

ROLE OF COMMUNITY PUBLIC SAFETY GROUPS



***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. The following are principles to achieve public safety outcomes that meet the needs of the community through continuous, meaningful engagement of community public safety groups.*

Clearly define the goal of LEAD as improving community health and safety. Though LEAD uses human services tools, it is *not* another human services program – it is an alternative strategy to improving community health, order and safety. This clearly articulated goal is the underpinning of a strong partnership with community public safety groups that are frequently influential in the development of public policy.

Don't oversell what can be accomplished with available resources. Existing human services are rarely adequate in meeting the needs of the entire population of people who are struggling with addiction, mental illness, homelessness and/or poverty. It's important to be transparent and honest about the limits of what can be accomplished until housing, treatment and other resources are made more fully accessible to people who are actively using drugs and/or have criminal history.

Encourage community representatives' attendance at LEAD operational workgroup meetings. This allows community leaders to be recognized as partners in addressing the issues driving problematic behavior by addicted/ill individuals. Community representatives can identify priority locations or individuals, and contribute their knowledge of issues affecting particular participants. This allows them to report back to their own constituencies on what is working and what needs to be enhanced or more robustly funded/supported to achieve the outcomes they want to see. When community representatives attend the operational workgroup meetings, sensitive information about participants is shared on a need-to-

know basis; attendees must agree not to share it outside meetings unless required by organizational duties.

Develop channels for easy transmission of information. While community representatives are welcome at operational workgroup meetings, attendance may be too burdensome, so alternative channels of information exchange should be developed, so neighborhood concerns can feed into decisions about where to concentrate resources, and planned responses can be communicated back to the neighborhoods. The project manager and officers should also regularly attend meetings of key community safety groups to absorb concerns and report out on program development, obstacles, and progress. Transparency is more important than 100% success.

Supplement "data-driven" processes for focusing resources with qualitative information from all neighborhoods. Basing decisions on where to concentrate LEAD policing and case management resources on calls for service or crime trends alone will result in under-serving communities that have barriers to calling 911 and where crime is under-reported. Continuous dialogue with neighborhood leaders is critical to supplement standard "data-driven" prioritization processes.

Consider forming Community Leadership Teams. LEAD only works if there is meaningful community input. Establishing mechanisms to ensure such input can serve to keep the program actors accountable and keep the processes connected to community

needs and interests. Establishing a Community Leadership Team (CLT), comprised of interested community members, neighborhood leaders, people with relevant lived experience, etc. who are otherwise not already represented by groups linked to the LEAD Policy and Operational Workgroups, can prove incredibly useful both operationally and for program sustainability.