



Center for  
Law and Justice

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**Albany County Awarded \$1.26 Million to Expand Albany LEAD**

Albany County has been awarded \$1.26 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to support the Albany Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (Albany LEAD) program by expanding existing services, launching a new street-based clinical treatment initiative, and evaluating LEAD's work to date.

"Our nation is at a crossroads when it comes to mental health, addiction treatment and policing, and Albany County's LEAD program is serving as a template for others to follow. I want to thank the DOJ for providing this funding for our innovative program that has already provided smart alternatives to incarceration and new outcomes for hundreds of those in need of assistance," said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy. "This latest grant builds on previous support that we've received from our federal and state partners, and it will allow us to continue analyzing our performance and expanding so we can have an even greater impact on our community."

Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan said, "I commend Albany County for securing \$1.26 million in vital funding to ensure the continued success of the Albany LEAD program. When the City of Albany launched LEAD in 2016, we were among the first cities in the country to commit to helping low level offenders struggling with addiction, poverty, homelessness, and mental health challenges find the services they need, rather than arresting them. In the six-plus years since, Albany LEAD has diverted more than 300 individuals and recently added a social contact referral program when no arrest is imminent. Thank you to President Biden and the U.S. Department of Justice for supporting our efforts to help even more people stay out of the criminal justice system and on a path to success."

"The award of the COSSAP grant to the Albany LEAD program partnership is persuasive recognition of the success and ongoing commitment to the program's goals and outcomes," said Anthony Capece, executive director of the Central District Management Association. "The partnership continues to look at ways to unite the community around the idea that crime prevention starts with a better set of resources for the community and a partnership with law enforcement that can work together to help stop crime and harm before it happens. From a business representative's perspective, connecting an individual to a LEAD case manager often can be more helpful than arrest and prosecution. This grant goes a long way to help ensure a more vital environment to operate a thriving community."

"LEAD holds promise for making needed reforms to our criminal legal system by reducing arrests," said Dr. Alice P. Green, Executive Director of the Center for Law and Justice. "The new funding for an independent evaluation will play an important role in assessing LEAD's effectiveness as we go forward. In addition, the new clinical treatment initiative can assist our community as we seek to address the lack of access to appropriate and culturally responsive mental health care."

“Off-ramps to involvement with the courts can be just as important as legal proceedings when seeking the best public safety outcomes, and best result for defendants in quality-of-life cases,” said Albany County District Attorney P. David Soares. “The success of the existing LEAD program in the City of Albany shows promise, and justifies expansion to serve even more residents in Albany County. The intersection of prosecution and social progress is often a topic of public debate, and LEAD shows that we can do both of these things at the same time.”

“Like many other communities across the country, Cohoes has been affected by opioid addiction and mental health issues in recent years,” said Cohoes Mayor Bill Keeler. “This administration has responded by fully funding our police department, equipping patrols with the anti-opioid nasal spray NarCan, and by implementing Emergency Medical Technician training of police officers. Expanding LEAD into our city is a natural next step in our efforts. Improved access to prevention, treatment and recovery support services through LEAD case managers can play an important role in further enhancing our response in these areas.”

“We are very encouraged to have the opportunity to work with other municipalities and Albany County in the LEAD partnership,” said Watervliet Mayor Charles Patricelli. “Many police calls are driven by mental illness, addiction, homelessness and poverty, and we need alternatives to traditional arrest and prosecution. We look forward to making LEAD a key part of that approach.”

The new federal funding is the second competitive grant Albany County has obtained for Albany LEAD through the Department of Justice’s Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Abuse Program. The new, three-year grant is expected to support the following initiatives:

- Additional case management capacity for LEAD in the City of Albany and other jurisdictions within Albany County (\$370,000);
- New, street-based clinical outreach and treatment to be developed in coordination with the Albany County Department of Mental Health (\$356,000);
- Independent evaluation under the direction of Dr. Tomoko Udo of the University at Albany’s School of Public Health (\$245,000);
- Project management for LEAD in newly added municipalities (\$156,000); and
- Expanded data analysis capacity across the Albany LEAD initiative to identify potential operational improvements and enhance accountability (\$120,000).

Albany LEAD, an alternative to the traditional criminal legal system, provides harm reduction-based case management for individuals who otherwise may be arrested for behaviors related to mental health, substance use, homelessness or poverty. Albany Police have diverted 308 individuals from arrest since the program’s third-in-the-nation implementation in Albany in 2016. Nine other individuals have been referred to LEAD through a new process, social contact referrals, which may be made in certain cases where no arrest is imminent. LEAD is governed by a Policy Coordinating Group including the Albany County District Attorney’s Office, Albany County Executive’s Office, Albany Mayor’s Office, Albany Police Department, Central District Management Association and The Center for Law and Justice.

Additional information about Albany LEAD is available at [www.albanylead.org](http://www.albanylead.org), and on Instagram and Facebook.

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