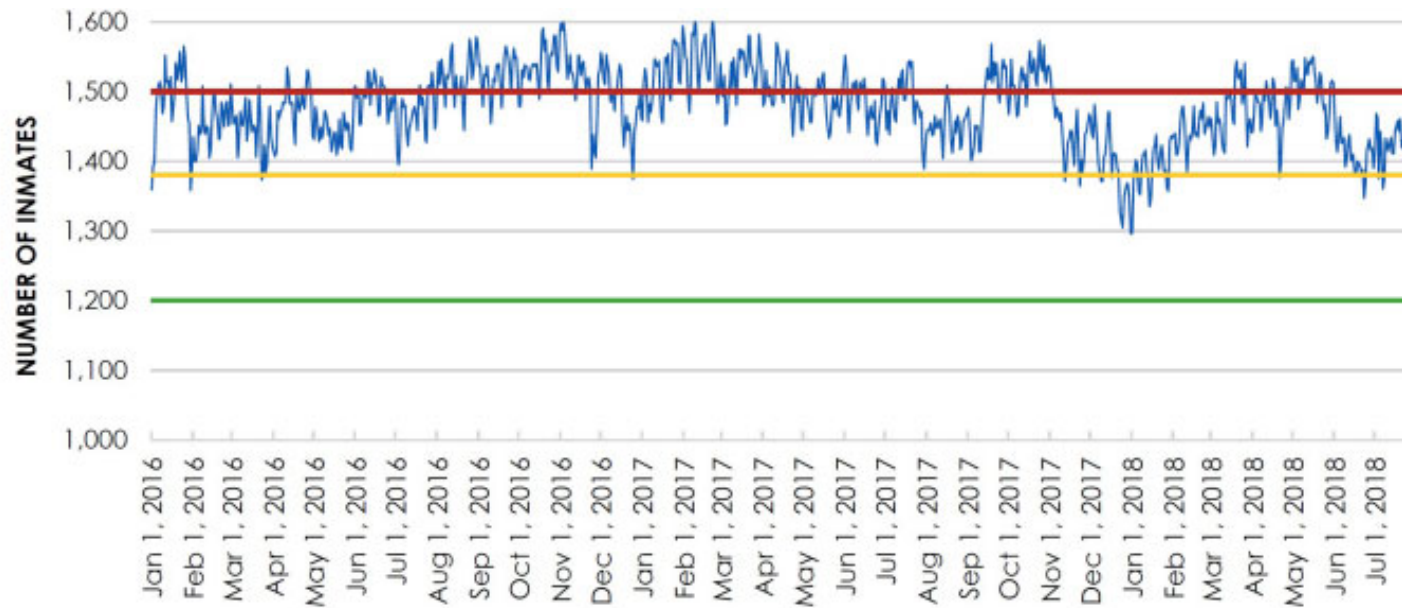

Hand-coded
Incident Database

Audit Finding

Management Processes Prevent Understanding of Safety and Security Risks.



A Long-Standing Condition: Crowding



Source: Auditor's Office analysis of Denver Sheriff Department data.

