



**NEW ORLEANS**  
Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

## LEAD 2024 Impact Report

LEAD New Orleans is a collective impact initiative to enhance public safety

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) is New Orleans' only pre-arrest diversion and non-arrest deflection program. We offer officers and other criminal justice actors a way to respond more effectively to people who commit low-level offenses related to unmet social service needs. Officers- either responding to calls for non-violent offenses or encountering someone known to have repeated encounters with law enforcement that are a result of an individual surviving homelessness, substance use disorder, mental illness, or trauma – can refer them to LEAD. If an individual consents, they are diverted to community-based case management.

### RESULTS

In 2024, LEAD participants had an **88%** decrease in recidivism, as defined by jail admissions pre and post enrollment, while getting support to achieve stability and meet their goals, including legal case resolution, housing, vital documents, income, and receiving care and treatment.

### PARTICIPATION

167 individuals were referred for deflection via social referrals, primarily from NOPD, and 7 were diverted by NOPD pre-arrest. 68 individuals referred were located and chose to enroll with LEAD case management. **At the end of 2024, LEAD had 111 active participants.**

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2024, case managers spent hundreds of hours directly with LEAD participants, establishing rapport, providing housing advocacy and assistance, attending court in support, helping people get into care, providing transport to court dates and medical appointments, rides upon release from jail to a safe place to stay, and helping secure documents and benefits.

1509



Substantive  
meetings with  
case managers

227



Court cases  
resolved

4



Housed  
permanently

106



Steps taken  
toward income

83



Connected to  
SUD services

36



Connected to  
mental health

## PARTICIPANT JOURNEYS



Tiffany was a social contact referral from NOPD's 6th district. She was unhoused, living with trauma, injecting drugs, and was frequently arrested for stealing packages off porches. She was hard to locate until she had a medical crisis and was in the hospital. There her case manager was able to enroll her in LEAD and start working together. Her case manager connected her to rehab, and then a next move to sober living in another parish followed by long-term recovery house for women. As she missed a court date while in sober living, she had an outstanding warrant, and her case manager assisted her in petitioning the court and getting her registered for probation. NOPD collaborated by verifying her homeless status, and she is on the permanent supportive housing waitlist. She is on her own road to recovery!

Will was unhoused, self-medicating with substances, and involved with the criminal legal system for low-level infractions when he started working with LEAD. Will's case manager supported him in creating goals to reduce his substance use and interactions with the criminal legal system. He completed a 28-day substance use rehabilitation program. After this, he transferred to a sober-living home and then a temporary housing program. Will gained employment at a local fast-food restaurant and has been sober and off the streets ever since. His case manager assisted him in getting an ID and completing all the paperwork necessary to get a Permanent Supportive Housing voucher. Will is a practicing Muslim and has many family members who live in the New Orleans area including two children, which he says inspires him to continue doing the work he is doing. Will has shown a lot of strength and made steady progress toward his goals, and with housing, he will be able to reduce his interactions with the criminal legal system and increase his quality of life.



*Will (R) with his LEAD case manager, Marty (L).*



Bryant was homeless when he was last arrested for petty theft in 2021 and enrolled in LEAD. Since working with his LEAD case manager, he has not been arrested or had any negative police interactions and has made remarkable progress in meeting his life goals. LEAD initially assisted Bryant with permanent housing support and obtaining his identification card. He has met his goal of becoming sober, consistently attending AA meetings, and remaining sober for over three years. He has been given the opportunity to speak at different organizations to let others know about his negative experiences with drugs and the steps he took to become sober. Bryant reports that he can think more clearly and makes more rational decisions now that he is sober. He meets with his case manager every two weeks in his home, and this steady support helps Bryant maintain stability.

# NEWS & UPDATES

## PRE-ARREST DIVERSIONS IN ALL 3 LEAD DISTRICTS

In 2024, we expanded LEAD to the 6th and 7th police districts and reactivated pre-arrest diversions in the 8th district.

