



San Francisco Department of Public Health

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**San Francisco's new diversion program will reduce incarceration
for substance abuse and mental illness
*Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) will improve community safety
and quality of life*
San Francisco is finalist for state grant**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO (March 31, 2017) – San Francisco is well on its way to adopting a new program to reduce the number of people with substance use disorder and mental illness who are incarcerated, by redirecting them into treatment before they are arrested. The Health Department, which is leading this effort, received preliminary notice of a \$5.9 million grant from the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to support the work.

San Francisco's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program (LEAD SF) is a pre-booking diversion program that is a collaboration between the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Police Department, BART Police, District Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff's Department, Adult Probation, and community partners Glide, Felton Institute and Drug Policy Alliance. LEAD SF will refer repeat, low-level drug offenders, at the earliest contact with law enforcement, to community-based health and social services as an alternative to jail and prosecution.

"LEAD will improve community safety and quality of life, open another pathway to treatment, and decrease incarceration due to substance abuse or mental illness," said Health Director **Barbara Garcia**.

"This program will help redirect people to much-needed treatment programs," said Mayor **Edwin M. Lee**. "By intervening at the earliest possible point, police officers and public health providers will partner to improve community safety and quality of life for all our residents."

LEAD SF is based on a successful Seattle program by the same name. It will begin in two parts of the city with a large number of drug-possession arrests: the Tenderloin/Civic Center BART Station and the Mission/16th Street BART Station.

The Work Group to Re-envision the Jail Replacement Project expressed support for this program. Garcia, Sheriff **Vicki Hennessy** and **Roma Guy** chaired the 34-member work group of criminal justice and mental health experts from the city and the community. The group met from January to October 2016 to identify investments in mental health and capital projects needed to uphold public safety and better serve at-risk individuals.

The San Francisco Sentencing Commission also has heard expert testimony on LEAD program design, implementation and the feasibility of replicating this model program in San Francisco. Formalized law enforcement assisted pre-booking diversion is an evidence based and fiscally prudent alternative to incarceration.

LEAD SF participants will have access to the city's extensive system of care that includes comprehensive behavioral health services (substance use disorder and mental health treatment), physical health services, transitional housing, employment and other relevant services. Eligible individuals encountered by SFPD or BART PD will be diverted to a LEAD SF intake site, where they will work with a case manager to establish an individualized treatment plan.

"We look forward to utilizing LEAD as a 21st Century Policing tool," said San Francisco Police Chief **William Scott**. "In keeping with our goal of full implementation of Department of Justice reforms, this diversion program enables us to further collaborate with city agencies on key community issues."

"This new partnership will improve cleanliness and safety at Civic Center and 16th Street/Mission BART stations by helping move those suffering from addiction or mental illness out of our stations and into a clinic or program where they can get the help they need," said BART's Acting Police Chief **Jeff Jennings**.

"LEAD SF is a thoughtful approach to ensure that communities are safe and that those struggling with addiction are directed toward the help they need. We are hopeful that this collaborative effort will reduce recidivism, thereby reducing drug related crime in San Francisco." said District Attorney **George Gascón**.

LEAD SF builds on San Francisco's leadership in developing programs that offer an alternative to incarceration. Such programs include Drug Court and Behavioral Health Court, and the Community Justice Center. The BSCC will vote on the LEAD grant award April 20.

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