



ALBANY

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

2024

ALBANY LEAD

ANNUAL

REPORT



www.AlbanyLEAD.org

From the Project Management Team

We are proud to report over 500 people have been diverted or referred to Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) in Albany, Cohoes, and Watervliet since our initiatives began.

In 2024, the number of people served increased, and a new street-based clinical initiative was launched with the Albany County Department of Mental Health. Funding for LEAD came from various sources, including federal, state, and local (City of Albany and Albany County) support. Collaborations with the City of Albany, Albany Police Department, the Albany County Executive and multiple County departments, the Albany County District Attorney's office, Center for Law and Justice, and the Central Avenue Business Improvement District, were vital to increasing community engagement and addressing operational needs.

The case management team at Catholic Charities adopted a multi-disciplinary approach by adding a recovery peer navigator position and partnering closely with our new clinical team. Additionally, we worked closely with an evaluation team at the UAlbany College of Integrated Health Sciences to improve our data reporting capabilities.

LEAD recognizes and appreciates the importance of meaningful collaborations across service providers. This year we worked even more closely with other local agencies, partnering to meet people's needs effectively and efficiently. We look forward to continuing to build and grow together, demonstrating responsiveness to needs shared by those we serve and our community, in 2025.



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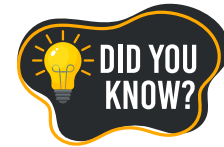


Robert Ward
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What is Albany LEAD?

Albany LEAD helps people who experience mental illness, substance use, poverty, or homelessness receive support rather than experiencing cycles of arrest, prosecution and incarceration related to those issues. LEAD case managers meet people where they are physically and metaphorically, addressing immediate and long-term needs. Case managers develop a care plan based on the person's goals and self-identified needs.

PATHWAYS INTO LEAD



LEAD now operates in the cities of Albany, Cohoes, and Watervliet in Albany County.



Dr. Alice P. Green was a founding member of Albany LEAD. After hearing about the Seattle LEAD initiative, she invited other city leaders to New York City to hear a presentation about the work.

Dr. Green remained an active and vocal member of LEAD until she passed away in August 2024. Her passion, goals, and dedication for this work live on, and we are proud to be one small part of her legacy.



Who is Involved in Albany LEAD?

Our Policy Coordinating Group guides the work of project managers and governs our initiative. Voting members of the group during 2024 included the following leaders and their designees:

Albany Mayor
Kathy M. Sheehan

Albany County Executive
Daniel P. McCoy

Albany County District Attorney
P. David Soares
Lee C. Kindlon (as of January 2025)

**Center for Law and Justice
Executive Director**
Dr. Alice P. Green
Ta-Sean Murdock (as of August 2024)

Albany Police Chief
Eric Hawkins
Brendan Cox (as of December 2024)

**Central District Management Association
Executive Director**
Anthony Capece

LEAD in Albany is staffed by two organizations:

- **Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services** (case management provider)
- **Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region** (project management and community engagement provider)

In addition, many agencies make up our Operational Work Group. We could not do our work without this amazing support. The group brainstorms, collaborates, and shares strategies to support clients twice a month. Regular members include:

- Albany County Department of Mental Health
- Albany County Department of Probation
- Albany County Department of Social Services
- Albany County District Attorney's Office
- Albany County Alternate Public Defender's Office
- Albany County Public Defender's Office
- Albany Police Department
- The Center for Law and Justice
- Joseph's House Outreach Van
- St. Catherine's Center for Children



