

What LEAD is

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) is a community-based diversion approach with the **goals of improving public safety and public order**, and **reducing unnecessary justice system involvement** of people who participate in the program.

Officers participating in LEAD have the option to divert individuals to a community-based case management program instead of arresting, citing or issuing a warning. **Instead of individuals getting caught up in the criminal justice cycle** – booking, detention, prosecution, conviction, incarceration – **individuals can be referred into a trauma-informed intensive care coordination program** that focuses on reducing harm. Participants in this program can choose to receive a wide range of supportive services, often including transitional and permanent housing and/or drug treatment.

Police and other stakeholders may also refer people to the program through Social Contact Referrals, which means people who have a criminal history and would like to participate in LEAD do not have to commit another offense to be eligible for the program. LEAD can also work alongside mental health crisis response teams, which can respond to calls about behavioral health issues that do not involve a crime.

The only requirement for a person to participate in LEAD is that they complete an intake assessment with a care coordinator. National experts indicate this is a key part of a successful LEAD program.

1

REORIENT

government's response to safety, disorder, and health-related problems

2

IMPROVE

public safety and public health through research-based, health-oriented and harm reduction interventions

3

REDUCE

the number of people entering the criminal justice system for low-level offenses related to drug use, mental health, sex work, and extreme poverty

4

UNDO

racial disparities at the front end of the criminal justice system;

5

SUSTAIN

funding for alternative interventions by capturing and reinvesting justice systems savings

6

STRENGTHEN

the relationship between law enforcement and the community

Evidence for LEAD

LEAD MAKES PEOPLE LESS LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED

Seattle, WA: LEAD participants were 60% less likely than people in the control group to be arrested within the first 6 months of participating in the program. Over the entire course of the evaluation to date, **people in LEAD were 58% less likely than people in the control group to be arrested.**

Charleston, WV: 6 months into the LEAD program, 74% of participants had avoided arrest.

Santa Fe, NM: There was a 20% decrease in the average number of new arrests in the first 6 months after diversion.

Fayetteville, NC: Found up to a 90% reduction in criminal activity within LEAD participants.

LEAD SAVES MONEY

Santa Fe, NM: After LEAD implementation, there was a 52% decrease in Criminal Justice and Emergency Medical Services, or \$4,727 per person in savings. With the cost of LEAD, **this resulted in \$1,558 savings per client per year, or a 17% decrease in expenses.**

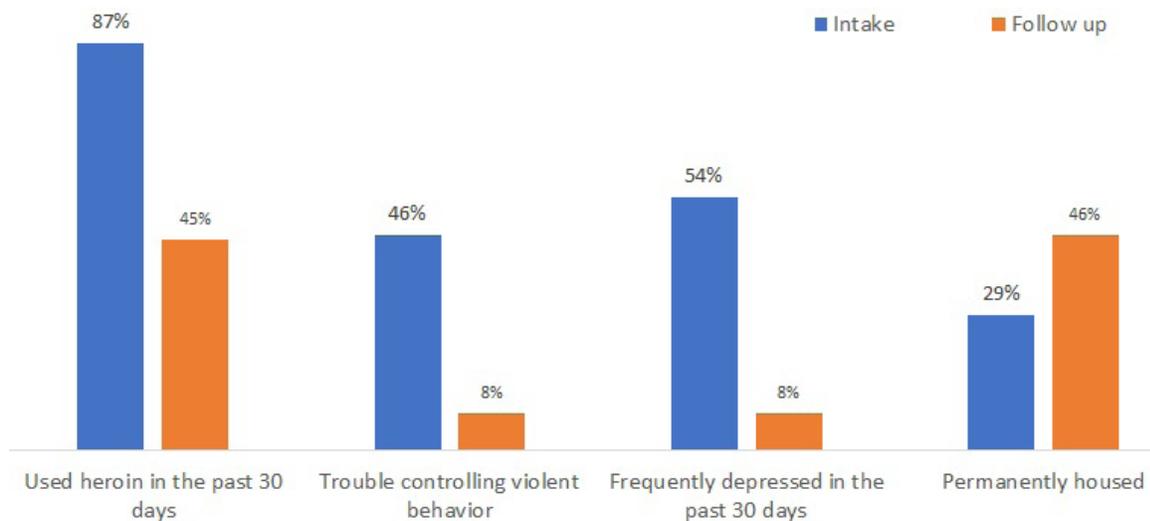
Seattle, WA: LEAD participants had a \$2,100 reduction in costs of criminal justice and legal system utilization, compared to participants in the system as usual of \$5,961.

LEAD IMPROVES POLICE - COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Seattle found that **half of the participants who originally described their interactions with police as negative had positive views of police after LEAD involvement.**

LEAD REDUCES CHAOTIC BEHAVIOR

Quality of Life Outcomes in Santa Fe, NM:





Moving away from negative consequences

Unlike most current criminal justice programs, LEAD does not use a “carrot-and-stick” approach.

Consequences Don't Deter People

*“I think that people who are engaged in these activities have lots of negative consequences already. The definition of addiction is continuing to do something despite negative consequences. **If more negative consequences worked, then the person doesn't have an addiction.**”* - Harm reduction expert

Consequences Don't Heal People

“Our officers do want to work with people instead of just busting them, which is why I think LEAD would be a good fit because they want to work with people and help them for the most part. It's refreshing.” - Local council member

Consequences Can Cause Long-Term Harm

People often use opioids and other substances to help themselves cope with mental health issues and trauma. Consequences increase the stress on an individual and can create long-term barriers to housing, employment, etc. All of this makes it even more difficult for someone to cope.

