

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105873](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

From calendar years 2018-2022, about 25 percent of individuals released while awaiting trial were required to use a monitoring device as a condition of their release. When an individual fails to adhere to location monitoring restrictions, the monitoring device will signal an alert.

GAO was asked to examine the Administrative Office's management of pretrial release location monitoring. This report describes (1) how the Administrative Office manages its location monitoring program and assesses its districts' adherence to policies, (2) characteristics of individuals with court-ordered location monitoring and obstacles they face, and (3) challenges pretrial services officers encounter with alert response and the extent to which the Administrative Office has initiatives to address challenges.

Among other methods, GAO analyzed the Administrative Office's pretrial population data and surveyed chiefs in each of 93 district offices—receiving 79 responses. GAO also interviewed officials and a variety of personnel from six districts to obtain perspectives and analyzed the Administrative Office's initiatives to address challenges against its own guidance, internal controls, and human capital standards.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to the Administrative Office, including that it develop a method to collect and analyze data on the underlying cause of alerts and the length of time it takes officers to investigate certain alerts. The Administrative Office said it will consider these recommendations as it replaces its current data system.

View [GAO-23-105873](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or [GoodwinG@gao.gov](mailto:GoodwinG@gao.gov).

September 2023

## PRETRIAL SUPERVISION

### Actions Needed to Enhance Management of the Location Monitoring Program

## What GAO Found

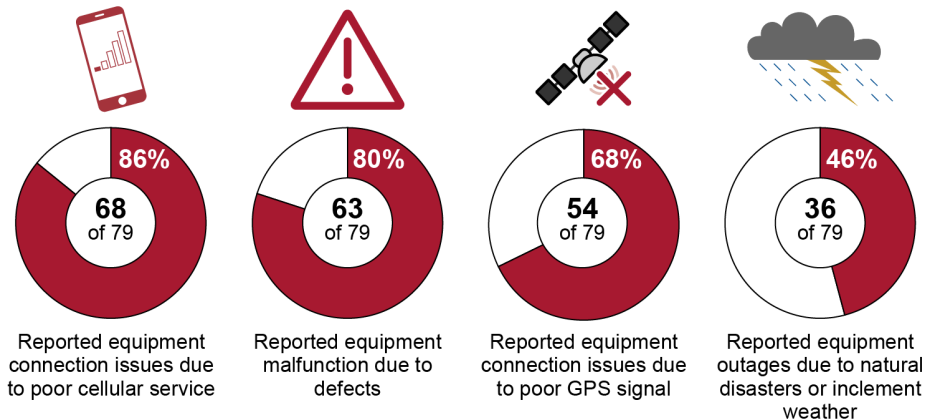
To implement its location monitoring program, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (Administrative Office) contracts with a single provider to supply location monitoring equipment, train officers, and assist with alert response. Further, the Administrative Office reviews each of the 93 district offices with pretrial services every 5 years, in part to ensure they adhere to location monitoring policies.

GAO's data analysis showed similar characteristics among individuals with court-ordered location monitoring. Generally, they were male (85 percent) and had zero new criminal charges while under supervision (92 percent). Nevertheless, these individuals faced obstacles. For example, according to federal defenders GAO interviewed, some companies may not hire these individuals because of monitoring-related scheduling restrictions or the visibility of the location monitoring device.

Location monitoring poses challenges for officers due to the demands of alert response 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. According to a GAO survey, this includes challenges related to equipment connection errors (see figure). The Administrative Office has initiatives to address some challenges, such as developing an emergency response team to help in the case of natural disasters. However, the Administrative Office does not fully collect and analyze data on the underlying causes of certain location monitoring alerts. In addition, the Administrative Office does not track the length of time it takes officers to respond to and investigate certain alerts. With this data, the Administrative Office could better understand workload demands, potentially reduce them, and use this information when making staffing decisions.

### Number of Chiefs Reporting that Equipment Related Challenges were Moderately or Extremely Challenging in their Districts within the Past Year

Equipment functionality challenges



Percentage of chiefs who responded to GAO's survey that this was moderately or extremely challenging<sup>a</sup>

Source: GAO survey of Chief Pretrial Services Officers and Chief Probation and Pretrial Services Officers; GAO (illustrations). | [GAO-23-105873](#)

<sup>a</sup>The survey asked chiefs "In the past year, how challenging, if at all, have each of the following been for location monitoring in your district?"