



Feasibility and Acceptability of a Police Pre-arrest Deflection Program



In an attempt to address the opioid epidemic and misuse of other substances, like methamphetamine, the **Tucson Police Department (TPD)** implemented a pre-arrest deflection program starting July 1, 2018. TPD’s **Deflection Program** seeks to reduce opioid and other substance misuse by taking advantage of daily interactions of patrol officers with community members as opportunities to identify individuals who have substance use issues, provide a brief intervention to encourage engagement in treatment, offer deflection to a treatment provider, distribute resources related to treatment, and immediately transport individuals to a substance misuse treatment provider. TPD’s Deflection Program allows patrol officers the discretion to “**deflect**” individuals with substance use problems such that officers **encourage them to seek treatment and offer immediate transport to a treatment provider instead of arresting them**. Under the Deflection Program, community members can approach a TPD facility or officer and request help connecting to a treatment provider without being charged for possession of drugs or paraphernalia – this is TPD’s **Angel Program**. TPD’s Deflection Program’s main partnering substance misuse treatment provider is **CODAC Health, Recovery & Wellness, Inc.** This report presents project achievements for a 3-year period - November 1, 2018 to October 31, 2021.



Officer & Community Member-initiated utilization of the Deflection Program

Type of Incident	Number of Incidents	Number of Unique Individuals Encouraged to Engage in Treatment
Patrol officer deflections	2,129*	1,782
Angel Program referrals	63	63
Total:	2,192	1,845

**This number of deflections, an average rate of 59 deflections per month, indicates officers are actively implementing the Deflection Program and, thus, indicates that they are accepting of the program.*

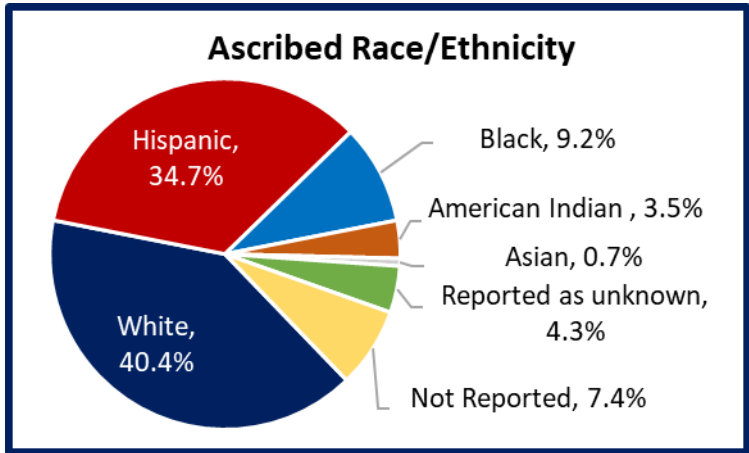
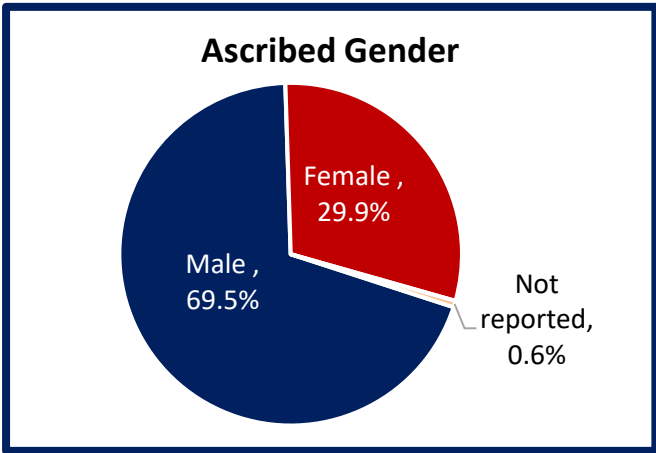
Suggested reference: Korchmaros, J. D. & Hall, K. (2022, December). Feasibility and Acceptability of a Police Pre-arrest Deflection Program. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, Southwest Institute for Research on Women.

Disclaimer: This research was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (SAMHSA-CSAT; H79TI081559) and Arnold Ventures. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed here are the author’s. They do not necessarily represent the official policies of SAMHSA; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The views expressed in this report also do not necessarily reflect the views of Arnold Ventures.



Demographics of Individuals Deflected by Patrol Officer & Encouraged to Engage in Treatment

Aged 18 to 80 years old with an average age of 33.7 years old.



