



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety Committee

Agenda

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

9:30 AM

Council Chamber, City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Robert Kettle, Chair
Rob Saka, Vice-Chair
Debora Juarez, Member
Eddie Lin, Member
Maritza Rivera, Member

Chair Info: 206-684-8807; Robert.Kettle@seattle.gov

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Meeting Location:

Council Chamber, City Hall, 600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

Committee Website:

<https://seattle.gov/council/public-safety>

This meeting also constitutes a meeting of the City Council, provided that the meeting shall be conducted as a committee meeting under the Council Rules and Procedures, and Council action shall be limited to committee business.

Members of the public may register for remote or in-person Public Comment to address the Council. Please register in advance in order to be recognized by the Chair. Details on how to register for Public Comment are listed below:

Remote Public Comment - Register online to speak during the Public Comment period at the meeting at <https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/public-comment>. Online registration to speak will begin one hour before the meeting start time, and registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting.

In-Person Public Comment - Register to speak on the public comment sign-up sheet located inside Council Chambers at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting start time. Registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting.

Please submit written comments no later than four business hours prior to the start of the meeting to ensure that they are distributed to Councilmembers prior to the meeting. Comments may be submitted at Council@seattle.gov or at Seattle City Hall, Attn: Council Public Comment, 600 4th Ave., Floor 2, Seattle, WA 98104. Business hours are considered 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Comments received after that time will be distributed after the meeting to Councilmembers and included as part of the public record.

Please Note: Times listed are estimated

A. Call To Order

B. Chair's Report

C. Approval of the Agenda

D. Public Comment

Members of the public may address items on the agenda and matters within the purview of the committee. Please register in advance to be recognized by the Chair.

E. Items of Business

1. Seattle's Drug Possession and Public Use Ordinance Policy and Data Review

Supporting Documents:

[Central Staff Presentation](#)

[LEAD Presentation](#)

[LEAD Cohort Study](#)

Briefing and Discussion (90 minutes)

Presenters: Chief Shon Barnes, Rob Brown, Acting Assistant Chief, and Sarah Smith, Chief of Operations, Seattle Police Department; Lisa Daugaard, Co-Executive Director, Sam Wolff, Policy Director, and Simone Walcott, Program Director, Purpose. Dignity. Action. (LEAD); Greg Doss, Council Central Staff

F. Adjournment



Legislation Text

File #: Inf 2885, **Version:** 1

Seattle's Drug Possession and Public Use Ordinance Policy and Data Review



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
CENTRAL STAFF

Seattle Drug Ordinance (ORD 126896) Overview and Data Update

GREG DOSS, ANALYST

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

APRIL 28, 2025

Background – ORD. 126896 Passed Fall 2023

- Adopts RCW 69.50.4013 - misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors for public use and possession of a controlled substance
- Seattle Police Department (SPD) will adopt policies governing arrests for public use and possession. The policies will seek to minimize use of force and incorporate de-escalation and crisis intervention. SPD will train its officers on these new policies.
- An officer must have probable cause for arrest, although nothing in the Ordinance shall mandate an arrest to occur.
- Diversion, treatment, and other alternatives to booking are the preferred approach when enforcing drug use and possession crimes.
 - SPD policies will state that diversion and referral to services is the preferred response to the crimes
 - A lack of diversion opportunities shall not be a reason for arrest
- Threat of harm assessment.

SPD Policy on Drug Arrests (1/2)

SPD Policy 15.150 - Narcotics - preferred approach when enforcing drug use and possession crimes:

- 15.150.6 - Diversion and Treatment Programs are the Standard Approach for Most Instances of Knowingly Possessing and Public Use of Controlled Substances

Diversion, treatment, and other alternatives to booking are the preferred approach when enforcing the crimes of simple possession of narcotics and the public use of narcotics. When an arrest is warranted, sworn employees should prioritize diversion in lieu of booking

SPD Policy on Drug Arrests (2/2)

- 15.150.7 Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Program

The LEAD program will be available to provide pre-booking diversion for subjects arrested for misdemeanor narcotics crimes. Diversion through LEAD is available 24/7 through the LEAD on-call phone line at (206) 455-0386. When a subject is arrested, and prior to booking, the arresting sworn employee, or their supervisor, will call the LEAD service provider at the on-call phone line.

The subject will then be released to the case management team (pursuant to agreed LEAD protocols to which SPD is a partner) for initial screening at a department precinct.- A lack of diversion opportunities will not be a reason for booking.

