



Center for
Law and Justice

CONTACT

Brendan Cox
Director, Policing Strategies, LEAD Support Bureau
bcox@leadbureau.org; 518-229-5711

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City, County, and Community Leaders Align with Albany LEAD® to Expand Care vs. Punishment Programs

Albany, New York – In a collaboration that represents community, government, and law enforcement, Albany Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (Albany LEAD) is at the center of renewed efforts to repair racial disparities in policing and the judicial system. The Albany County District Attorney's Office, Albany County Executive's Office, Albany County Sheriff's Office, Albany Police Department, Central District Management Association, City of Albany Office of the Mayor and The Center for Law and Justice have come together to support LEAD, an evidence-based public safety and public health intervention program.

Albany LEAD began operations in April 2016. It is a collaboration of public agencies, nonprofit organizations and community members who work to reduce arrest and prosecution by providing long-term, community-based case management to better address unlawful conduct that can stem from mental illness, substance use, homelessness or extreme poverty. Since its inception, 287 individuals have been diverted from arrest and instead offered the opportunity to work with case managers from Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services who connect clients to essential services.

Reducing racial disparities, improving lives, reducing the costs of incarceration and building safer communities are all documented outcomes of linking individuals to solutions versus ineffective and costly incarceration.

The Albany LEAD initiative has been advancing three strategic improvements this year. First, the collaborative has strengthened its operational capacity by hiring two co-project managers, Jennie Huling and Robert Ward (biographies below). Their roles are to ensure operational adherence to goals and to facilitate coordination among participating agencies. They recently hosted a stakeholder retreat where a cross section of policy level stakeholders, operational personnel and community leadership members were able to share their visions of the future of Albany LEAD.

Second, the collaborative is expanding case management services and community engagement outreach via an infusion of \$150,000 from the LEAD Support Bureau and a \$97,050 grant from

the New York State Office of Community Renewal awarded earlier this month. These are in addition to the \$898,062 grant from the Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) that was awarded last year which is allowing Albany LEAD to continue to grow. Finally, Albany LEAD is working to address the racial disparities in diversions and to improve reporting, transparency and accountability to stakeholders by developing more robust data analysis, planning for detailed program evaluation, and implementing an overall communications plan. Newly expanded communications initiatives will include social media, monthly updates, more detailed quarterly reports, and a formal annual report.

The joint goal of all members of the collaborative is to build on the momentum to make Albany LEAD as effective as possible by identifying further operational improvements and considering potential policy changes to give more individuals the opportunity to obtain critically needed services through the program.

The Community Leadership Team (CLT) works in conjunction with the Center for Law and Justice to provide the community and its stakeholders opportunities for feedback and accountability. The CLT has been working to expand outreach and grow its membership. This is a key area of importance for Albany LEAD as community involvement, transparency and accountability are key aspects of a successful LEAD initiative.

The Albany LEAD initiative is advancing the collective call to strengthen the Albany community by implementing evidence-based strategies to better address the challenges associated with substance use disorder, mental illness and extreme poverty.

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Albany LEAD's 2021 Second Quarter Arrests and Diversions Report: To access a copy of the report, visit <https://www.albanyny.gov/366/Law-Enforcement-Assisted-Diversion-LEAD>.

Jennie Huling, Director of Operations, Community Engagement and Client Services: Jennie Huling identifies as a queer woman of color and has worked to advocate for marginalized populations for her entire career. Her background in systems work has fueled her passion for developing and evaluating social programs. She began her career in 2008 as an advocate for victims and survivors of intimate partner violence with Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency. There, Huling worked closely with law enforcement, courts, housing providers, social services and other related service providers. In 2013, she transitioned into a statewide role, working for the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, where she trained child welfare and child protective services staff. Most recently, she helped to roll out programming and training for mental health providers with the New York State Office of Mental Health. Huling holds a master's degree in community psychology from the Sage Colleges of Albany and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Wells College in Aurora, New York.

Robert Ward, Director of Policy, Research, Development and Expansion: Before joining Albany LEAD in 2021, Robert Ward worked as New York State Deputy Comptroller for Budget and Policy Analysis. Previously, he was Deputy Director of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute

of Government, the public policy arm of the State University of New York. He has also worked as a newspaper reporter, legislative analyst and research director for the Business Council of New York State. He is the author of *New York State Government*, the leading text on state and local government in the Empire State. Ward has served for more than 25 years as a board leader and direct-service volunteer for Albany-based nonprofits serving individuals who are experiencing homelessness, mental illness, addiction, and poverty. Over the past decade, he has volunteered in prison ministry at one of New York's maximum-security correctional facilities. He is currently a board member with Feed Albany, Capital Region Sponsor-a-Scholar and the Albany Torch Club. He earned his bachelor's degree from Syracuse University.