



Washtenaw County Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion and Deflection (LEADD)

Who Are We?

Washtenaw LEADD is a pre-arrest diversion initiative that diverts participants who have behavioral health disorders (BHD) and who are suspected of being engaged in low-level criminal behavior away from the criminal justice system and towards community-based support and services.

Washtenaw LEADD is modeled off of an evidence-based program that was first developed and launched in Seattle in 2011, and has since been implemented in over 75 sites across the United States.

Washtenaw LEADD's pilot was first launched in October 2021 in Ypsilanti Township. The LEADD initiative represents a collaboration between the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office (WCSO), Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (WCCMH), Washtenaw County Public Defender's Office (WCPD), Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office (WCPO), and Ypsilanti Township Prosecutor (McLain and Winters Law Firm). The initiative is supported with funds from Washtenaw County's Public Safety and Mental Health Preservation Millage. Washtenaw LEADD currently operates in Ypsilanti Township, with the ultimate goal of expanding the initiative throughout Washtenaw County.

What does Washtenaw LEADD aim to do?

Aim 1. Provide individuals with behavioral health disorders and who are suspected of being engaged in low-level criminal behavior, alternatives to citation, arrest, or incarceration.

Aim 2. Reduce the disproportionate criminal justice system contacts for African Americans and other individuals of color with behavioral health disorders that are suspected of low-level criminal offenses.

Aim 3. Create a safe and supportive environment where individuals with behavioral health disorders receive trauma informed, "do not harm" services from trained community responders.

Aim 4. Work collaboratively to ensure that each component of the system designed to support individuals with BHD, operates efficiently and effectively.

Aim 5. Increase the annual number of individuals exhibiting behavioral health disorders who will be evaluated, connected to and receive non-criminal justice system related community support services.

Aim 6. Refer persons suspected of low-level criminal offenses and believed to have a behavioral health disorder for clinical assessment and possible diversion/deflection services that provide harm reduction services and resources.

Aim 7. Reduce the number of individuals suspected of low-level criminal offenses in the Washtenaw County criminal justice system (jail, court, probation).

A significant focus of year one was making progress on the first four aims. This document highlights Washtenaw LEADD's progress towards accomplishing these aims, as well as next steps for the initiative.



Providing alternatives to citation, arrest, and incarceration.

As of October 31, 2023:

54

Social Contact Referrals

Stakeholders from the criminal legal system can refer individuals to LEADD who have a history of frequent contact with law enforcement due to behavioral health issues, substance use, or poverty. Most LEADD referrals (87%) have been social contact referrals.

8

Pre-Arrest Diversions

Individuals can also be referred to LEADD via pre-arrest diversion. A deputy can give individuals the option to be connected with a LEADD case manager in lieu of arrest, citation, or criminal charges for a suspected LEADD-eligible offense. Since becoming an option in June 2022, there have been 8 pre-arrest diversions.

What's next?

1. Increasing capacity for warm hand-offs. Warm hand-offs are instances when a case manager meets a deputy on scene to assist with a LEADD referral. Increasing the availability of case managers or other staff to conduct warm hand-offs with deputies may help increase the transformation from referral to enrollment. Determining ways to have more around the clock support for warm-offs may support referral and enrollment numbers considerably.

2. Increasing deputies' capacity to make referrals. Ensuring that deputies and sergeants have the training and support they need is key to encouraging greater reliance on LEADD. Providing consistent updates to law enforcement about LEADD's reach and impact, debriefing with deputies and sergeants following LEADD referrals, making LEADD resources and protocol easily accessible, and developing a Washtenaw County specific LEADD training are strategies that deputies recommended for encouraging greater engagement with the initiative.





Reducing racial disparities.

One of the core goals of the LEAD Model is to undo racial disparities at the front end of the criminal justice system. [While people of color make up about 30% of the United States' population, they account for 60% of those imprisoned.](#)

Preliminary data suggests that LEADD is doing a good job of reaching and engaging Black individuals.

Over half of the individuals who are referred to and deemed to be eligible for LEADD are Black (See Table 1). To put this in context, in 2022, Black individuals made up 32 percent and White individuals made up 57 percent of residents in Ypsilanti Charter Township, LEADD's pilot area. Once they are deemed eligible for LEADD, Black participants are also more likely to participate in the initiative. LEADD stakeholders acknowledge that having two Black case managers likely plays a role in helping to build rapport with and engage Black participants.

Table 1. Racial Demographics of LEADD Referrals and Participants

	Percentage of those referred to LEADD (N=56)	Percentage of those determined to be eligible for LEADD (N=44)	Percentage of those actively participating in LEADD (N=20)
African American / Black	55%	57%	70%
Caucasian / White	39%	39%	30%
Other Race / Ethnicity	7%	7%	0%

NOTE: Race/ ethnicity categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, a client can be categorized as Black and Other Race / Ethnicity.

What's Next?

1. Monitor Data for Racial Disparities. LEADD stakeholders collect and track data on whether there are racial disparities in Washtenaw County LEADD referrals, enrollment, engagement, and service delivery. LEADD will continue to do this to ensure an equitable system. Some benchmarks that will be important to track include whether there are any racial disparities in cases that are not referred to LEADD, as well as whether there are any racial disparities in client engagement with case management. Tracking these benchmarks will be particularly important as LEADD expands into other areas of Washtenaw County that are less racially diverse.