Threat of Harm Assessment

Ordinance 126896:

When considering making an arrest, releasing, or diverting an individual, officers may determine whether the individual, through their actions and conduct, presents a threat of harm to others. SPD policy will identify factors to guide officers when assessing the threat of harm presented by the individual.

SPD Policy 15.150.4 – Narcotics - Definition of Public Harm:

- Threats of violence / escalating demeanor
- Co-occurring crimes
- Location of public use
- Type of narcotic(s) used
- Presence of community members/businesses nearby
- Physical condition of the subject
- Public harm is presumed if use or possession occurs near a school, park, bus stop, rail station, or other transportation structure

Threat of Harm to Self (1/2)

Ordinance 126896:

1. If an officer determines there is probable cause to arrest, and the officer's assessment indicates that the individual does not pose a threat of harm to others, the individual only poses a threat of harm to self.
2. An officer may attempt to contact and coordinate efforts for diversion, outreach, and other alternatives to arrest. An officer may arrest at the officer's discretion to avoid additional harm to self.
3. An officer will not arrest when the individual only poses a threat of harm to self absent articulable facts and circumstances warranting such action.

SPD Policy 15.150.5 – Narcotics:

When a sworn employee determines there is probable cause that public possession or public use of a controlled substance has occurred, as described under this policy, but the subject does not pose a threat of harm to others/public harm, the sworn employee will make a reasonable attempt to contact and coordinate efforts for community care resources.

Threat of Harm to Self (2/2)

SPD Policy 15.150.5 – Narcotics, continued:

If information is available to or can be obtained by the sworn employee about a subject's existing service relationship, the sworn employee will make reasonable efforts to report on the individual's current circumstances to the service provider/case manager.

A sworn employee will not book the subject into jail in this situation, absent articulable facts and circumstances warranting such action. Facts and circumstances that could still warrant a jail booking may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Possession of seven (7) or more grams of suspected narcotics, and/or
- To securely transport directly to community-based care, and/or
- To prevent the subject causing additional harm to self.

Pre-Arrest and Post-Arrest Diversion

Pre-Arrest Diversion / Social Contact Data – All Drug Crimes

| 2024 | 2025 | |
|------|------|---|
| 164 | 96 | LEAD diversion data. 41 percent reduction in pre-arrest diversion |

SPD Arrest vs. Post-Arrest Diversion – All Drug Crimes

| 2024 | 2025 | |
|------|------|--|
| 633 | 942 | SPD count of people arrested. 47 percent increase in arrests. Just under half of SPD arrests are for simple possession and use (48 percent both years). Remaining arrests are for more serious offenses that include intent to distribute or manufacturing. |
| 256 | 180 | *LEAD diversion data. 30 percent reduction in LEAD diversions among all drug arrests. LEAD and SPD are working together to more consistently identify post-arrest diversions. See notes section for more info on diversions. |

* LEAD is Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

SPD Data - Disposition of Simple Drug Use & Possession Arrests

48 Percent of all Drug Arrests in 2024 and 2025

| 2024 | 2025 | |
|------|------|--|
| 36 | 69 | Identify and release. Not booked |
| 173 | 109 | Mark43 recorded diversion / template completed |
| 80 | 180 | Charge-by-officer |
| 7 | 33 | Declined at Jail |
| 34 | 81 | New Offense - Booked |
| 4 | 17 | Warrant - Booked |

- In this group (simple possession and use), subjects that were booked or declined at jail grew by 191% between 2024 and 2025.
- LEAD allows for enrollment through multiple channels (see notes section), and represents cases beyond those recorded in Mark43 (SPD Computer Aided Dispatch system).

*Population of this group is 304 in 2024 and 456 in 2025. 30 to 33 individuals, respectively, are counted in multiple categories due to multiple arrests.

Take-Aways

1. SPD policies either require or strongly suggest attempts be made to divert subjects through the LEAD program, particularly among “harm-to-self” subjects.
2. Arrests are increasing. The portion of simple use/possession arrests remains constant at 48 percent.
3. LEAD diversions are decreasing, both pre-arrest (social contact) diversions and post arrest diversions.
4. It is possible that LEAD capacity and SPD operational issues are affecting SPD’s ability to use both pre-arrest and post arrest diversion.

Questions?