Service Snapshot

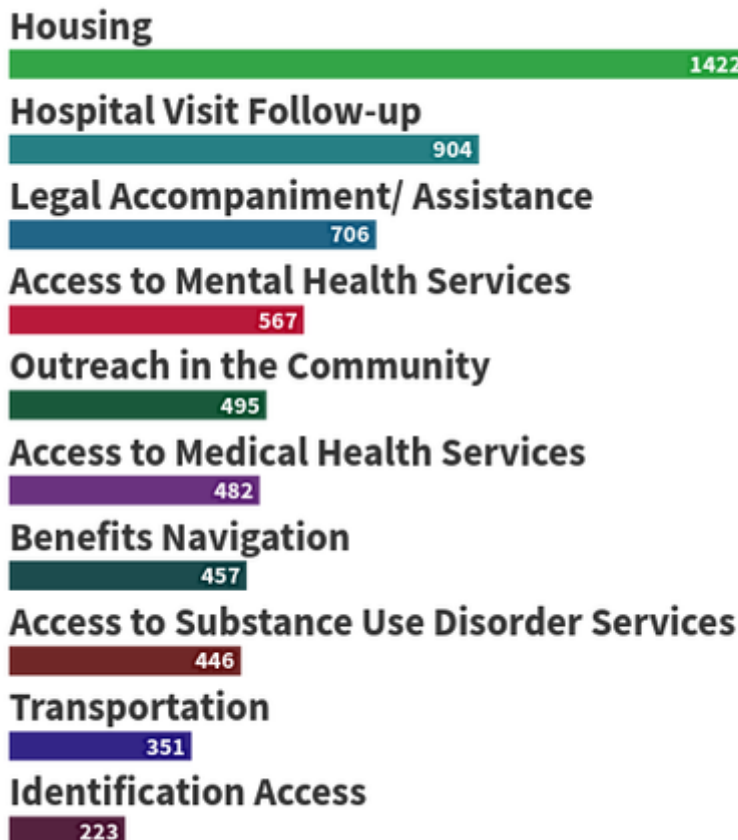
203
People
Engaged

In 2024, services to help clients find and maintain shelter and housing were by far the most common client contact type, followed by checking in after hospital visits, helping clients navigate legal proceedings, and connection to mental health services.

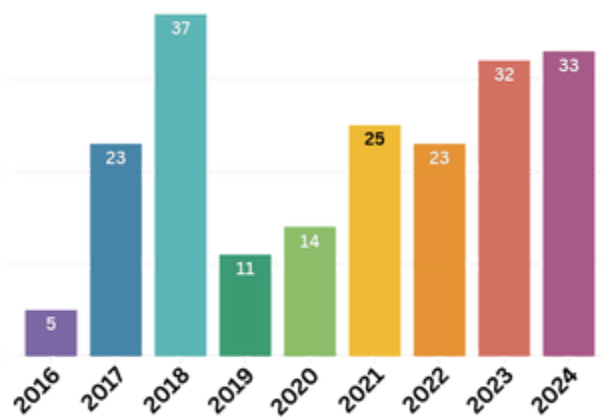


On average, each LEAD client received **34** service contacts. LEAD provides intensive services, not just referral.

Most Common Service Types, 2024



Initial year of engagement for Albany LEAD clients working with case management in 2024.



Once someone works with LEAD they can always return for additional services.



2024 Diversions and Referrals

46
people
newly
connected



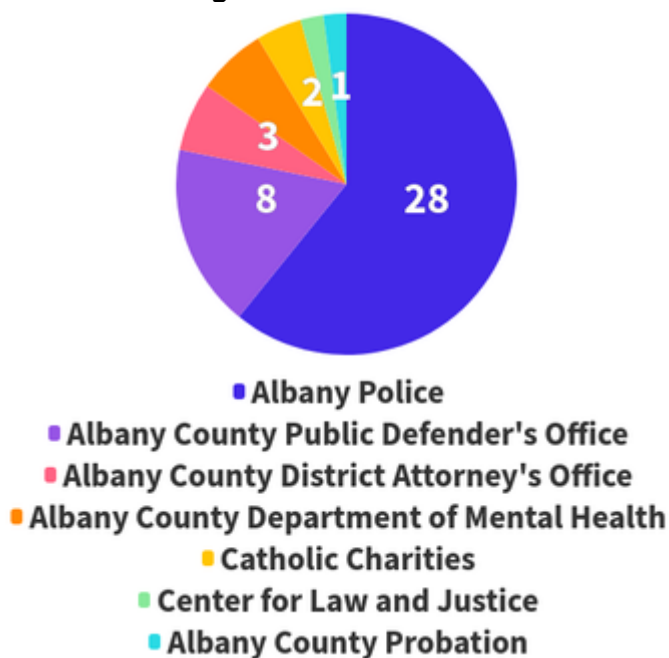
In 2024, a total of **46 people were newly offered LEAD services**: five people were diverted, and 41 people were referred. Diversions only come from Albany Police Department, and referrals can come from a number of offices.

