



# ALBANY LEAD



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

[www.AlbanyLEAD.org](http://www.AlbanyLEAD.org)



# From the Project Managers

Albany Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) has now completed seven years of work. During 2022, LEAD case managers engaged with a total of 181 clients utilizing a harm reduction approach to intensive case management. Included in this number were 26 new people Albany Police diverted from arrest. Under a second LEAD pathway piloted in August, 17 more people were offered LEAD services through social contact referrals (outside the context of a potential arrest) during the calendar year.

In helping clients address their needs and work toward their goals, LEAD works to reduce future arrests, prosecution and incarceration. While the initiative has helped many clients make life-changing progress, we continue to work on improving racial equity outcomes and evaluating overall effectiveness. A \$1.26 million federal grant received by Albany County on behalf of LEAD will support evaluation by the University at Albany's School of Public Health along with an innovative street-based treatment initiative, additional case management and expansion to jurisdictions beyond the City of Albany.

We see growing recognition that substance use, mental illness and homelessness require an emphasis on services, not arrests. LEAD is an important part of that new response.

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Photos by El-Wise Noisette



# 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 include the following leaders and their designees:

**Albany Mayor**  
**Kathy M. Sheehan**

**Albany County Executive**  
**Daniel P. McCoy**

**Albany County District Attorney**  
**P. David Soares**

**Center for Law and Justice**  
**Executive Director Dr. Alice P. Green**

**Albany Police Chief**  
**Eric Hawkins**

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

The Operational Work Group meets biweekly to discuss challenges LEAD clients are facing, as well as progress toward their goals. The group works to brainstorm, collaborate, and share strategies to support clients. This group consists of the following organizations:

- 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
- Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services
- The Center for Law and Justice
- St. Catherine's Center for Children

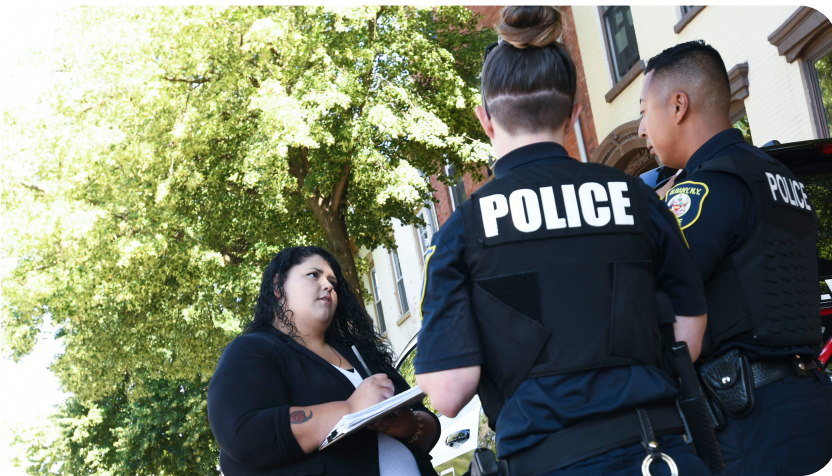


Members of our Operational Work Group pictured here include staff from St. Catherine's, Albany County Department of Social Services, and Catholic Charities

# What is Diversion to Albany LEAD?

Albany LEAD helps people who may experience mental illness, substance use, poverty, or homelessness avoid citation, arrest, prosecution and incarceration related to those issues.

Since 2016, Albany Police officers have avoided more than 300 arrests through diversion to Albany LEAD. An officer, arriving on the scene of an alleged violation that is low-level and non-violent, can assess the situation for appropriateness to divert to a LEAD case manager. In that case the possible charge will not be filed if the person meets with a case manager. Case managers, once receiving a diversion from an officer, work with a person on their own goals, from a harm reduction perspective. The goal of intervention is to help people meet the needs they define, with an overall goal of reducing future law enforcement contact.



