



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 6, 2020

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Tucson Police Department Deflection Program**

Attached is an email my staff received addressed to the Tucson Mayor and City Council as well as City Manager regarding the Tucson Police Department (TPD) Deflection Program initiated on July 1, 2018. The primary goal of the program is to provide a treatment option in lieu of jail to individuals possessing a small amount of drugs or drug paraphernalia. The program has been successful and nationally recognized by the Bureau of Justice.

The statistics associated with the program from July 1, 2018 to December 10, 2019 indicates nearly 1,000 individuals were deflected from jail. More importantly, individuals needing treatment and social services support received those services in lieu of jail.

TPD is to be commended for this positive step in criminal justice system performance improvement.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c: Wendy Petersen, Assistant County Administrator for Justice and Law Enforcement

From: Chris Magnus <Chris.Magnus@tucsonaz.gov>

Sent: Thursday, January 2, 2020 12:39 PM

Subject: TPD Deflection Program Update

This message and sender come from outside Pima County. If you did not expect this message, proceed with caution. Verify the sender's identity before performing any action, such as clicking on a link or opening an attachment.

Dear Mayor, City Council Members, City Manager, and others:

The Tucson Police Department's Deflection Program was initiated on July 1, 2018, with its primary goal being to address misuse of opioids and other substances. TPD personnel work to identify individuals with substance misuse issues, encourage them to get treatment, and immediately facilitate transport to a treatment provider.

The goal of deflection is to break the cycle of *Drug-related Crime*→*Arrest*→*Jail*→*Release*→*Drug-related Crime* by getting individuals who possess small amounts of drugs or drug paraphernalia into treatment to address their underlying substance abuse disorder problems. These are not "drug dealers." The use of deflection is always discretionary for an officer, in part because not everyone caught up in this cycle is ready or willing to accept treatment.

TPD is one of only a comparatively small but growing number of police agencies throughout the U.S. that participate in a deflection/diversion program. These programs focus on treatment as a priority over arrest and incarceration.

Not surprisingly, there is still a fair amount of resistance and negativity associated with deflection programs within some police agencies. Even locally, a commander from another agency was recently heard proudly proclaiming that in his jurisdiction, "*Dopers go to jail!*" I recognize that it will take some time for members of the policing profession (as well as many members of the public) to realize that addiction is a disease.^[i]^[i] Whenever possible, we are better off addressing the disease of substance abuse disorder medically rather than through the criminal justice system. This is the goal of deflection.

TPD's deflection program has received national recognition and is one of six national learning sites designated by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. This designation funds other agencies from across the nation to visit Tucson and learn from our program.

Between July 1, 2018 to December 10, 2019:

- [953 people were deflected](#)
- [8 people were self-referred \(showed up at a police facility seeking help\)](#)
- [19 people were social referrals \(sought out a police officer or CSO in the field for help\)](#)
- [After a six-month evaluation of the program was conducted by U of A researchers in May 2019, it was noted 61% of the people offered deflection agreed to be deflected](#)

To illustrate the impact deflection is having on people in our community, I am sharing some encouraging stories from community members who were deflected:

- Ann was deflected in November 2018, when she was 30 weeks pregnant. She was engaged in medication-assisted treatment for her opioid use disorder 6 months+. As a result, she has reunited with her parents and her son. Her note to deflecting officer:
I just want to say thank you and because of you I was able to get off of the streets and go home to my parents....I have been clean and now have a relationship with my son again....I have been coming to CODAC every day. Thank you again, you changed my life tremendously.
- Cindy was deflected in December 2018, and has been engaged in medication-assisted treatment for her opioid use disorder 5 months+. Her note to deflecting officer:
Just wanted to thank you for changing and saving my life!
- Laura was deflected in April 2019, and has been engaged in medication-assisted treatment for her opioid use disorder 1 month+. Her note to deflecting officer:
Thank you for referring me to the diversionary program. I am going on 3 weeks clean from heroin. I don't think I could have done this without this program.

Racial and ethnic disparities in arrest and incarceration rates have historically existed in our country. In our analysis of the deflection data, we are observing some similar racial and ethnic disparities. This is a chronic and systemic societal problem that is not a reflection on individual officers. We are simply asking officers to be aware of and take these disparities into consideration.

The link below is used to train our officers about how simple the CODAC intake process is related to deflection: <https://arizona.box.com/shared/static/xbmjzjb3s5im3hywatmcnywgho303cm.mp4>.

I continue to be impressed that so many of our officers are embracing the deflection program and changing lives. If you have any questions about this program, please feel free to contact me or Field Services Bureau Assistant Chief Kevin Hall (kevin.hall@tucsonaz.gov)

Happy New Year!

Chief Chris Magnus

[i][i] From the National Institute of Drug Abuse: *"Addiction is defined as a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences. It is considered a brain disorder, because it involves functional changes to brain circuits involved in reward, stress, and self-control. . . Addiction is a lot like other diseases, such as heart disease. Both disrupt the normal, healthy functioning of an organ in the body, both have serious harmful effects, and both are, in many cases, preventable and treatable. If left untreated, they can last a lifetime and may lead to death."*