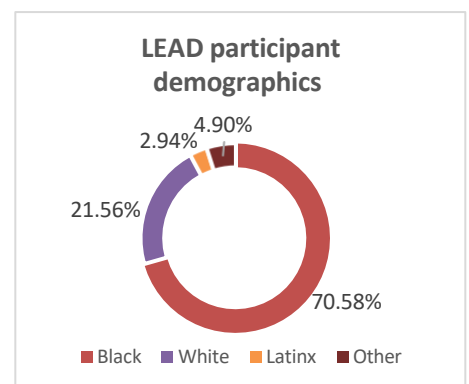
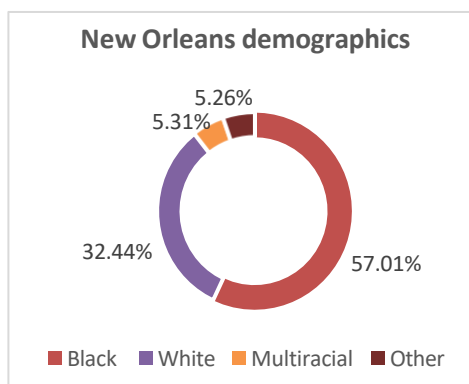
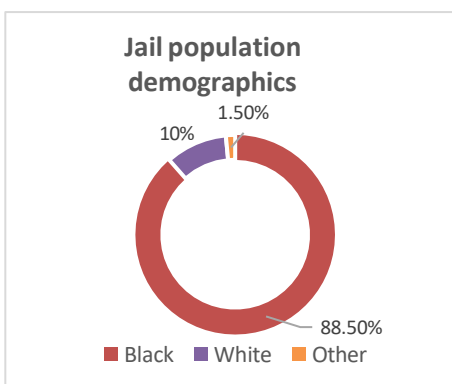
In 2025, we will provide capacity for pre-arrest diversions in the 6th and 7th districts as well. Arrest diversions will allow officers to call LEAD case management to the scene of a non-violent offense when an individual is believed to have unmet behavioral health needs or untreated substance use disorder. With arrest diversions, we will strengthen the fabric of community-based responses to ensure that officers can focus on more serious public safety concerns.

LEAD Intake and Outreach Coordinators (IOC) will be available for pre-arrest diversions from 7 am to 7 pm, Monday through Friday in the 6th, 7th, and 8th districts. By engaging clients at the scene of a minor law violation via a warm hand-off from officers, case managers can connect with clients during an acute moment of need, building trust from the start, and allowing officers to return to more pressing matters.

## RACIAL EQUITY

As Black people are overrepresented in our jail population, LEAD New Orleans strives to reach racial equity in our referral and participant demographics. According to the jail population report produced by our Office of Criminal Justice Coordination, on average, Black people made up 88.5% of the average jail population, and 57% of the estimated parish population.

Black people make up 71% of LEAD participants. Although not equivalent to our goal of matching the jail population demographics, our collective impact partners have made progress in ensuring Black people served by LEAD exceed the overall percentage of Black people residing in New Orleans, reflecting the higher levels of incarceration.



## EVALUATION

LEAD New Orleans had its first independent evaluation in 2024, conducted by Rebecca Davidsson of UNO. The program evaluation used qualitative and quantitative methods to assess program impacts on individual health and well-being of LEAD participants and to identify any gaps in services and systems.

Key findings included:

- ❖ LEAD participants need safety, connection, trust, purpose and hope to thrive and heal.
- ❖ LEAD participation led to an increase in quality of life for all participants interviewed.
- ❖ Overall finding: LEAD offers a pathway to a holistic continuum of care with no noted gaps in services.

## NATIONAL COLLABORATION

LEAD New Orleans continues to learn from the LEAD National Support Bureau (NSB) and the 72 LEAD-affiliated programs through the country. We participate in NSB learning collaborative meetings and informal consultations with other LEAD programs.

The LEAD Project Manager and one of our case managers attended the LEAD National Convening in Seattle in October 2024, followed by the PTACC (Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative) conference.

The 2025 PTACC conference will be in New Orleans in December, which affords a great opportunity for criminal justice partners here to attend, gain inspiration, and continue to develop our LEAD initiative.

## COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHT



LEAD's approach to public health and public safety requires coordination amongst the systems and agencies in the name of more just and equitable outcomes for some of our city's most vulnerable residents. One of our invaluable partners is Catherine Rieder, the supervising attorney for Municipal and Traffic Court and Magistrate Court for the Orleans Public Defender's Office (*shown on the left with Kolby Curry, case management supervisor, on the right*). Her experience in the criminal justice field has allowed her to observe the barriers that so many citizens deal with daily, and she

has become acutely aware of the need for services for the many citizens who come through court. Throughout 2024, Catherine Rieder has supported LEAD's success by working closely with LEAD case managers to assist clients and by participating in decision-making and strategy meetings.

**Thank you to all LEAD collaborative partners including NOPD, NOHD, OCJC, Councilmembers Moreno, Morrell and Harris, City Attorney, OPD, OPDA, OPSO, MHSD, NAMI New Orleans, Travelers Aid Society, and Vera Institute of Justice for another year of collective impact.**