During a diversion, Albany Police officers connect people to LEAD case management staff instead of arresting or citing them





# What is a Social Contact Referral?

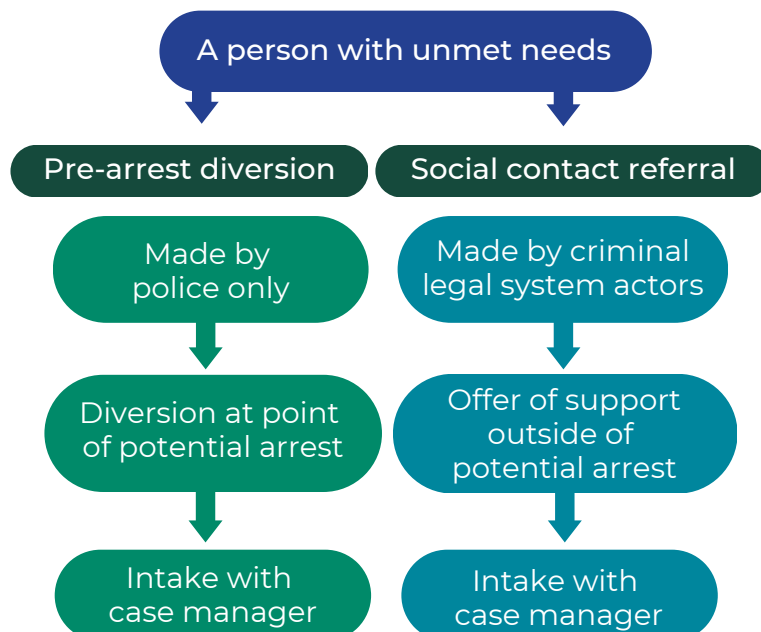
In 2022, Albany LEAD piloted an additional pathway for entry into LEAD, social contact referral. This pathway allows officers and others in the criminal legal system (prosecutors, public defenders, judges, and probation officers) to make referrals for case management services without a potential charge or arrest. Referrals are intended to engage people who have already had multiple contacts with law enforcement, and to offer support to those who are disproportionately engaged in the criminal legal system including Black people, people of color, and those who appear to need support for LEAD-related conditions.

This policy change was discussed at great length on both policy and operational levels as it would be a major change for the initiative. Project managers heard from community members who were concerned that Albany LEAD would lose our focus on diversion away from arrest, and from those who believed there should be another pathway to engage people outside of a stressful arrest situation, and to reach people who had been arrested but really were in need of services. We continue to track data on both pathways and look forward to independent evaluation on the effectiveness of each approach.



Members of our Operational Work Group pictured here include an APD officer, project manager, Assistant District Attorney, and staff member of the Center for Law and Justice

