

# Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD®)

**Revolving Doors Presentation  
LEAD National Support Bureau**

# LEAD National Support Bureau

## LEAD National Support Bureau (Bureau)

- Project of Public Defender Association
- Based in Seattle; staff located in Minneapolis, Albany, Bay Area; regional contractor experts
- Established in 2016 to respond to jurisdictions that are developing LEAD initiatives across the country and internationally
- Provides technical assistance, training, and strategic support

# A Public Health Perspective

- Beginning in the 1980s and continuing for decades, arrests for low-level drug crimes in Seattle showed **indisputable racial disparities** with extremely damaging consequences.
- After a decade of contentious debate, in the mid-2000s a group of stakeholders asked: What if we could use arrest **only as a last resort** for drug offenses?
- What if we gave officers **a new alternative** to arrest/don't arrest?
- What if that could yield **better outcomes** for everybody?

# How LEAD Began

- The result was **LEAD: Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion**
- Launched as a pilot in Seattle in 2011, LEAD is the nation's first *pre-arrest, pre-bookings diversion initiative*.
- In 2015, LEAD was recognized by Obama administration, earned formal federal recognition as a promising practice, and received bipartisan support for a dedicated federal grant program.
- The LEAD model is now being replicated in 59 sites across the nation, with dozens more queuing up.

# What Is LEAD?

- Diverts people whose problems are driven by behavioral illnesses **out of** the justice system whenever possible, and **into** long-term, non-coercive case management
- Law enforcement officers are primary portal for diversion, **in partnership** with case management, service providers, prosecutors, community leaders and health agencies



# LEAD Power Sharing

Collective governance and management is always a feature of a LEAD model.



- Multi-agency **Policy Coordinating Group (PCG)** provides collective governance and joint decision-making, and **Operational Work Group (OWG)** manages day to day coordination and case reviews, implementing policy set by PCG.
- Mechanism for review and oversight by civil rights organizations.
- Communications agreement and coordination among partners (including prosecutors, case managers, law enforcement, civil rights groups) is necessary for consistent alignment and coordination.

# Harm Reduction

Harm reduction is a public health philosophy & intervention that seeks to **reduce the harms** associated with certain behaviors

Harm reduction seeks to “meet people where they are at.....but not leave them there”

As a **person-centered** approach, it is non-judgmental & seeks to support what the individual identifies as their needs

# How Does LEAD Work?

- Presented with an arrestable offense, officer can instead offer LEAD as an alternative to arrest/booking. Sometimes done at investigative detention stage.
- Officers are also authorized to make “social contact” referrals.
- If person accepts, officer does direct hand-off to case manager.
- Case manager does immediate triage at the scene, begins to form relationship.
- Case is diverted entirely out of the justice system: Criminal filing is not pursued if release of information signed and intake assessment completed.



# How Does LEAD Work?

- Starting in 2020, in specific LEAD sites, in an effort to de-center the police in the referral process LEAD is transitioning to:
  - **Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion/Let Everyone Advance with Dignity**
  - Allowing for direct community referrals without police approval
  - Provides community opportunity for engagement and increased chance for non-punitive outreach

# LEAD at Work

- What crimes do we divert:
  - Drug possession
  - Drug sales
  - Sex work
  - Crimes driven by addiction, mental illness, poverty, or homelessness
- Who are our participants:
  - People suffering from
    - Substance use disorders
    - Mental illness
    - Poverty
    - Homelessness

# LEAD Paradigm Shifts

LEAD is not a “program,” any more than an officer taking somebody to jail is a “program.” LEAD is a new, collective, system of response.

- Recognizes that arrest, prosecution, and conviction can cause harm and interfere with lasting behavior change
- Recognizes that cycles of arrest and incarceration further destabilize individuals, families, and communities
- Recognizes that using the justice system as a response to behavioral illness saps law-enforcement resources
- LEAD works without a stick

# A Case Manager Perspective

- Harm Reduction Philosophy
- Participant-Identified and Driven
- Intensive/Street Based Case Management
- Peer Outreach and Counseling
- Trauma Informed Care
- Specially Tailored Interventions
- Cultural Competency

# LEAD Case Management



# Case Management Keys to LEAD

- Slow start expected and services not contingent on performance  
– no one “fails” LEAD
- Not a divert-to-treatment approach
- Rooted in evidence: Stages of change, harm reduction, peer-focused, client-directed, long-term case management
- Only requirements: Complete a psychosocial intake and sign a release of information
- Field-based, not office-based

# LEAD Isn't a Quick Fix

- LEAD is more **complicated** than other light-touch alternatives to the system as usual—complex response to complex problems
- As a multi-agency, whole-system initiative, LEAD requires new ways of doing things, **power-sharing**, and commitment among multiple agencies.
- **Fidelity** to the LEAD model is key to successful replication.
- A strong and independent **project manager/management team** is essential. Project manager must clearly understand and be able to explain the model, must have strong capacity to cultivate relationships in many arenas, and must have both strategic and operational skills.