Notes on Presentation

SPD notes on diversions:

1. SPD arrest data in Mark43 counts only those LEAD diversions that were finalized. For example, LEAD accepted the intake and assumed the person's case.
2. SPD arrest data does not count as LEAD diversions cases where officers attempted a diversion, but LEAD did not respond or declined. Many arrest reports include a LEAD template, but they are not counted as diversions if they were only attempts/contacts with no further action by LEAD.

LEAD notes on diversions:

1. LEAD allows for enrollment through three channels: SPD referrals post-arrest in lieu of booking & prosecution ("arrest diversions,") SPD (and, starting in 2026, CARE) proactive referrals in other contexts ("social contact referrals"), and SFD/Health One or community referrals without first responder involvement ("community referrals"). SPD & CARE referrals are automatically approved; community referrals are vetted and approved by LEAD partners including prosecutors & law enforcement to ensure they are focused on individuals who chronically are exposed to enforcement for offenses related to behavioral health or poverty.
2. All post-arrest diversions to LEAD are initiated with a call to Crisis Connections, which provides a daily report on each call, which officer called, and time elapsed to connect to a 24/7 LEAD responder. Each post-arrest diversion results in an email thread to operational partners from the LEAD responder, which contains name, date, time, offense, SPD incident number, precinct, whether intake was completed at the point of referral, whether it was a subsequent referral after an earlier diversion, and the name/agency of the assigned case manager. Post-arrest referrals also involve the officer submitting the incident report to LEAD prosecutor liaisons (even though the case will not be filed if LEAD enrollment occurs) for transparency, visibility of diversion patterns, & an audit trail; if this is not submitted, the prosecutor liaisons track it down. The LEAD CRM database, accessible to all partners, captures at a minimum:
 - All referrals received from all sources, by type & precinct/neighborhood;
 - Whether each community referral was approved, denied, or pending, and the reason for denial;
 - Whether the individual referred completed a LEAD intake, signed an ROI, and was thus enrolled in LEAD services;
 - Which agency is assigned to provide case management (and changes in assignment if any); and
 - Current status of the participant.



**LAW ENFORCEMENT
ASSISTED DIVERSION**
Let Everyone Advance with Dignity

Diversion & LEAD utilization since Seattle drug ordinance adoption (October 2023)

City Council Public Safety Committee

April 28, 2026

LEAD overview

- LEAD recovery services model of care aligns with **SAMHSA recovery framework** pillars (a safe place to live, access to medical & behavioral health care, relationship/connection, & well-founded hope for a meaningful life)
- Long term case management + legal services + legal system coordination
- Long term case management itself is a core recovery services intervention under WA law; case managers are skilled in supporting behavior change through motivational interviewing, broker other benefits & services, provide housing navigation & legal system coordination, & connect to clinically appropriate treatment resources



Evaluation & research

58%

Independent UW researchers funded by Laura & John Arnold Foundation found LEAD reduced recidivism for all crimes by 58%, reduced felony charges by 39%, resulted in 41 fewer days in jail per person annually, and lowered the odds of entering prison by 88%.

89%

Participants' odds of being housed increased 89% & odds of being on employment continuum increased 46% over status at entry

King County Auditor (2022) found LEAD Seattle/King County unique among local diversion programs in commitment to rigorous evaluation & using data to make program adjustments

DIVERSION & REFERRAL PATHWAYS

ARREST DIVERSION

Post-arrest referral
by law enforcement
("arrest referrals")



SOCIAL CONTACT REFERRAL

Proactive referral by
first responders
outside context of
arrest ("social contact
referrals")