## PATHWAYS INTO LEAD





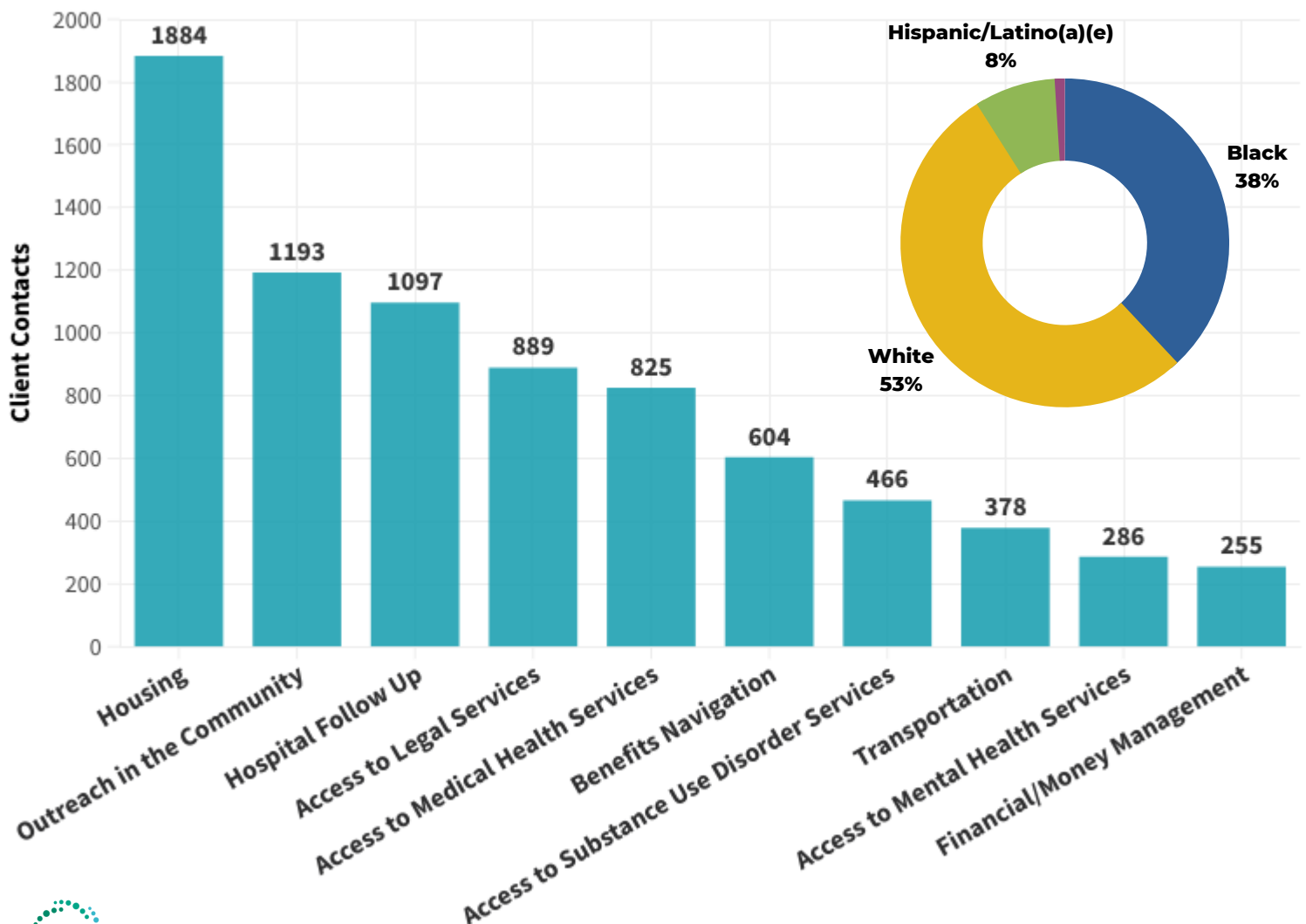
# Client Services

**181**  
**People**  
**Engaged**

During 2022, case management staff worked with 181 people. Over the course of the year, services related to housing were the most common, followed by case managers outreaching clients in the community, as clients are often unhoused and may not have regular access to phones or to mail.

*Our LEAD staff go above and beyond to make sure clients receive the services and support they need. Case Managers help clients with goals like **navigating the bus system** to get to **medical appointments**, establishing **SNAP** benefits, accessing substance use and mental health **treatment**, and completing **housing** applications. LEAD staff are dedicated, caring, and strong advocates who provide respectful services honoring each client's dignity.*

*-Candace Ellis, Executive Director, Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services*



# The Impact of Trauma

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Many clients come to us having experienced trauma at some point in their lives. Most have experienced being unsheltered, are unstably housed and/or have lived in extreme poverty.

Many Albany LEAD clients come to us having suffered trauma at some point in their lives. For example, most have experienced being unsheltered, are unstably housed when they begin working with us, and/or have lived in extreme poverty. LEAD clients have had contact with law enforcement, often including incarceration. They may have lived with various forms of trauma, including racism, stigma, and adverse childhood experiences. A majority of LEAD clients deal with mental illness and/or substance use, which are disproportionately common among individuals who have experienced trauma.

LEAD case managers apply a "Housing First" model to their case management when a client shares one of their goals is to find housing. This means that we recognize it is very difficult to participate in treatment, follow mandates, or work toward other goals when you do not know where you will sleep at night, where your next meal is coming from, or if you will be safe where you find shelter.

As shown on our Client Services page, a great deal of time and work goes into helping clients search, apply, and prepare for housing. Case managers also work with clients on obtaining legal incomes, identification, and other foundational needs that often facilitate additional goals such as connection to medical, mental health, and substance use treatment, jobs, educational goals, or anything else a client wants to work toward. Given the long-term nature of many individuals' needs, LEAD is there to work with clients as long as they wish to engage.





