PRE-ARREST DIVERSION PROGRAMS CAN HELP WITH:

- Police Staffing Shortages
- Access to Services
- ‘Frequent flyers”
- Overpopulated Jails
- Clogged Courts
- Public Safety

BACKGROUND

At one time, an officer’s job was well defined as law and order. Nowadays, officers are unrealistically required to be social workers, emergency medical technicians and counselors, in addition to their official duties. Police have also been facing staffing shortages exacerbated by COVID-19 and the “great resignation” as well as community retaliation after the murder of George Floyd. These factors have made an already stressful job exponentially harder.

Diversion—a program to divert or deflect someone from the criminal justice system—is generally used for low-level offenses in order to prioritize police time, court resources and jail space for serious offenses and violent crimes. In addition to these benefits, diversion has also been found to repair relationships between communities and police, connect individuals with needed services and, ultimately, reduce recidivism. In this sheet, we will focus on three pre-arrest diversion models that have proven successful and cost-effective.

PRE-ARREST DIVERSION EXAMINED

1. **Police-initiated diversion** allows the police to refer someone to an intensive case management program in lieu of arrest and the traditional criminal processing. The most common police-initiated diversion program, currently operating in 52 U.S. state jurisdictions, is known as **LEAD** (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion).

2. In a **co-responder** model, a behavioral health clinician and/or emergency medical personnel accompanies law enforcement on patrol. This provides an immediate, on-scene support to an individual in need, as opposed to police-led diversion which generally provides support after police contact. Co-responders respond to a variety of calls if a mental health crisis is at issue.

3. **Community responders** divert individuals by requesting trained, non-law enforcement professionals to respond to certain calls for service that do not require a badge and gun. This program takes the co-responder model and removes the police officer from the equation. Community responders only respond if safety is not at issue.
THE FACTS

All three models—by their very nature—reduce jail admissions and backlogs in the courtroom. Further, although evaluation data is limited, some peer-reviewed studies and individual jurisdictions have found these models to provide additional benefits (as indicated in the below table). Several Florida jurisdictions are already using or exploring these diversion models and could be resources for Broward County. Other communities around the nation, such as Denver, Colo., have found that because each model offers its own benefits, it would be most effective to implement more than one model, or even all three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAD</th>
<th>Co-Responder</th>
<th>Community Responder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>Reduction of recidivism by 58 percent</td>
<td>Reduction of average time on call from 185 mins to 136 mins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increase in connection of an individual to services</td>
<td>Increase in individuals engaging in behavioral health services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduction in hospital transports</td>
<td>Reduction in mandatory psychiatric holds</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lower criminal justice and health care costs</td>
<td>Reduction of use of force from 12.1 percent to 4.2 percent</td>
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</tbody>
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FL Jurisdictions

- Tampa Bay - Exploring
  - Gainesville
  - Jacksonville
  - Fernandina Beach
  - Pinellas County
  - Miami-Dade
  - Tallahassee
- St. Petersburg
- Orlando

BROWARD COUNTY STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ft Lauderdale</th>
<th>44,117</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avg calls for service per year</td>
<td>200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg inmates booked into jail per year</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg daily jail population</td>
<td>3,176</td>
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<td># of felony drug cases in 2019</td>
<td>3,196 (416 dismissed/acquitted)</td>
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<tr>
<td># of misdemeanor cases in 2019</td>
<td>14,432 (3,400 dismissed/acquitted)</td>
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ACTION STEPS

Officers cannot solve all the underlying problems in society, but they should have the tools available to assist someone in crisis properly.

These diversion methods have been found to support the police and the community better, as well as increase public safety.

1. Designate a champion
2. Gather key partners
3. Collect data
4. Find funding
5. Talk to other jurisdictions
6. Pilot program

CONTACT US

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