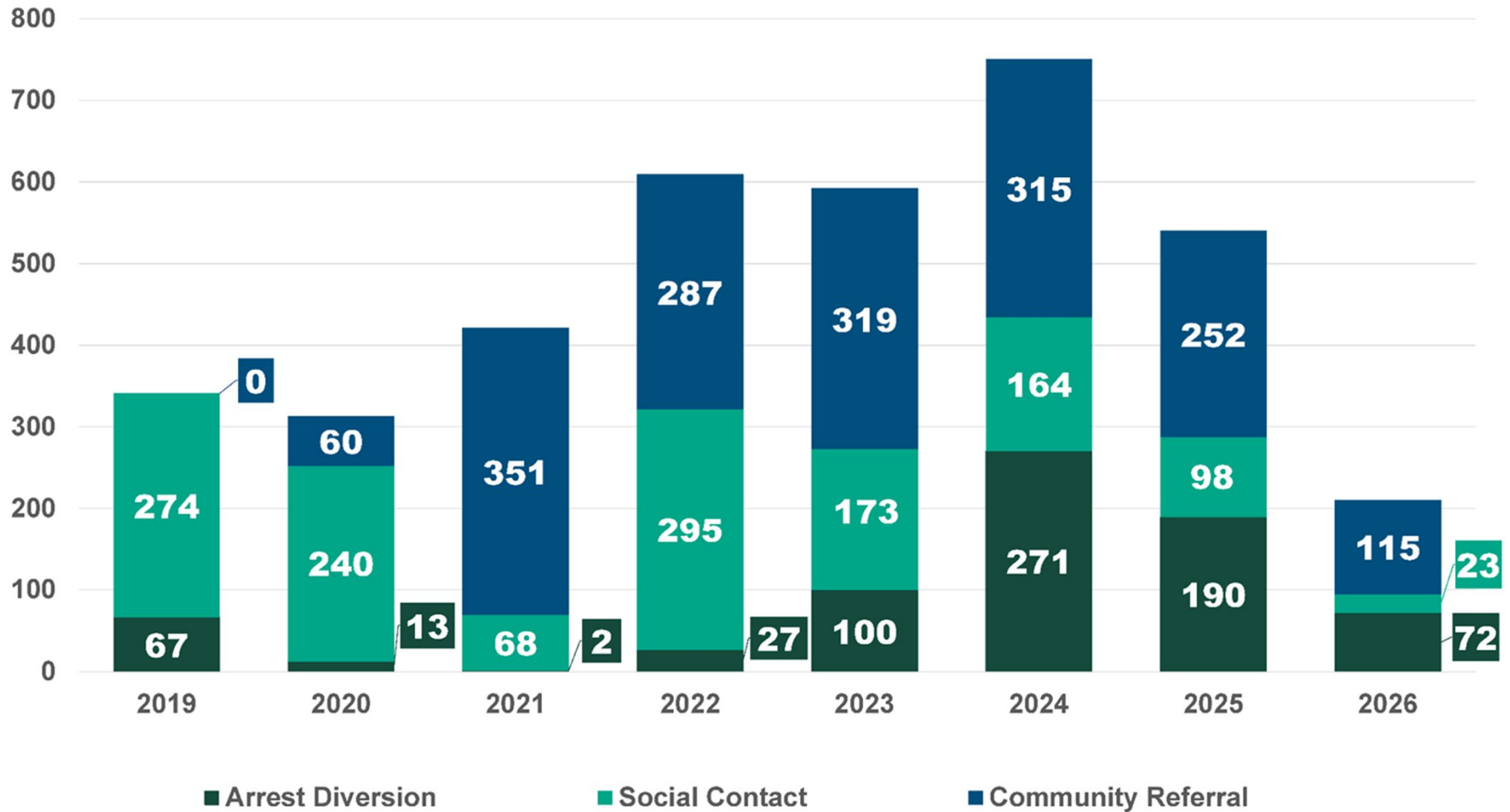
COMMUNITY REFERRAL

Community referrals
without need to pass
through emergency
response systems.
(Includes pre-filing
referrals from SCAO.)