Instead of negative consequences, LEAD uses a framework called harm reduction that is focused on helping people work on whatever they want to work on. This shift will require educating stakeholders on why programs that use harm reduction have better results than punitive measures.

*“In a harm reduction framework, LEAD case managers work with participants to identify the needs they want to address. The case manager does this in non-coercive, nonjudgmental, respectful manner. **This allows the case manager to work with the participant to start reducing harmful behavior and building trust that will result in positive changes.**”*

- LEAD National Support Bureau Toolkit

*“The harm reduction philosophy in LEAD recognizes that change takes time and not everyone is ready for traditional treatment, or even to be abstinent. The truth is that many people go to treatment and relapse, sometimes multiple times. **We know that people are more successful when they are ready for treatment, not when others mandate them to go.** In fact, some people never go to treatment. Harm reduction is a philosophy that supports participants in making lasting change at their own pace. Thus, participants do not fail out of LEAD.”*

- LEAD National Support Bureau Toolkit³³

*“The bottom line is that the only thing that a person needs to do at all is their intake. **If they've done that, they're in LEAD, and it's completely up to them and their case manager as to what comes next.** If they do that intake and they want to walk away from the program and never engage again, they can. That's the deal we're making. The prosecutors and the police have all agreed they will give up that one charge and not use that charge to hang it over someone's head.”*

- Representative from the LEAD NSB

WHERE IS THIS PROGRAM HAPPENING IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY? WHEN IS IT STARTING?

The City of Pittsburgh hopes to begin piloting pre-arrest diversion in the Northside (Zone 1). Pre-arrest diversion will then be rolled out to the rest of Pittsburgh and select other Allegheny County municipalities.

HOPE DIVERSION PROGRAM

Paving the way for further diversion programs, police in Pittsburgh's Northside have been collaborating with Foundation of HOPE on a pre-trial diversion program targeted at youth ages 12-26. Youth and young adults who commit low-level crimes, such as possession or petty theft, are connected to community-based services as an alternative to incarceration. The Pittsburgh pre-arrest diversion pilot will also be run by Foundation of HOPE staff, and will operate alongside the current diversion program. The main differences between the programs are that this pilot is only for adults and that it intervenes earlier.

HOW DO WE PAY FOR LEAD?

In other cities, this program has been shown to pay for itself in the long run by decreasing court costs and crime. Thanks to collaboration among various stakeholders, **Allegheny County has been awarded funding to cover start-up costs and most programmatic expenses for the first three years.**

Initial research and stakeholder outreach was funded by the Staunton Farm Foundation and the Heinz Endowments. From 2019-2022, start-up costs and most other programmatic costs will be paid for by a federal grant from the Centers for Disease Control to the Allegheny County Health Department. In Year 1 of this grant:

- **The City of Pittsburgh will receive funding** to develop a pre-arrest diversion program
- **CONNECT will receive funding** to provide technical assistance to help municipal police departments surrounding Pittsburgh explore LEAD.

The foundation community in the region has expressed interest in funding this program.

The LEAD National Support Bureau paid for a team from Allegheny County to attend the first LEAD National Learning Conference in January 2020. This team included representatives from the Allegheny County Health Department, CONNECT, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and Foundation of HOPE.

The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs has also announced its intention to pay for diversion programs.

What do people think of LEAD?

IN A SURVEY CONDUCTED WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS...

- *77% of respondents (34/44) said they thought LEAD would benefit or strongly benefit their community (20% were unsure)*
- *Representatives from 18 different municipalities said that they are interested in exploring a LEAD program*

A TOOL TO CONNECT PEOPLE WITH HELP

“Any resource we could obtain to make even one call per year easier is something and I would be interested in seeing it get off the ground. I think the majority of the department would be on board.” - Police officer

“Looks like a perfect program. It’s the same people that we are dealing with and that we wish we could help. Most people could see it as a positive.” - Municipal mayor

LOWER BURDEN ON POLICE

“It definitely has potential to work. It would help with not putting a burden on my department because we have to arrest a guy with simple heroin... It gives me an option.” -Police chief

REDUCTION IN ARRESTS

“If you put that program in place, you might be able to get one little edge before arresting... I think there’s a lot of potential with minor crimes.” - Police officer

“A program that reduces rearrest rates will be super compelling in this town.” -Municipal council member

LOWER BURNOUT

“The program would not only help the participants, but it would help the mental health and overall health of the officer and will probably prolong our careers. We go home and think about the people we couldn’t help, and this might help mental health on both ends. At the end of the day, we’re all affected differently and any relief of stress will go a long way.” - Police officer

ASSISTANCE FOR POLICE WHO ARE ALREADY DIVERTING UNOFFICIALLY

“We are basically doing an unofficial diversion already, but it would be helpful to have a policy in writing that we could refer to and talk to the community about.” - Police chief

PREVENTION OF HARM FROM CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

“The reason diversion is helpful is because once you’re convicted of a crime, your life is forever changed.” - Criminal justice stakeholder

INCREASE IN SERVICE UTILIZATION

“If people aren’t using a service, look at what’s wrong with the service, not the person.” - Harm reduction expert