



ST. MARY'S COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Understanding LEAD Program

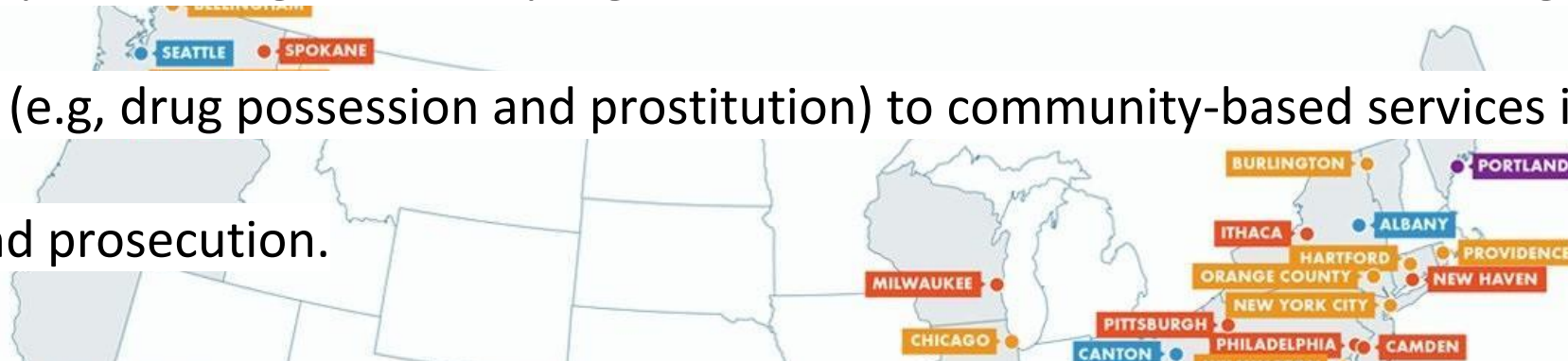
A Community-Based Approach to Public Safety and Harm Reduction

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LEAD Peer Support Specialist

What is LEAD?

- LEAD is a pre-booking diversion program that redirects individuals committing low-level offenses (e.g, drug possession and prostitution) to community-based services instead of arrest and prosecution.



- Focuses on individual with unmet behavioral health needs, such as substance use disorders, mental health issues, or poverty.



- Originated in Seattle, WA, in 2011; now implemented in over 50 U.S. communities.



Goals of LEAD

- ✓ **Harm Reduction:** Services prioritize reducing harm, not requiring abstinence from substance use.
- ✓ **Voluntary Participation:** Individuals opt-in and continue services without fear of prosecution for ongoing substance use.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** Involves law enforcement, prosecutors, case managers and community stakeholders.
- ✓ **Trauma-Informed Care:** Services are tailored to individual needs, including housing, treatment, and job training.

How Does LEAD Work?

Referral Process:

1. **Arrest Diversion:** Officers identify eligible individuals during encounters and refer them to LEAD instead arrest.
2. **Social Contact Referrals:** Community members or officers refer individuals without an arrest.
3. **Court Referrals:** Judges or prosecutors divert individuals to LEAD for low level offenses.
4. **Detention Center Referrals:** Staff at detention centers refer individuals to LEAD before release.

How Does LEAD Work? Cont....

Case Management:

- A case manager meets the individual (often on-site or post-referral) to assess needs and connect to services. (e.g., housing, treatment, vocational training)
- Ongoing, intensive support without fixed end dates.

Coordination:

Prosecutors, police, courts, and detention staff align with case managers to support participant progress.

What Could LEAD Look like?

STEP 1

Officer responds to a call.

STEP 2

Officer determines if the individual committed a violation that meets eligible criteria.

STEP 3

Officer completes LEAD Referral form and provides referral to LEAD Care Coordinator.

01

02

03

05

04

STEP 4

LEAD Care Coordinator meets with individual to complete intake and assessment of needs.

STEP 5

LEAD Care Coordinator meets with the individual on a regular basis to continue to connect them to a wide range of support services, including substance use disorder treatment, mental health treatment, job resources, housing assistance, etc.

Who is eligible for LEAD?

1. Individuals committing low-level, non-violent offenses.
2. Those with unmet needs related to:
 - Substance Use
 - Mental Health
 - Poverty



Exclusions: Violent offenders, high-level drug traffickers, or those with certain criminal histories.

Benefits of LEAD

For Individuals:

- Access to housing, treatment, and support services.
- Reduced risk of incarceration and overdose.

For Communities:

- Improved public safety and health.
- Reduced recidivism (58% lower arrest rates in Seattle study)

For Systems:

- Lower criminal justice costs (e.g., \$3,000 savings per participant).
- Strengthened police-community trust.



LEAD in Action: Success Stories

Seattle/King County

- Launched in 2011, reduced recidivism by 58% and felony charges by 39%
- Serves diverse populations, including those experiencing homelessness.

Albany, NY

- Received \$890k grant to address addiction and poverty-driven crimes.
- Strengthened community-law enforcement relationships.



References

- LEAD National Support Bureau: www.leadbureau.org
- Bureau of Justice Assistance: bj.a.oja.gov
- Collins, S. R., et al. (2015). Seattle's LEAD Program: Recidivism Outcomes. ScienceDirect.
- Albany, NY LEAD Program: www.albanyny.gov

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