SEATTLE REFERRALS BY TYPE - 2019 THRU MARCH 2026 - YEARLY

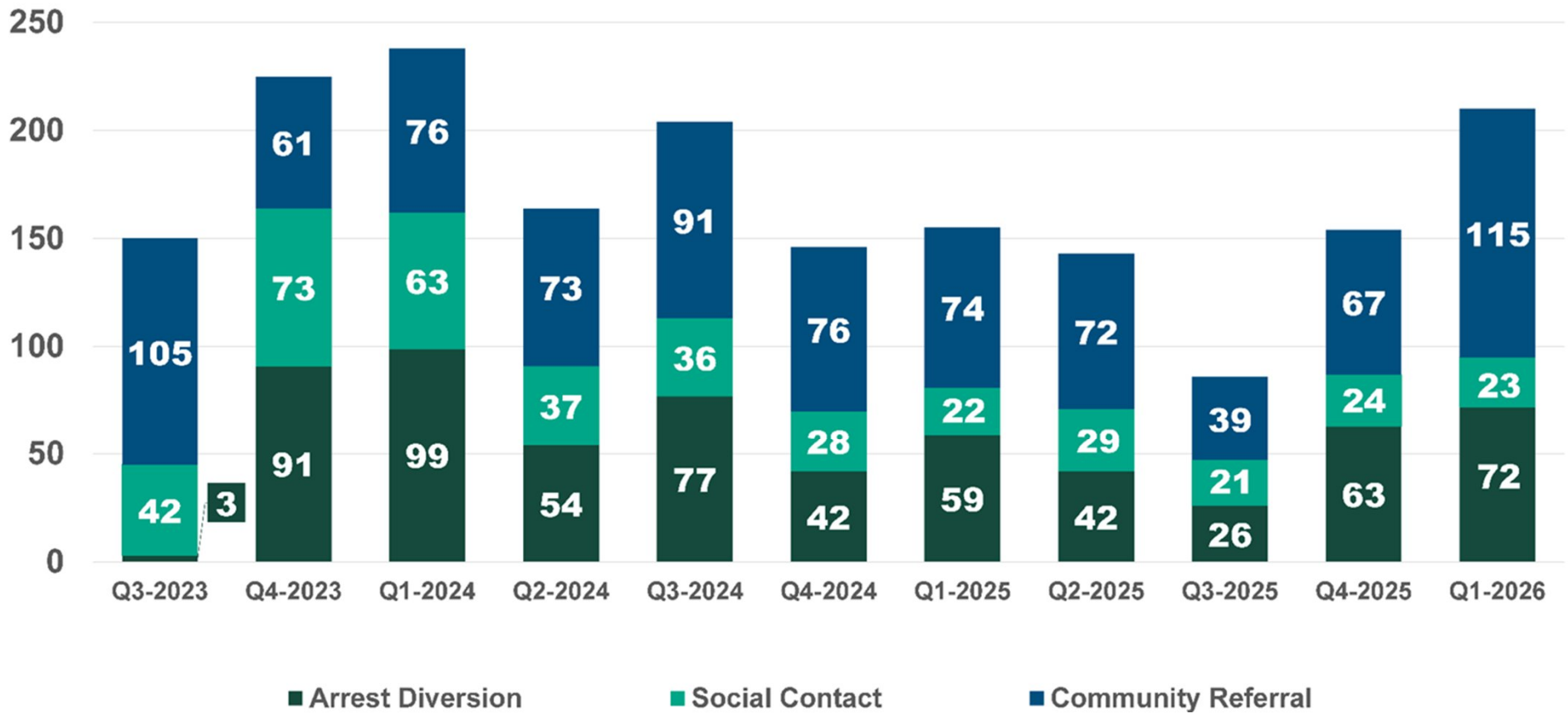
(Referrals Approved for CoLEAD are Not Included In these figures)



*Note: includes handful of arrest diversions for other offenses

SEATTLE REFERRALS BY TYPE - Q3 2023 THRU Q1 2026

(Referrals Approved for CoLEAD are Not Included In these figures)