2/3

of people who met with case managers for the first time in 2024 were still engaged at the end of the year.

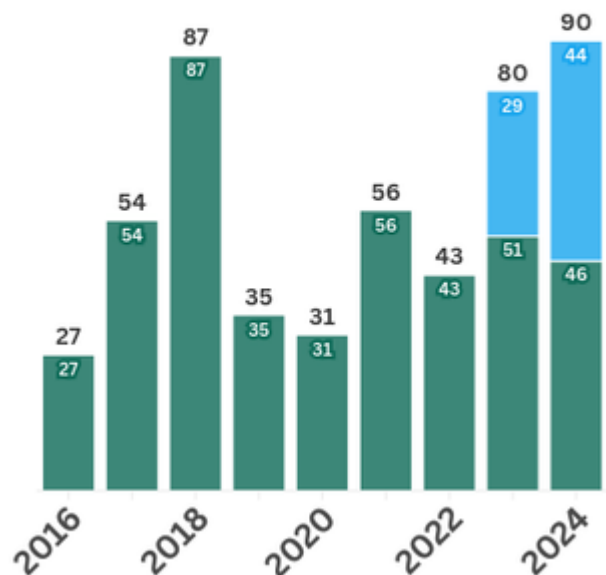
Current referral sources include the Albany Police Department, the Albany County District Attorney's Office, the Albany County Public Defender/Alternate Public Defender's Offices, the Albany County Department of Mental Health, the Albany County Probation Department, the Center for Law and Justice, and Catholic Charities.

Diversions and Referrals by Source, 2024



New Diversions/Referrals

■ Albany ■ Cohoes-Watervliet



Street-Based Clinical Launch

- Evidence-based therapy
- Medication management
- Person-centered, consistent outreach
- Low-barrier access to treatment
- Meeting people where they are

In 2024, LEAD and the Albany County Department of Mental Health launched our clinical initiative, funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The team is staffed by a full-time **Licensed Clinical Social Worker** and part-time **Doctor of Nursing Practice** prescriber working closely with our team of case managers and recovery peer navigator.

Number of People Engaged April-December 2024



17

Enrollment in the Albany County outpatient clinic: participated in the intake process or on-going treatment (therapeutic counseling, medication management, and additional supports)



4

Goal-oriented: therapeutic counseling without medication management



7

Initial Engagement: relationship-building and assessment



4

Additional people were outreached or offered connection but did not participate in services

32

people were outreached and/or served by the clinical team in 2024

One person served by this program was stuck in a multi-year cycle of incarceration and homelessness. They had not found success in sustaining independent housing for quite some time. At the end of 2024, after working extensively with LEAD, this person had remained in housing for six months and counting and was still actively participating in treatment.

These services have helped a number of people manage symptoms related to substance use and serious mental illness while they remained in the community, access housing they would not have otherwise qualified for, and improve their quality of life. It is clear that access to these services when and where people are ready for them addresses immediate needs and increases safety and stability.