Initial Reaction to Offer of Deflection to Treatment

Definitely wanted to do it	Undecided/unsure	Definitely not interested
837 (47.1%)	587 (33.0%)	354 (19.9%)

Officers had an opportunity to encourage 789 (83.8%) of these 941 individuals to consider deflection to treatment, persuading 309 (32.8%) to get treatment.

These findings indicate that 1) officers had the opportunity to encourage people to consider deflection to treatment, 2) officers took advantage of that opportunity, and 3) officers were successful in encouraging them.

Result of Encouragement to Engage in Treatment

Outcome:	Count	%
<i>Did not agree to deflection to treatment</i>	626	29%
<i>Agreed to deflection to treatment</i>	1,503	71%
Transported to a treatment provider	965	45%
Agreed to seek treatment on own	456	21%
Arrested for pre-existing warrant*	48	2%
Agreed but outcome not reported	29	1%
Already in treatment	5	<1%
Total	2,129	100%

45% of interactions resulted in an individual being transported to a treatment provider in lieu of citation or arrest.

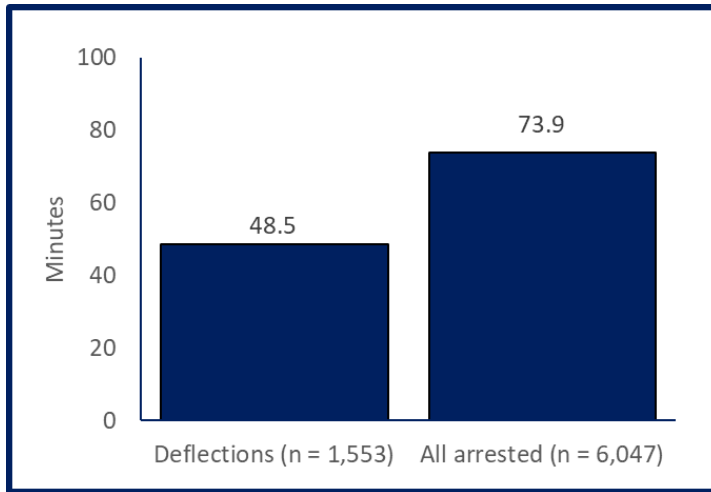
In an additional 21% of interactions, individuals agreed to seek treatment, but wanted to do so on their own.

29% of interactions resulted in the individual refusing treatment options.

Therefore, overall, community members who have substance use issues are accepting of the Deflection Program.

*An individual had charges deflected but was arrested for a preexisting warrant.

Duration of Deflection Incidents Relative to Arrest Incidents



Encouraging individuals to consider substance misuse treatment and deflecting them to a treatment provider does *not* present a time burden for patrol officers.

Deflection incidents took 48.46 minutes on average to complete with the most common duration (the mode) being 60 minutes.

Arrests took 73.87 minutes on average to complete with the most common duration being 60 minutes.

Therefore, deflection is an alternative to arrest that can address calls for service and community safety issues while providing an individualized response that saves officer time.

Treatment and Service Engagement by Deflected Individuals Connected to CODAC

Of the 922 *unique* individuals connected to a treatment provider as a result of TPD's Deflection Program, 789 (86%) were connected with the main partnering treatment provider - CODAC. Out of these 789 individuals:

558 unique individuals received at least one type of healthcare service at CODAC.
(71% of those connected to CODAC)

252 received one type of service. 306 received more than one type of service.

Most commonly provided services:

- Case management = 365 individuals
- Substance misuse treatment = 352 individuals
- Consultant assessment = 197 individuals
- Health promotion = 160 individuals

527 unique individuals completed the clinical assessment.
(67% of those connected to CODAC)

95% of these 527 individuals were diagnosed as having a substance use disorder.

352 unique individuals engaged in some kind of substance misuse treatment, including MAT.
(45% of those connected to CODAC)

147 unique individuals engaged in MAT.
(19% of those connected to CODAC)

Conclusion

Study findings suggest that pre-arrest deflection programs, like TPD's Deflection Program, are feasible and acceptable by police officers and people with substance use issues. TPD's Deflection Program enhanced and expanded access to treatment for people who have opioid use and other substance misuse-related issues. It accomplished this by identifying people with substance use issues, encouraging them to engage in treatment, and facilitating access to and providing substance misuse treatment and related services. This accomplishment was achieved using less officer time on average per incident compared to arrest.

For more information about the comprehensive evaluation of TPD's Deflection Program, contact Josephine Korchmaros, Ph.D., at jkorch@arizona.edu.

