Co-LEAD: adapting LEAD for the COVID-19 crisis

Co-LEAD is a temporary adaptation of the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in Seattle and Burien, during the COVID-19 emergency period. “Co-” stands for both COVID and Co-Responder.

Co-LEAD responds to these realities:
> Local jails have implemented booking guidelines that preclude most bookings for non-violent and public order offenses
> Courts have already granted motions to release many individuals in order to reduce the population of local jails—yet many of those released are struggling to meet their basic needs. There are almost no legal income streams accessible to them, they often lack a location to shelter in place, and the normal (though inadequate) systems of support for people with behavioral health conditions who are living homeless are mostly functionally inaccessible.
> Police agencies have issued guidelines for officers/deputies to engage with many situations only at distance, due to COVID-19 transmission considerations, and are at a loss for a solution for some problematic situations without resources to address individuals’ basic needs.

In Co-LEAD, the Public Defender Association, the project manager for the classic LEAD program in Seattle/King County, is:

* deploying a temporary team of intensive outreach responders and case managers, along with medical care providers

* placing people identified by defense lawyers, prosecutors, jails and the courts as needing stabilization and support in the community, in temporary lodging in motels and hotels, whenever such a placement appears viable. Up to 200 hotel rooms will be secured, mostly in hotels that normally serve a traveling population that is not booking rooms due to COVID-19 restrictions

* addressing the basic needs of Co-LEAD participants, using gift cards, providing cell phones, access to food, sanitation supplies, and crisis management needs

* providing 24/7 on-call response to crisis needs

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