



Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

LEAD improves community health and safety by allowing officers to refer certain eligible individuals who commit law violations due to behavioral health issues (substance use disorder or other mental illness) or extreme poverty to care in the community.

LEAD Goals

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

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

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.

UNDO racial disparities at the front-end of the criminal justice system.

SUSTAIN funding for alternative interventions by capturing and reinvesting criminal justice savings.

STRENGTHEN the relationship between law enforcement and the community.

LEAD Services

SHORT-TERM

Food, clothing, hygiene services, medical referrals, and shelter.

LONG-TERM

Services such as substance use treatment, mental health counseling, housing, transportation, health care, benefits, obtaining ID, vocational training, education, employment, and legal services.

LEAD Background

In 2011, in an attempt to move away from the War on Drugs paradigm and to reduce gross racial disparities in police enforcement, LEAD® – a new harm-reduction oriented process for responding to low-level offenses such as drug possession, sales, and prostitution – was developed and launched in Seattle, WA. It was the result of an unprecedented collaboration between police, prosecutors, civil rights advocates, public defenders, political leaders, mental health and drug treatment providers, housing providers and other service agencies, and business and neighborhood leaders – working together to find new ways to solve problems for individuals who frequently cycle in and out of the criminal justice system under the traditional approach that relies on arrest, prosecution, and incarceration. LEAD is now in more than 80 communities across the country.



Contact Us

For more information about making LEAD referrals, please contact the LEAD management team:

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