

Framework and Self-Assessment for a Strong Diversion Program*

This framework outlines the elements common to strong early diversion programs and supporting structures. Use this self-assessment to determine your city’s current capacity and opportunities for growth in key components of a structure that supports public safety, accountability, and improved community health through pre-arrest diversion.

Element	Toe-hold	Walking	Traction	Running	Next steps to strengthen/expand
Diversion occurs at one or more decision points within city government span of control.					
Reserve arrests, charges, and jail only for people who pose a public safety risk.					
Individuals receive services sufficient to address needs and antisocial behaviors.					
Police and others use locally-validated, evidence-based decision-making tools.					
Process and capacity for continuously monitoring and adjustment.					

**Adapted from the National League of Cities’ “City Leadership to Reduce Use of Jails – Framework/Self-Assessment for a Strong Diversion Program”*

Notes on the Elements

Diversion occurs at one or more decision points within city government span of control.

- Review local ordinances and regulations to ensure legal authority for diversion.
- Conduct training to accomplish the spirit of diversion vs. just the letter of the policy, including Trauma Informed Care, Crisis Intervention Training, Mental Health First Aid, and Implicit Bias.

Reserve arrests, charges, and jail only for people who pose a public safety risk.

- Reductions in mental health treatment and other services have placed the criminal justice system as the system of last resort for all kinds of needs.
- System actors should ensure victims are safe, restored, and treated with respect.

Individuals receive services sufficient to address needs and antisocial behaviors.

- For many, especially for young adults, people with behavioral health needs, and high utilizers (often overlapping with people experiencing homelessness), criminal behavior does not indicate innate criminality but rather a manifestation of needs.
- Partnerships among local, state, private and public entities enable referrals to diverse services, including basic services such as housing, employment, and education.
- Important to allow access to behavioral health treatment multiple times in order to achieve success.

Police and others use locally-validated, evidence-based decision-making tools.

- Screening tools, well-crafted criteria, and training help decide who to divert.
- Assessment tools help determine “diversion to what.”
- Partnerships with local institutions of higher education can help develop or validate tools.

Process and capacity for continuously monitoring and adjustment.

- REGGOR. Pay particular attention to unintended racial and ethnic disparity effects of eligibility criteria.
- Accountability. City leaders routinely request data and set measurable objectives. Stakeholder group (including city leaders) meets regularly to review data and has the ability to hold agencies/service providers accountable and make changes as needed. Third party evaluators, including institutions of higher education, can support.
- Transparency. Share data with the public to build support for sustainability, while protecting individual privacy.