

CONNECT Public Safety, Health, and Human Resources

Working Group meeting

Thursday | October 8, 2020 | 1:00pm

Via Zoom



Municipal Attendees: Mark Sampogna, Green Tree; Mary Nesby; Homestead; John Frombach, Brentwood; Mary Ellen Ramage, Etna; Bruce Fromlak, West View; Rebecca Vargo, Wilkins; Mike Boyd, Wilkins; Steve Beuter, Carnegie; Tim McLaughlin, Aspinwall; Shawn Alfonso-Wells, Swissvale; Deb Gross, Pittsburgh; Bethany Hallam, Allegheny County; Nickole Nesby, Duquesne; Laura Drogowski, Pittsburgh; Krista Koller, Churchill; Rick Wagner, Ben Avon; Patty DeMarco, Forest Hills; Josh Schneider, Pittsburgh; Gina Aldrich, Homestead; Chardae Jones, Braddock; Tom Theilacker, Forest Hills and GSPIA

Other Attendees: Janet Ector, LEAD Support Bureau; Kat Sutherland, ACHD; Caroline Hamilton, ACHD; Rebecca Lerman, Institute of Politics; Aaron Lauer, Institute of Politics; Lucas Musewe, Star Consultant LLC; Jenn Batterton, DHS; Giulia Pascucci, University of Pittsburgh; Jeff Williams, Foundation of HOPE; Joni Schwager, Staunton Farm; Zoe Burch, GSPIA; Brett Stewart, GSPIA; Nick Mackereth, DCED; Najja Morris, LEAD National Support Bureau; Jim Pugel, LEAD National Support Bureau; Alice Bell, Prevention Point Pittsburgh; Alexa Pierce, University of Pittsburgh; Jay Gilmer, Pittsburgh Dept. of Public Safety; Timothy Rodman, Etna Police; Blair Mickles, GSPIA; Wasi Mohammad, Pittsburgh Foundation; Amanda Settelmaier, TCV COG; Swain Uber, Community Justice Project; Janie Simmons, NYU; Kenneth Hickey, UPMC Community Paramedics; Jamie Ducar, Pitt Community and Governmental Relations; Brad Korinski, County Controller's Office; Ed Mulvey, University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems; Maria T. Cruz, ACHD; Tami Hirth, Pitt Community and Governmental Relations; Alexandra Abboud, Pittsburgh Dept. of Public Safety; and two numbers that called in.

CONNECT: JoEllen Marsh, Lydia Morin, Tess De Jong, Kelley Kelley, Sarah Downing

Welcome + Introductions in the chat

- Welcome to people from all over the country in this meeting, and welcome to those joining us as a part of Pitt Civic Action Week.
- A brief overview of CONNECT
- We are in our 11th year and we have ambitious goals for fire service and policing

Volunteer Fire Discussion (John Frombach, Brentwood)

- This is a problem that people are scared to touch, to open Pandora's box, but it is only growing and we need to keep it in front of elected officials
- Looking at the regionalization of fire services in Allegheny County. We stay away from "mergers"
- Last year's capstone project considered issues such as the rise in operation costs and the allocation of resources. This year the efforts are on helping departments collaborate

more efficiently and finding ways to come together as a community. Getting input from all stakeholders

- “Collaborative capacity”
- Focus groups with fire chiefs in early November to see if there is a consensus on the challenges. If you are interested, please join either Thursday, November 5 at 6pm or Friday, November 6 at 12pm! Email Brett at bms142@pitt.edu
- The GSPIA students are creating a map of how to best engage and where to go next. If anyone would like to further discuss Fire Service Delivery issues with the CONNECT research team (or join the bi-weekly meeting Wednesdays at 12:30 – 10/21, 11/4, etc), please feel free to reach out at bms142@pitt.edu
- This is not a unique problem to Allegheny County. What we do will be right out in front and we hope will present options to people all over
- Comment: I don’t think we should try to dance around the issue and avoid terms people don’t like. Guess what, it is a really bad situation and the survival of the departments depend on us acknowledging that
 - Discussion about how volunteer fire is a very difficult political and personal situation, and to what degree we should be blunt with people
- Comment: My dad’s dad’s dad was in the fire department and any whisper of a merger shut the conversation down. You have to take it slow. Communities love firefighters and they will listen to them, so you need them to want it.
- Comment: It took 2 years, but Rankin and Braddock have officially been merged for a year now. We almost didn’t exist. Now we have better equipment and better training
- Comment: Warren County has also had success regionalizing fire service. They meet every other month to discuss fire issues. CONNECT should connect with them.

Fire is a long game, and planning the transition is almost as important as what you’re transitioning too. And that is what we are doing with LEAD!

Opioids and Police Safety (Janie Simmons, NYU, HIV and Opioid Overdose Prevention Researcher)

- A training related to LEAD. I am the PI for a CDC funded study that is about ready to launch in PA. The goal is to harmonize police and public health in relation to opioid overdoses. We train police officers – one group gets a training about how to reduce COVID transmission, another group gets an opioids and police safety training (reducing needle sticks, fentanyl, burnout due to filling so many job duties, etc). Both get a naloxone first responder training. Officers volunteer for the training, but they are randomized into one of the groups.

- You can disseminate these [flyers](#) in your municipalities! Please spread the word. Participants get a \$75 gift card, and then \$40 every 3 months for 1 year when they take a quarterly survey.