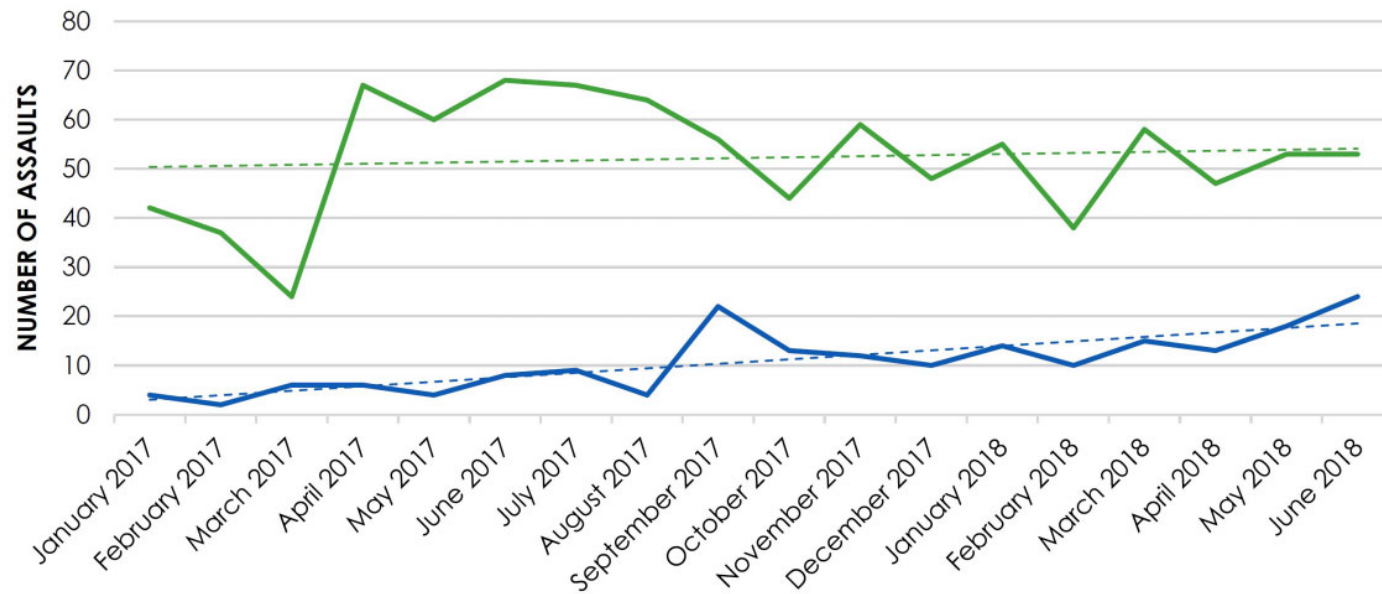


Law, Policy,
Rule, etc.



Jail
Management
System

Potential Effects: Increased High-Risk Assault



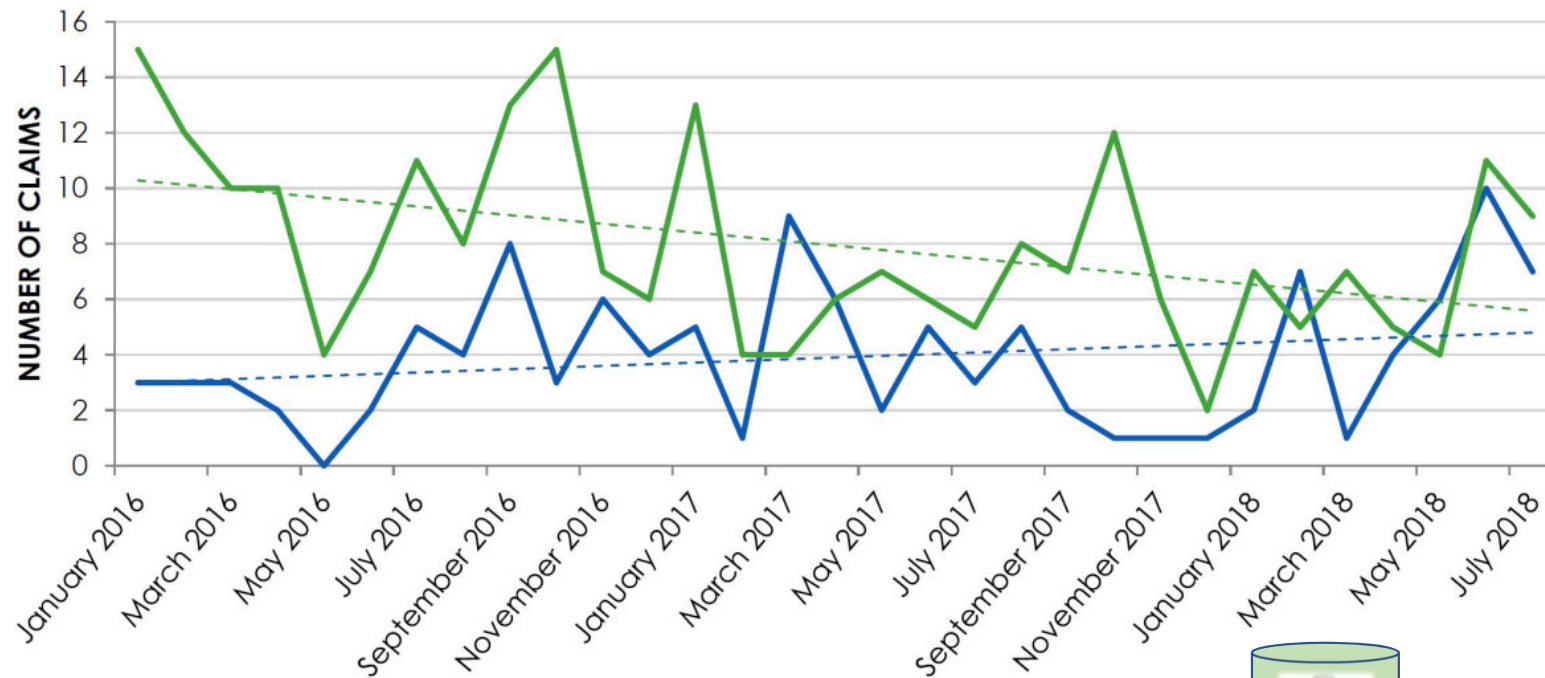
Source: Auditor's Office analysis of Denver Sheriff Department data.