2. Prioritize conversations on racial equity during stakeholder discussions. In order to center racial equity as LEADD expands, LEADD stakeholders will make conversations on racial equity a more explicit focus during LEADD stakeholder meetings, discussing the implications that their decisions have for reducing racial disparities and ensuring racial equity for the participants they serve and for non-LEADD participants.



Protecting and serving with a harm reduction approach.

Washtenaw County LEADD creates a safe and supportive environment for individuals with behavioral health disorders by ensuring that LEADD deputies, case managers and other staff are trained in [harm reduction](#). Washtenaw LEADD utilizes the National LEAD Bureau training that takes all forms of harm seriously – systemic, individual, and collective. The LEAD model recognizes the harms caused to communities by the disruptive or dangerous conduct that can stem from unmanaged behavioral illness; it recognizes the harms inflicted by the criminal legal system; and it recognizes the harms imposed by inequitable access to resources. Acknowledging these harms and the impact it has had on the community, Washtenaw LEADD seeks to reduce any further damage by training its community responders.



As of October 31, 2023:

32

Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office deputies / recruits trained

5

Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office sergeants trained

2

Washtenaw County LEADD case managers

Currently, 68 percent of the deputies/recruits and 80 percent of the sergeants in Ypsilanti Township have received LEADD training. LEADD training refers to the receipt of information about LEADD and how to refer clients to LEADD.

Meeting participants where they're at

As of October 31, 2023, 22 LEADD participants have been connected with a LEADD case manager. LEADD case managers work with participants to identify their needs and goals and connect them to local resources and services.

“ A lot of clients want someone to care about them. Once they feel that you care about them, they open up to you, they want to hang out with you, to go to the park with you. Most of the time they've been in a real slump and all they care about is just drinking again ... You're trying ... to get these consumers to believe that you're doing the right thing. I'm trying to get you housing, a job, get you a treatment if you need it. Whatever you need that suits you, I'm meeting you where you are at.”

- LEADD Case Manager

What's next?

1. Develop a Washtenaw County-specific LEADD training for deputies and sergeants. Washtenaw LEADD currently has plans to develop a Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office LEADD training for deputies and sergeants. Developing a training program that is specifically designed for Washtenaw County would allow LEADD to better tailor the training to suit the needs of the local community.

2. Advocate for harm reduction-informed policies. LEADD is an initiative grounded in the principles of harm reduction; however not all policies at the local, state, and federal level are in alignment with principles of harm reduction. An important next step for the LEADD initiative is to identify policies that are prohibitive for clients because they are not consistent with principles of harm reduction, and then advocate for eliminating or revising these policies at the local level.



Collaborating with community partners.

Washtenaw LEADD has developed and established a robust team of partner agencies. These partnerships include:

- Washtenaw County Public Defender's Office,
- Washtenaw County Community Mental Health,
- Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office,
- Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office, and
- McLain and Winters Law Firm.

These partnerships work collaboratively to problem solve and to make decisions and recommendations for the betterment of Washtenaw LEADD. As Washtenaw LEADD progresses and expands in the future, stakeholders and staff seek to strengthen the partnerships already established and build new partnerships with other agencies.

Representatives from our partner agencies describe collaboration among LEADD stakeholders as an important asset of the initiative:



“ Staff at each partner agency are invested in the success of LEADD. There's a lot of buy-in!”
 - Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office

“ Partners [are] very open to hearing non-law enforcement perspectives and implementing [those] suggestions into policies and procedures.”
 - Washtenaw County Public Defender's Office

What's Next?

1. Develop a LEADD Community Leadership Team. By creating a Community Leadership Team, LEADD stakeholders aim to further increase community awareness and engagement. This team will be responsible for continuously engaging diverse stakeholders, including business owners, neighborhood representatives, elected officials, social service providers, advocates, and directly impacted communities to act in an advisory capacity to LEADD agency partners.

2. Increase outreach to the business community. Strengthening rapport with the business community is important for both ensuring LEADD eligibility and connecting LEADD participants with resources. If LEADD participants have committed a crime against a business establishment, business owners must decline prosecution in order for an individual to be eligible for LEADD. In addition, local businesses may serve as sources of employment and support for LEADD participants. To increase awareness of LEADD and its goals among the business community, a pamphlet about LEADD that can be shared with local businesses will be developed. LEADD will also increase outreach activities to the business community, including the local Chamber of Commerce.

3. Increase collaboration among agencies and programs providing services to similar populations. Connecting with other local organizations and programs, such as local housing agencies and crisis support services, will expand the capacity of LEADD to support its participants. In addition, greater communication with other services and programs, such as the Re-entry program, is needed to ensure that participants do not fall through the cracks.



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 Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion and Deflection

If you are looking to learn more about Washtenaw LEADD please reach out to Hailey Richards at RICHARDSH@WASHTENAW.ORG.
 or visit the Washtenaw LEADD website: <https://leadd.washtenaw.org/>