*Note: includes handful of arrest diversions for other offenses

Drug Ordinance & LEAD Utilization · 4/23/26



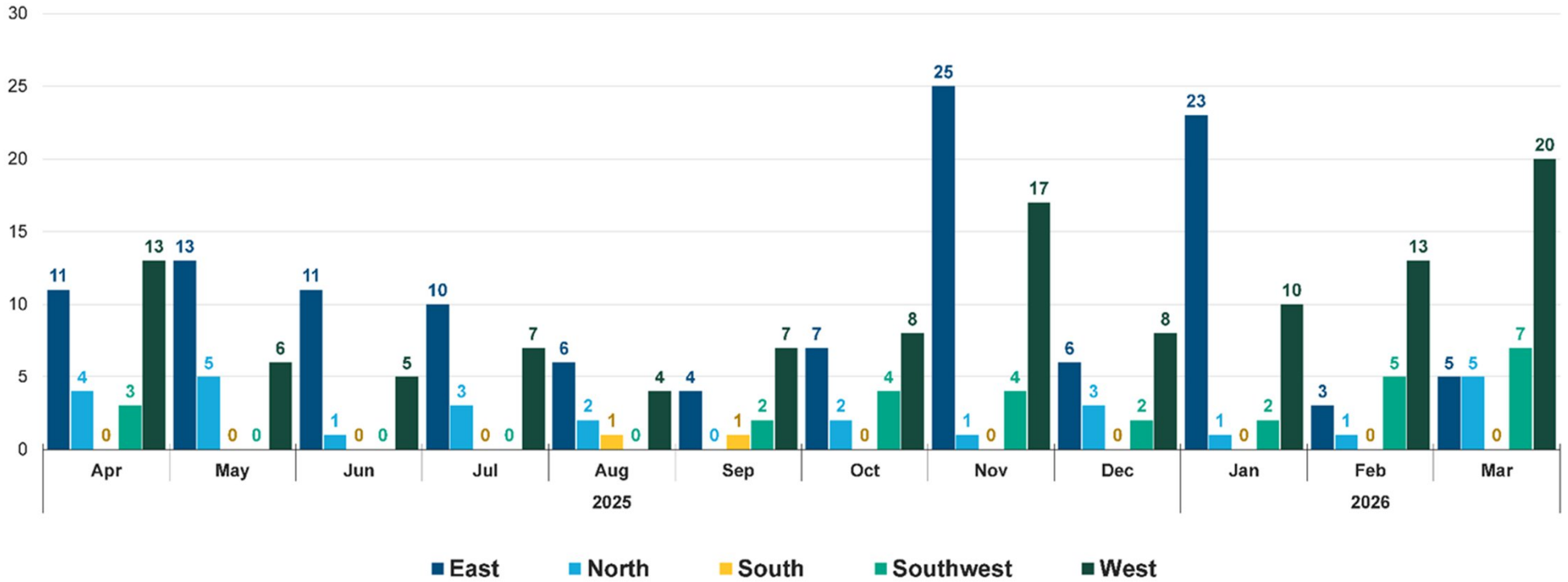
Projected 2026 referrals

- 380 SPD referrals (even without planned e-learning & roll call trainings)
 - 288 post-arrest referrals
 - 92 social contact referrals
- CARE referrals TDB (launching spring 2026)
- 460 community referrals* (includes pre-filing referrals from SCAO)
 - ... based on Q1 referral data (will not be a straight line in real life conditions)

*With a community awareness campaign, this number would be much higher—community referral sources have proven very capable of identifying people with chronic law violations related to behavioral health and poverty, without needed to route those through emergency response systems.



SEATTLE LAW ENFORCEMENT REFERRALS PER MONTH BY PRECINCT - APRIL 2025 THRU MARCH 2026



Oversight & Accountability

- LEAD is overseen by a governing body that includes Mayor, City Council Public Safety Chair, SPD Chief, City Attorney, King Co. Executive, King County Council Law & Justice Chair, Sheriff & King County Prosecutor
- City of Seattle funding has been audited annually by HSD including client file review, rigorous financial practices auditing, & contract compliance site visit
- LEAD identified by King County Auditor as unique among local diversion programs for its commitment to rigorous evaluation & use of data for systematic program improvement



2026 LEAD Re-boot Initiatives

[These steps could not be undertaken until stabilization funding was confirmed in 2025 budget process:]

- all-SPD e-learning module on LEAD to be released Spring 2026
- roll call trainings to resume (had been suspended due to lack of capacity to take new referrals)
- Operational Workgroups (case conferencing with officers) to recommence starting in North Precinct
- data integration project to debut (see next slide)



SPD & LEAD Data Integration Roadmap

Where we are and where we are headed...

| CURRENT STATE | MID-LATE-2026 | 2027? |
|---|---|---|
| <h2>Where We Are</h2> <p>Active</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● CAPABILITY Officers can see in real time basic demographic and case management information in SPD systems (pursuant to LEAD Release of Information)● METHOD On-demand pull request from LEAD database via API (Application Programming Interface).● GOAL Match LEAD records with Mark43 records to verify program participation. | <h2>Phase 2 Expansion</h2> <p>Preliminary Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● FOCUS Direct notifications to LEAD CRM from Mark43 dispatch about arrest diversions initiated in-field.● TECHNICAL Add common identifier to CRM linking subject records to LEAD participant records.● OBJECTIVE Align arrest diversion data between both systems, speed screening & intake and potentially auto-generate LEAD coversheet. | <h2>Phase 3</h2> <p>Integrated Case Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● VISION Direct notification of all police contact with any active LEAD participant.● OUTCOME Empowers participant case management team(s) to inform a quick and supportive response to upticks in police engagement.● IMPACT Continuity of care partnership with law enforcement. Quicker response for crisis stabilization. |

KEY TAKEAWAY Moving from siloed records to a unified, real-time data ecosystem — reducing officer admin burden and improving outcome visibility across the LEAD program.