# LEAD Impacts

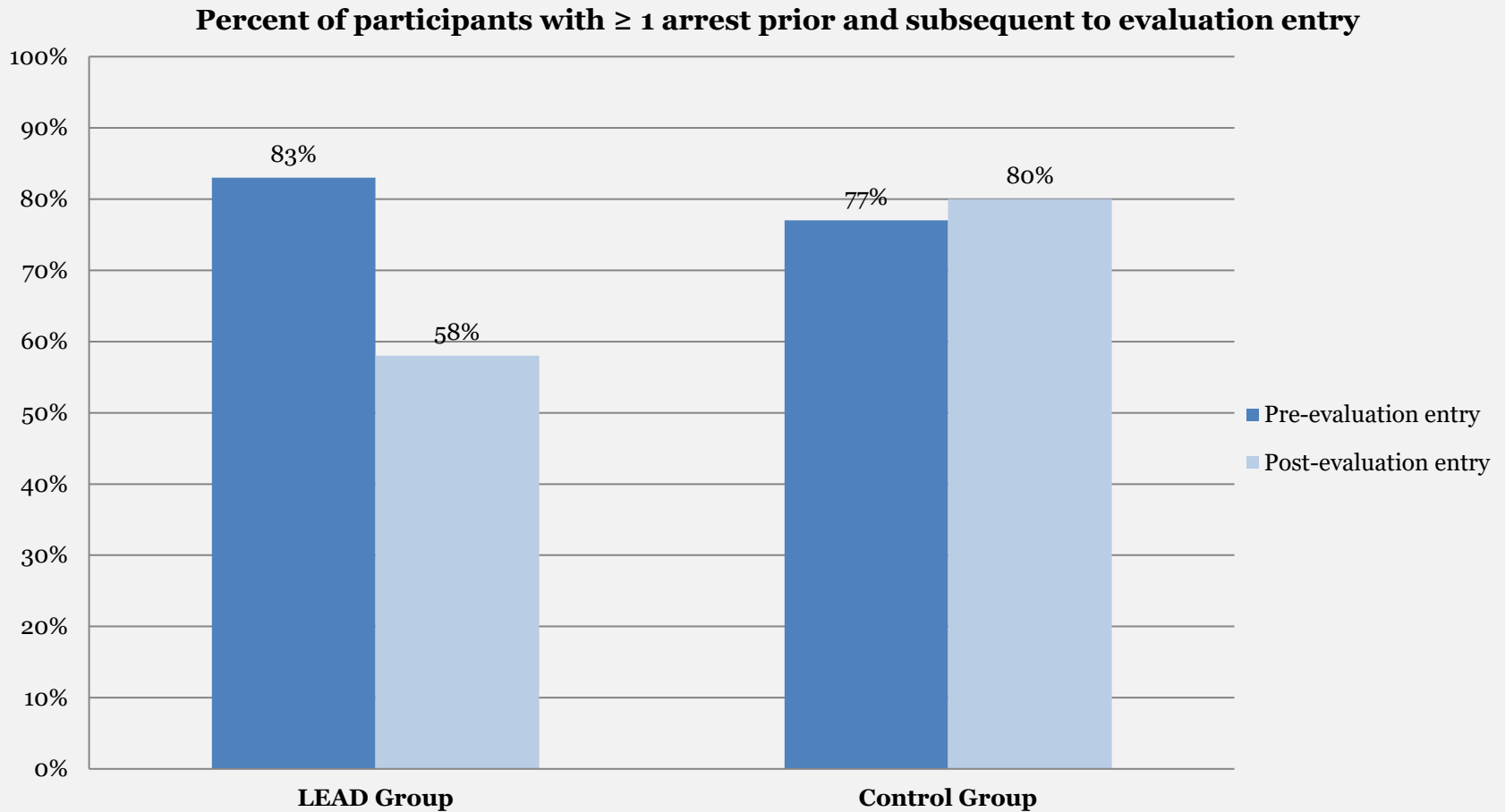


# LEAD Outcomes

Evaluations by University of Washington showed:

- 58% decrease in rates of re-arrest
- 39% decrease in new felonies filed
- 87% decrease in prison admissions
- 89% increase in permanent housing
- 33% increase in legitimate income

# LEAD Effects on Recidivism



# LEAD Cost-Benefit

## Justice systems costs analysis:

- For participants, post-enrollment justice-systems costs **fell** by \$2,100
- For control group, justice-systems costs rose by \$5,981
- Net difference of more than \$8,000 per client in justice systems costs alone
- General rule of thumb for program cost (varies with geography and project developmental stage): \$6,000 per participant per year

# LEAD's Reach Today