LEAD Update

- Read aloud [Resolution 20-08](#) passed at CONNECT's 11th Annual Legislative Session in September
- Remarks about site implementation from LEAD National Support Bureau's Najja Morris, Janet Ector, and Jim Pugel. Sharing the elements of LEAD, including the policy coordinating group, operational work group, and leadership team.
- LEAD in Allegheny County is about to launch these groups, keep that in mind as we talk about them to see if any interest you.
- LEAD is a living org. It is not owned by a single entity. It *is* a partnership. The Policy Coordinating Group is kind of like the board of directors. It represents all key stakeholders who have decision making authority for their agencies, including public defenders, law enforcement, service agencies, parole, advocacy groups, business community leaders. They have equal buy in and succeed or fail together.
- CONNECT has been talking with ACHD about honorariums for community members who participate.
- The operational group is the more tactical group with people on the ground, it keeps LEAD from becoming siloed. It passes up information to the policy coordinating group. Listening to those who have influence, power, and ears to the ground in communities.
- [LEAD Principles for Implementation pdf](#)
- [LEAD Implementation Checklist pdf](#)

CONNECT Comments (JoEllen Marsh)

- This model of a large group of voting members, with transparent meetings for other partners, is a lot like CONNECT – we know how to do this already.
- Highlight on the timeline how much we have already done!! We have done so broad stakeholder outreach for 1.5 years to avoid leaving anyone out. You can see [where we are on the LEAD implementation checklist](#)
- PSH Working Group LEAD subcommittee meeting Thursday, 12/3 3 at 1pm, to discuss Community Leadership Teams and decide how we want to do outreach. [Add to calendar](#).
- Save the date for the Policy Coordinating Group exploratory meeting #1 on Tuesday, 12/8, 10am-12pm. [Add to calendar](#).

Pittsburgh Update (Laura Drogowski, Pittsburgh and Jeff Williams, Foundation of HOPE)

- Pittsburgh is a member of CONNECT. The idea of “jurisdictional equity” – if a program is initiated in part of the county that would be beneficial to other parts as well, to expand its reach instead of having a hard stop at a municipal border. CONNECT’s whole ethos is working together.
- City Council passed all legislation requirements to move forward on diversion in Zone 1!
- A reminder that this diversion program has not started yet; all of this is still preparing to start. Foundation of HOPE is looking to hire a director and case manager very soon
- This work has been happening for a long time and is not a knee jerk reaction to events of this summer
- An article from Public Source: “[Many arrests are rooted in behavioral health issues. Can this program be an alternative for the Pittsburgh region?](#)”

Crisis Response Group (Jenn Batterton, DHS)

- Overview of the many DHS programs, many are contracted out so you often don’t know we’re behind it. We serve 1 in 5 Allegheny County residents.
- We want to improve our crisis and prevention response, and weave services and developing initiatives together in a more effective, cohesive, and functional way, with fewer gaps
- We’re largely looking at the intersection of human services and criminal justice: jails are the largest mental health treatment facilities, ¼ of people shot by police have a mental illness, ½ of people with a mental health issue will be arrested at some point. Gathering info on police calls that are actually behavioral health related and looking at race disparities. Jail redesign and reduction strategies.
- This takes us to the crisis response stakeholder group. We’re mapping in depth the system of services to enhance cross-system coordination
- See the DHS PowerPoint [slides](#)
- Comment - The mental health /police data are really alarming and so sad. This is a true call for restoring the social safety net- so many programs dedicated to public health, social services, even education have been wrung out of government in the name of “fiscal efficiency.” But the result is a terrible toll on the misery of people who need help not police records!

Fines and Fees Reform in Allegheny County (Bethany Hallam, Allegheny County Council and Brad Korinski, Chief Legal Counsel, County Controller’s Office)

- 5 months ago, we applied for a competitive grant for fines and fees for criminal justice and we were picked to be one of 10 recipients across the country. We quickly built up a solid team and brought on many awesome partners.

- Having outstanding fees is a barrier to getting a license, voting, expungement, and employment
- We spend more money trying to collect the fines and fees than what they bring in. They will not be missed from the county budget.
- Comment: When talking with municipalities during the LEAD Pre-planning Process, a lot of the municipal leaders we spoke with said they don't see much money coming in from fines/fees
- We will put together agenda of fine and fee report that's within Allegheny County's ability to implement. Also, eliminating the cost of phone calls in jail and other hidden fees that are just a tax upon people in the criminal justice system, paid for by the poorest segment of our population. Part of the report will be a racial impact analysis
- Comment: Foundation of HOPE is doing work around phone calls in jail too, they are going to make the proper connections and get in touch
- Comment: This is the issue we have with citing and fining people for panhandling. How do we expect that person to get funds for the citation? Panhandling. We never let up on people. Same thing with sex work. If we give someone an \$80 ticket for skipping fare, how will they pay that if they can't afford the original fare?
- If a fine keeps someone from driving, how will they get to their job to pay off that fine? If they go to jail, they will lose that job. This system keeps oppressing the same people over again.
- Fines, fees, and citations do not work as incentives to not commit the crime. And once it's committed, the fee or citation goes on their credit report, affects their ability to get housing, a job, etc. The horrible loophole is that giving people many small citations can add up to a criminal charge. Citations are not better than arrests, they only delay arrests.

Wrapping up

- Discussion around convening specific topics more frequently. LEAD sub-committee will begin to meet monthly, fire service group is meeting every other Wednesday at 12:30pm.
- Many, many thanks from everyone on the Zoom for a very informative meeting, and many regrets in the chat from those who could not stay over time
- Next PSH working group meeting: Thursday, January 14, 1:00pm. [Add to calendar.](#)

Adjourn 2:59pm