Criminal Justice Diversion in Maine

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MENTAL HEALTH FIRST RESPONDER

SANFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT

What Are Diversion Programs?

Definition

- Criminal justice diversion programs redirect individuals away from the traditional court system toward **treatment, services, or community-based interventions**.

Key Goals

- Reduce incarceration
- Address root causes of criminal behavior
- Improve public safety
- Provide treatment and recovery support

Diversion Can Occur At

- Pre-arrest
- Pre-booking
- Pre-trial
- Post-conviction

Why Diversion Is Important in Maine

Major Issues Driving Diversion Efforts

- Opioid and overdose crisis
- Mental health emergencies
- Homelessness and poverty
- Overburdened jails and courts
- Recidivism from untreated behavioral health issues

Diversion focuses on **treatment, recovery, and stabilization rather than punishment alone.**

Co-Response Programs

Definition
Co-response programs pair **law enforcement officers with behavioral health professionals** when responding to crisis calls or any call for service that involves behavioral health issues.

How It Works

- Police and clinician respond together
- Clinician assists with de-escalation
- Immediate mental health assessment
- Connection to treatment or services

Benefits

- Fewer arrests
- Reduced use of force
- Better support for people in crisis

Co-Response in Maine

Examples

- Sanford Police Department
- Bangor Police Department
- Penobscot County Sheriff's Department
- South Portland Police Department
- Windham Police Department
- Westbrook Police Department

Differences Between Programs

- Clinician is hired by the city/county directly?
- Clinician from behavioral health agency is contracted and embedded within law enforcement agency ?
- Funded positions through grants?
- Crisis worker paired with law enforcement agency?
- Clinicians licensed/ or not licensed MHP?
- Dedicated officer in the unit?

Maine OPTIONS Program

OPTIONS: *Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach, Naloxone, and Safety*

Goal: Reduce overdose deaths and connect individuals to treatment and recovery resources.

Program Features

- Behavioral health clinicians embedded in law enforcement agencies
- One OPTIONS liaison in each Maine county
- Respond to overdose calls
- Follow-up outreach with individuals and families
- Distribute naloxone and overdose prevention education

OPTIONS

SAVE LIVES

KNOWYOUROPTIONS.ME

OPTIONS Locations

Sweetser

- York County: Wells PD, Sanford PD (open position), Sheriff (open) & recovery coach
- Cumberland County: Portland Fire Department, Sheriff's department, Brunswick PD, & recovery coach
- Kennebec: Waterville PD liaison & Augusta PD liaison & recovery coach
- Somerset: liaison works remotely and takes referrals from sheriff
- Franklin: 2 liaisons at Sheriff's Department
- Sagadahoc: Bath PD
- Knox: 2 liaisons with Rockland PD
- Lincoln: Sheriffs department
- Waldo: 2 liaisons with Sheriff

Spurwink

- Androscoggin: 2 liaisons & recovery coach

Aroostook Mental Health

- Washington: liaison with sheriff
- Hancock: liaison with sheriff
- Aroostook: liaison with sheriff

Community Health and Counseling Services (CHCS)

- Penobscot: liaison with Bangor PD
- Piscataquis: liaison with sheriff

LEAD Program

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

A **pre-arrest diversion program** allowing police to refer individuals to services instead of arrest.

Who Qualifies?

Typically individuals involved in:

- Low-level drug offenses
- Minor non-violent crimes
- Behavior related to substance use or poverty

Services Provided

- Case management
- Housing assistance
- Substance use treatment
- Mental health support
- Employment services

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Model

Specialized training for police responding to mental health crises.

Goal: Safely resolve mental health crises and connect individuals with care instead of jail.

- **Key Elements**
- 40-hour training program
- Mental illness education
- De-escalation techniques
- Collaboration with mental health providers
- Emphasis on diversion to treatment

Maine Treatment Courts

Specialized court programs designed to address addiction and mental health disorders.

Types of Courts

- Adult Treatment and Recovery Courts
- Veterans Treatment Court
- Co-Occurring Disorders Courts
- Family Treatment Drug Courts

Program Components

- Judicial supervision
- Mandatory treatment programs
- Drug testing
- Regular court check-ins
- Case management

Benefits of Diversion Programs

For Individuals

- Access to treatment and support
- Reduced criminal record consequences
- Improved stability and recovery

For Communities

- Lower incarceration rates
- Reduced recidivism
- Increased public safety

For Law Enforcement

- Better crisis management
- More efficient use of resources

Challenges and Limitations

- **Common Challenges**
- Limited funding
- Lack of treatment resources in rural areas
- Coordination between agencies
- Public misunderstanding or stigma
- Workforce shortages in behavioral health

Future of Diversion in Maine

Potential Developments

- Expansion of co-response programs
- Increased behavioral health funding
- More counties adopting LEAD programs
- Greater collaboration between health and justice systems
- Data tracking to measure outcomes

Conclusion

Key Takeaways

- Diversion programs shift responses from punishment to treatment.
- Maine uses several innovative models including:
  - Co-Response Teams
  - OPTIONS Liaisons
  - LEAD Programs
  - Crisis Intervention Training
  - Treatment Courts
- These programs help address underlying causes of crime while improving community safety.

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