**LAW ENFORCEMENT
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Let Everyone Advance with Dignity

LEAD services after the referral: a look at the cohort enrolled since ordinance adoption (October 2023)

APRIL 28, 2026

Cohort outcomes from the LEAD program · October 2023 – February 2026

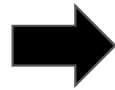
LEAD model of care

- LEAD recovery services model of care aligns with **SAMHSA recovery framework** pillars (a safe place to live, access to medical & behavioral health care, relationship/connection, & well-founded hope for a meaningful life)
- Long term case management + legal services + legal system coordination
- Long term case management itself is a core recovery services intervention under WA law; case managers are skilled in supporting behavior change through motivational interviewing, broker other benefits & services, provide housing navigation & legal system coordination, & connect to clinically appropriate treatment resources



SUBSTANTIVE MEETINGS AS BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHANGE

Substantive Meetings

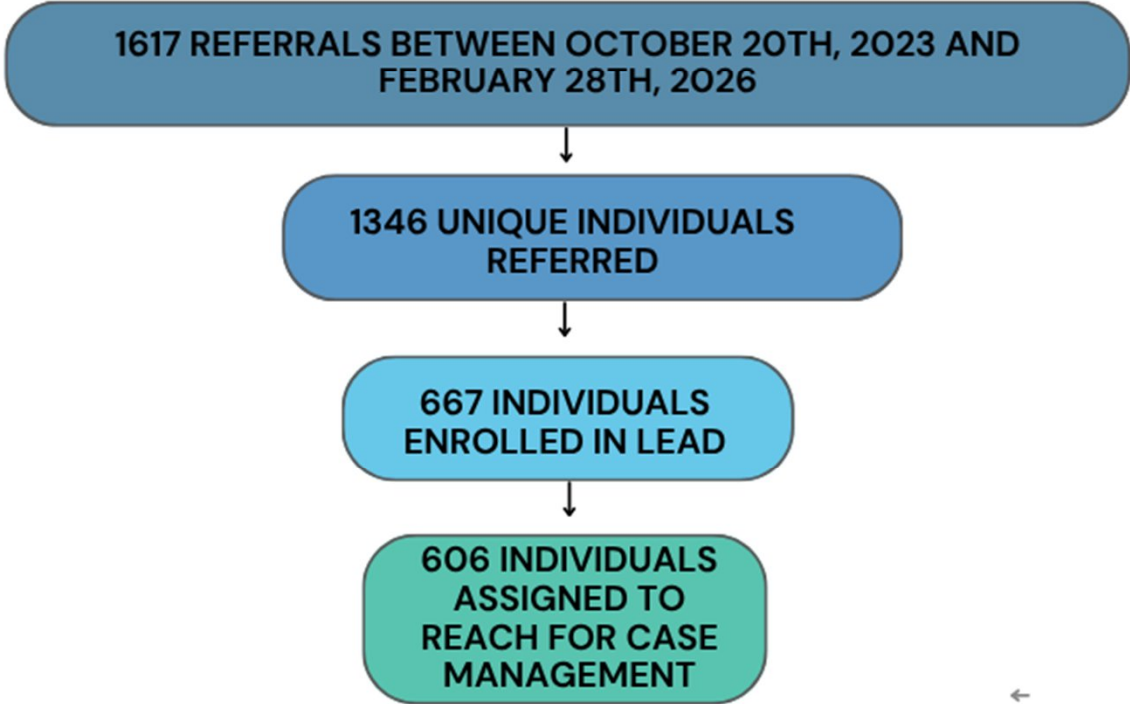


- “Substantive meetings” are encounters between LEAD clients & case managers working towards specific goals — not just a brief outreach encounter.
- In 2025, LEAD case managers conducted 33,056 substantive meetings with LEAD clients.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Independent UW researchers studied the LEAD care model & found that each meeting between a participant and case manager increases that person’s likelihood of gaining shelter or permanent supportive housing.
- The frequency & intentionality of substantive engagements generates meaningful change over time. Case managers use motivational interviewing techniques to advance change.