Community Engagement

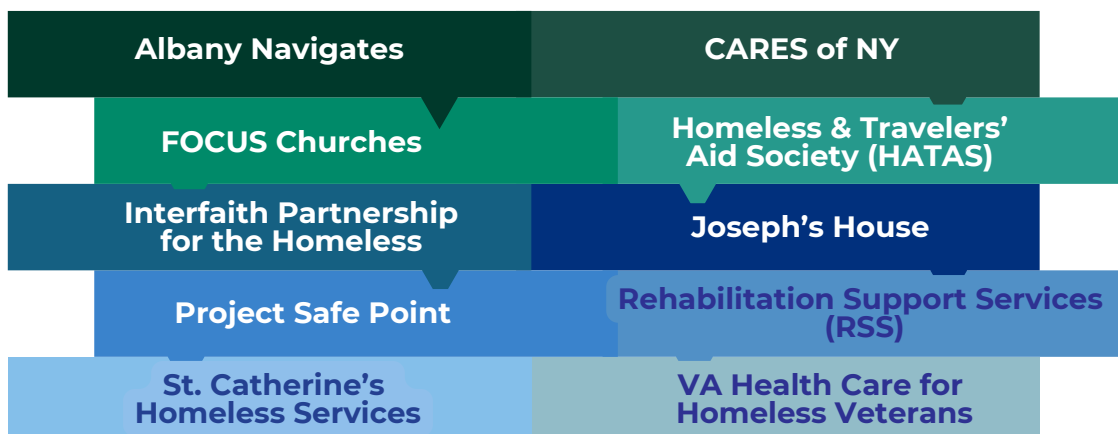
In 2024, our initiative developed a Community Engagement Handbook to guide our participation in community events. We focused on the neighborhoods of Arbor Hill, the South End, and West Hill, and the following goals:

- Share information about our work in an effort to increase diversions and referrals,
- Inform community members of their options,
- Uplift community members' voices and experience,
- Understand community members' goals for our work, and
- Receive feedback to influence our decision making.

We participated in events at National Night Out in the South End, the Arbor Hill Block Party, ALERT "Improve Your Quality of Life" events at South Mall Towers and Westview Homes, the Albany Public Library, Christ Church's Serve Albany Brunch, and more.

