

PRE-ARREST DIVERSION PILOT PROGRAM



April 2018, The District of Columbia launched an adult pre-arrest diversion pilot program to provide individuals facing mental illness and/or substance use disorders who may otherwise be arrested with the opportunity to receive supportive services when they come into contact with MPD and the criminal justice system because of minor criminal offenses. By providing a diversion program focused on providing individuals with needed services as an alternative to criminal charges, these agencies can help to break the cycle of arrest, incarceration, release and re-arrest.

This pilot is a collaboration between the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and Department of Human Services (DHS).

APPROACH

The pre-arrest diversion pilot program will provide participants individualized services focusing on:

- **Harm reduction:** Connecting those in need with treatment programs and social services
- **Peer support:** Using shared experiences to promote and encourage success
- **Intensive outreach:** Engaging participants in the community to help maintain and improve their level of engagement with services
- **Service system navigation:** Using professional staff, peer supports and partnerships to connect participants with available community services and economic supports

GOALS

- Reduce arrests of those with behavioral health needs and substance use disorders
- Address the underlying conditions that contribute to criminal behavior
- Increase access to behavioral health support services
- Improve housing stability through homelessness prevention counseling and coordinated entry to access longer-term housing
- Increase access to support services, including employment, education and enrollment in economic benefit programs
- Free up law enforcement to focus on the prevention of violent crime

PILOT PROGRAM INFORMATION

Pre-arrest diversion focuses on individuals who might otherwise be arrested and links them directly to services. Participants will follow a person-centered process from referral to graduation:

- Trained MPD officers will offer potentially eligible individuals committing low-level offenses an opportunity to meet with a licensed behavioral health professional for an assessment. All participation is voluntary.
- Once accepted, program staff will collaborate with the participant to begin services based on a plan tailored to the participant's individual needs.
- Program staff will provide ongoing assessment, outreach, referrals and resources to participants.
- As participants become increasingly connected with community services, the program will continue to work with participants through collaboration with their community-based provider(s), as needed.
- Participants will be assessed for vulnerability and service needs throughout the program and will graduate from the program after 180 days, when they have a robust connection to the community care system.
- In addition to providing needed services to participants, the program seeks to decrease criminal activity impacting the community, including disorderly conduct and other low-level offenses.