COHORT STUDY: how model of care has played out for referrals since October 2023 adoption of Seattle drug ordinance



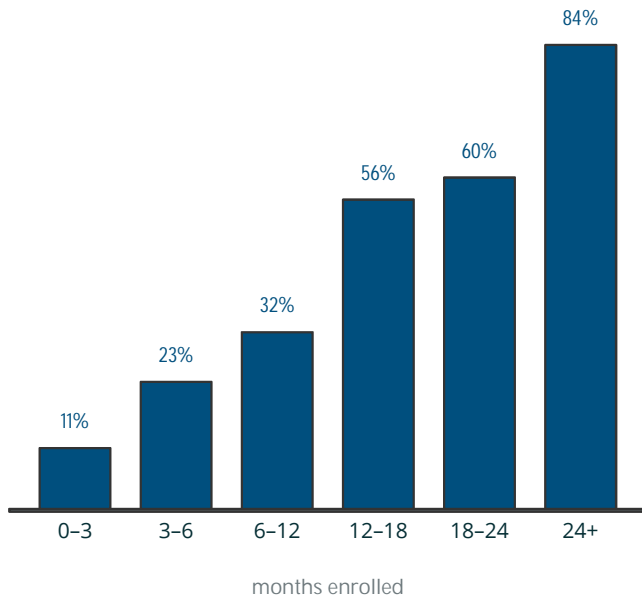
substantive engagement → meaningful recovery progress

| Type | <i>Substantive Meeting Working on Goals</i> | <i>Accomplishments</i> |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Any outcome | ~100% | 97% |
| Recovery (SUD) | ~94% | 35% |
| Legal related | ~93% | 44% |
| Housing/Shelter | ~98% | 32% |
| Mental Health | ~83% | 13% |
| Physical Health | ~85% | 14% |
| Financial | ~94% | 22% |

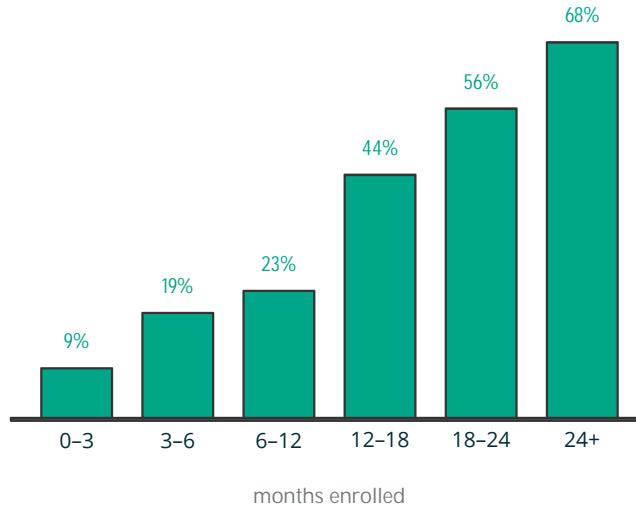


sustained exposure enhances progress

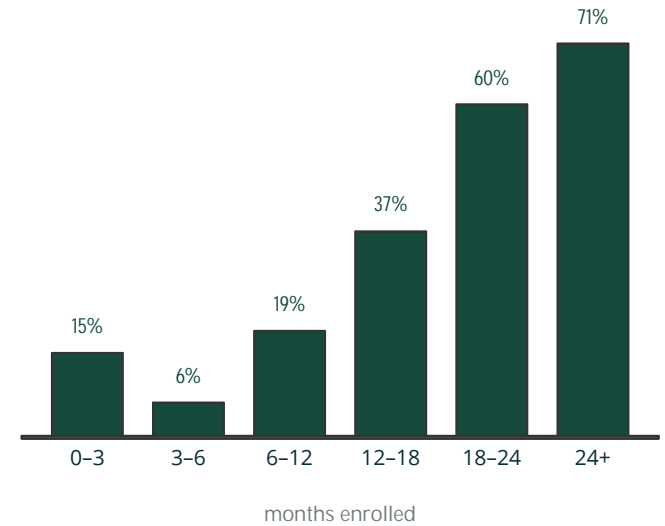
LEGAL



RECOVERY (SUD)



HOUSING



STATISTICAL EVIDENCE · Days enrolled is the strongest predictor of SUD engagement we've measured.

LOGISTIC REGRESSION (N = 606) · Time in program is a highly significant predictor of every domain, controlling for pathway, funding cycle, and re-referrals. Legal: $p = 1.0 \times 10^{-11}$. Recovery services: $p = 5.3 \times 10^{-6}$. Housing: $p = 3.8 \times 10^{-7}$.

Analysis prepared by Dr. Tim Thomas, CIDR Lab.