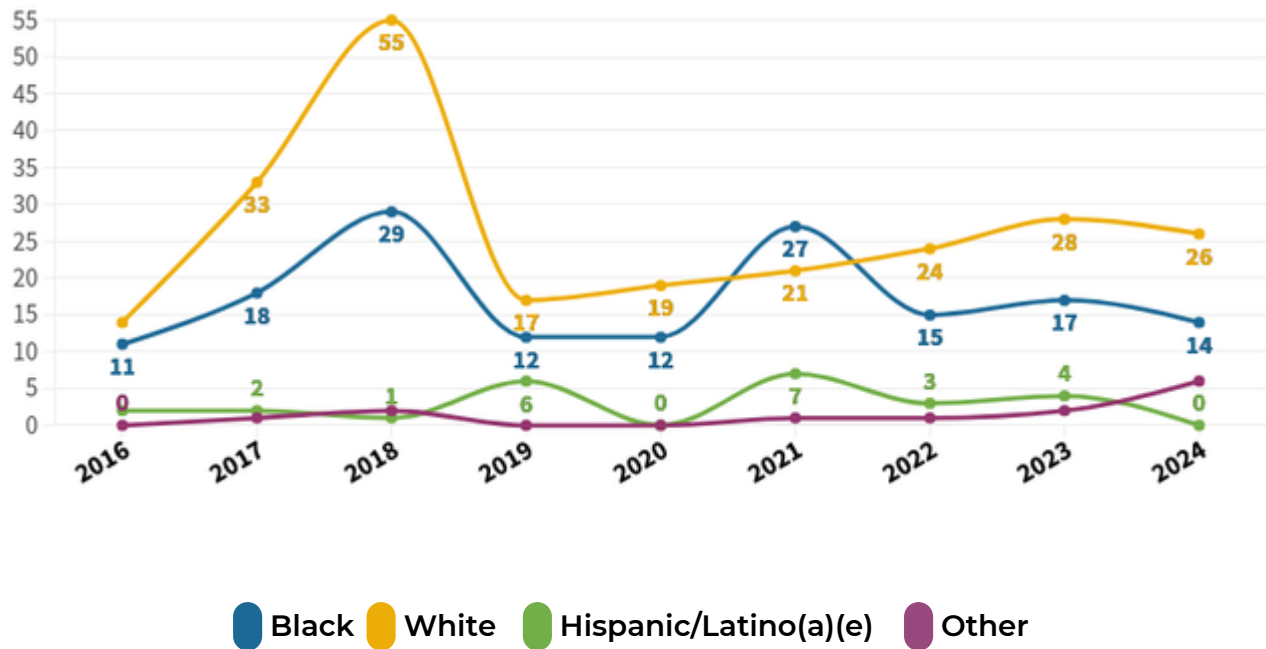


We cannot do this work alone and are grateful to all of our community partners. Below are some that we worked closely with in 2024.

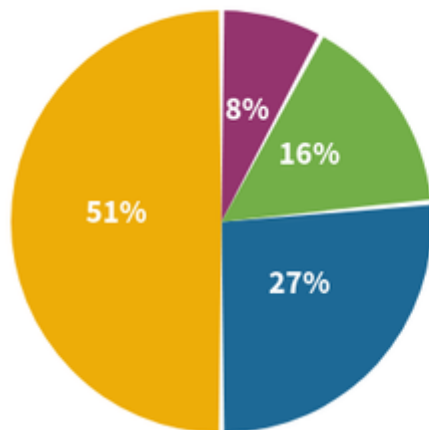


Diversions/Referrals Over Time

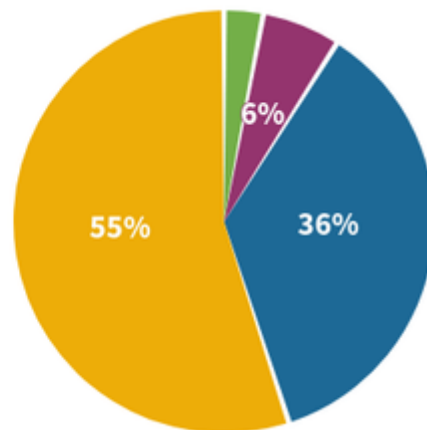
We track and regularly discuss the racial breakdown of people who are diverted and referred to LEAD. We recognize that people who are Black and brown are more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts, and therefore we want to ensure access to our services is provided in an equitable way.