Hand-coded
Incident Database



Potential Effects: Claims Related to Assault



Source: Auditor's Office analysis of Denver Sheriff Department data.



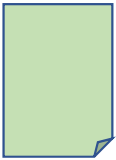
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Worker's
Compensation
Database

Audit Finding

Management Processes Prevent Understanding of Safety and Security Risks.



Law, Policy,
Rule, etc.



Interviews



Hand-coded
Incident Database



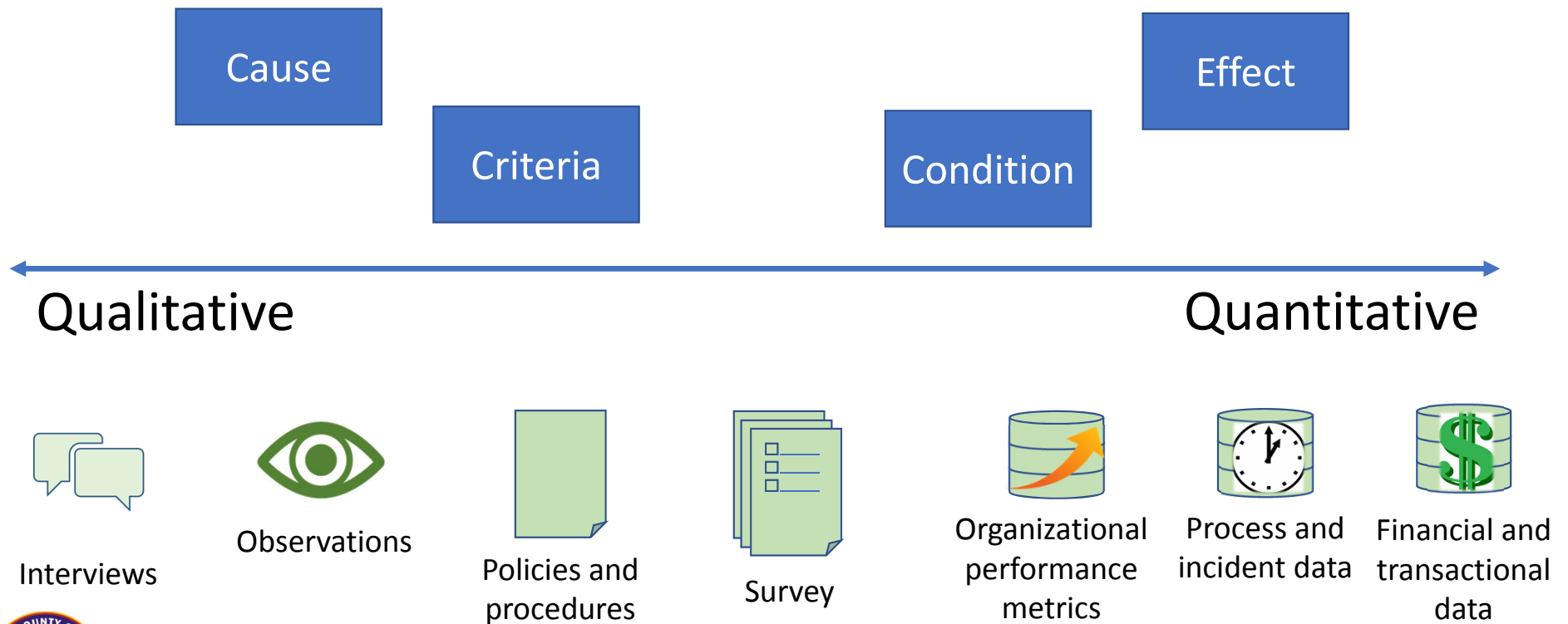
Workman's
Compensation
Database



Jail
Management
System



Where Types of Evidence Often Fit



Mixed-Methods to Address Uncertainty

What we have shown is known, good audit practice.

These fundamentals are difficult to maintain in certain situations.

Solutions found through:

- Creative with reformatting data to analyze risks;
- Diligent synthesis of policies;
- Targeted and repeated observations;
- Continued communication between the analysts and the auditors.



Thank You!



Darrell Finke, CGAP

- Darrell.Finke@denvergov.org

Robert Persichitte, CPA, CFE

- Robert.Persichitte@denvergov.org

Sam Gallaher, PhD

- Samuel.Gallaher@denvergov.org

Attributes

- Qualitative/Quantitative Image adapted from: Stojanov, Zeljko. (2016). Inductive Approaches in Software Process Assessment. I-XV. 10.20544/AIIT2016.I01. and Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research (pp. 209–240). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



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