**2024 Albany Census
(American Community Survey)**



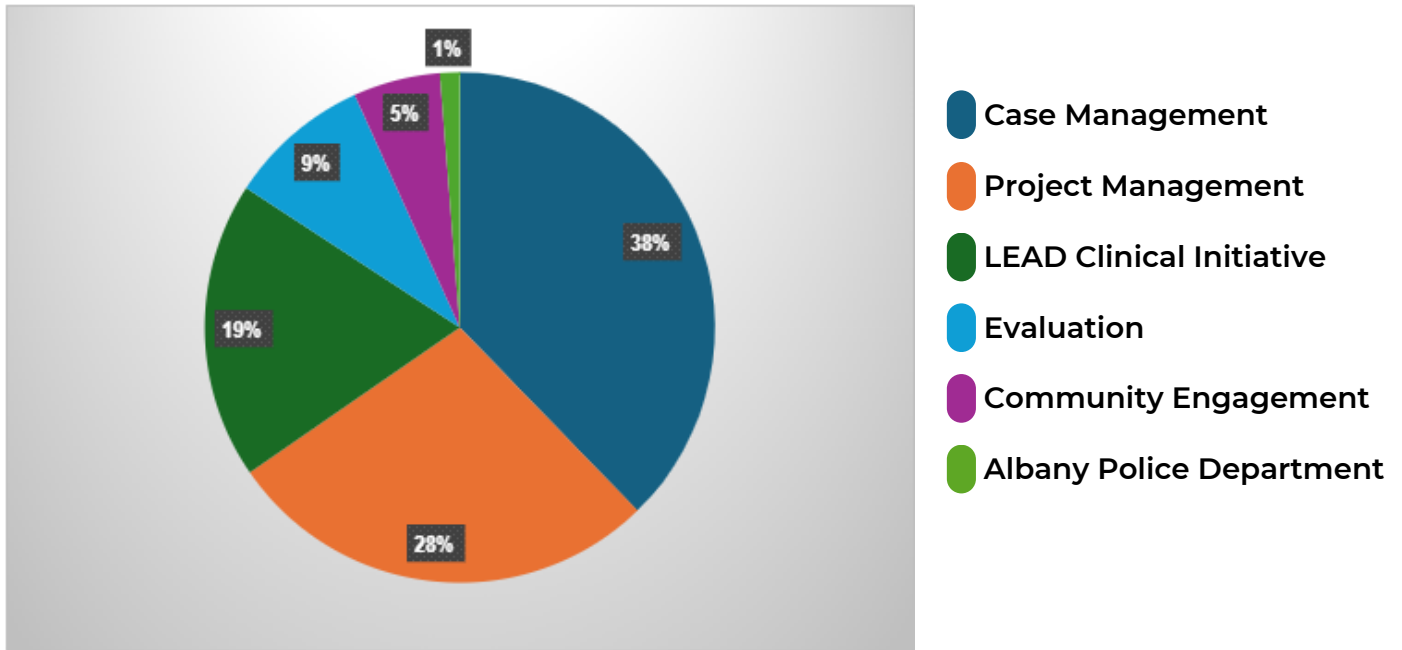
**Diversions and Referrals
Over Time**



Expenses and Resources

Albany LEAD Expenditures, 2024

Total: \$708,839; excludes in-kind spending



As shown above, expenditures for LEAD client services (case management and the new street-based clinical initiative) made up 57 percent of spending in 2024. Project management represented just more than one-quarter of the total, followed by independent evaluation, community engagement, and a part of the year's LEAD-related expenditures by the Albany Police Department.

Since its implementation in 2016, Albany LEAD has relied on a changing mix of time-limited resources. New York State Legislative Initiative funding secured by State Assemblymembers Patricia Fahy and John McDonald supported 45 percent of expenditures in 2024. Other important funding sources during the year included two major U.S. Department of Justice grants secured by Albany County; the City of Albany Community Development Block Grant program; Albany County Opioid Settlement Funds; and a New York State Health Department grant secured by Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services.

Project managers and the Policy Coordinating Group continue to seek sustainable funding to assure operation of LEAD for the long term.

Challenges and Future Directions

Challenges

In 2024, our initiative continued to struggle with **recruitment and retention** of case management staff. With support from Albany County's Opioid Settlement Funds we hired our first ever recovery peer specialist, working to make more of a multi-disciplinary team.

Case managers reported ongoing challenges to find **appropriate housing** for clients over the year. LEAD clients and case managers also see first-hand the impact of staffing and services limitations across the human services and health care sectors, which can result in difficulty obtaining needed help for clients.



Future Directions

Albany LEAD is still in need of a **sustainable funding source** to ensure we can continue our work for years to come. We hope to work more closely with relevant New York State offices in the future to form a coordinated statewide diversion movement.

In 2025, we will continue to fine tune our data collection and work on **independent evaluation** activities. The information gained will be used to further improve LEAD policies and practices.

LEAD's expanded footprint including the Cities of Albany, Cohoes and Watervliet recognizes that clients often move among jurisdictions, and services are needed throughout the Capital Region. Many individuals being served by LEAD and related programs in Albany County are from other areas where services are limited or nonexistent. Building more broad-based support for LEAD and other initiatives that address mental illness, substance use, homelessness and poverty in the context of our criminal justice system remains an important goal.



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