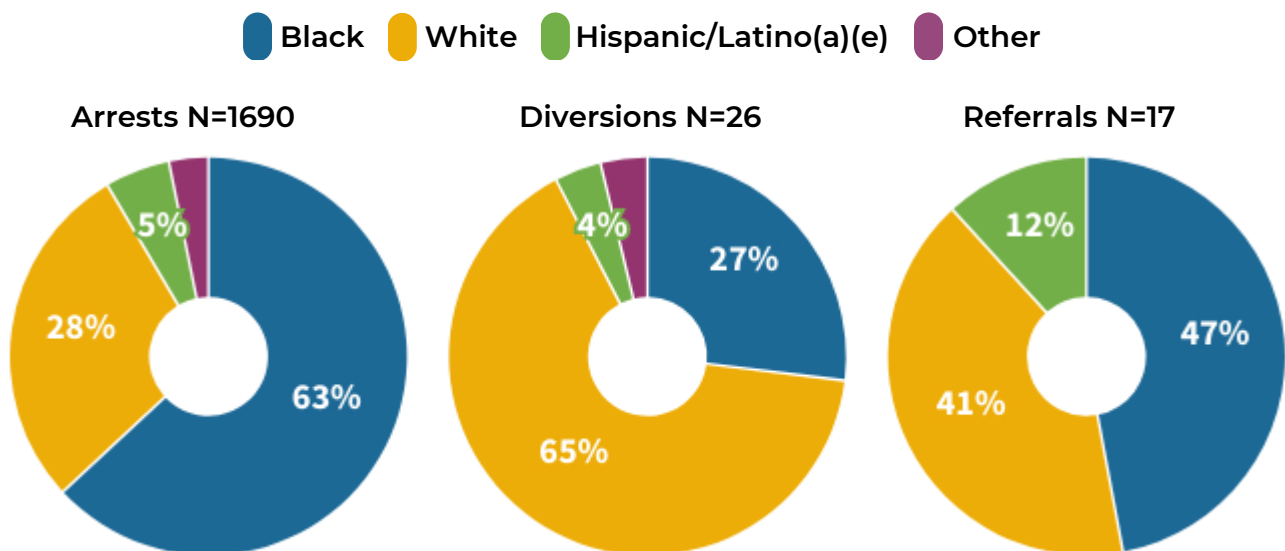
# 2022 Arrests, Diversions, and Diversion Rate

Note: Arrests in this report relate only to Albany Police Department. Other law enforcement agencies operate in the City, including the Albany County Sheriff's Office and the State Police. These agencies do not provide diversion as an alternative to arrest.

| Race/ Ethnicity        | Arrests     | Eligible Arrests | Diversions | % of Arrests Diverted | % of Eligible Arrests Diverted |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Black                  | 1066        | 69               | 7          | 0.7%                  | 9%                             |
| White                  | 480         | 57               | 17         | 3.4%                  | 23%                            |
| Hispanic/ Latino(a)(e) | 90          | 5                | 1          | 1.1%                  | 17%                            |
| Other                  | 54          | 5                | 1          | 1.8%                  | 17%                            |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>1690</b> | <b>136</b>       | <b>26</b>  | <b>1.5%</b>           | <b>16%</b>                     |

Most arrests are not eligible for LEAD diversion, which is limited to certain lower-level charges. Overall, approximately 1 in 6 LEAD-eligible charges were diverted in 2022. In some cases, diversion was not allowed due to past convictions on certain higher-level charges, a victim's refusal to agree to diversion or for other policy reasons; in other cases, officer discretion may have resulted in arrest rather than diversion.

Among "eligible" charges, the diversion rate for Black individuals was less than half that for white individuals. Internal and independent evaluators continue to analyze arrest and diversion data and explore the potential for additional policy and operational changes to advance racial equity outcomes, as detailed later in this report.



# Data and Evaluation

In 2022, Albany LEAD made further strides in data collection and analysis:

- Our multi-disciplinary Data and Evaluation Committee continued to analyze ways to improve data collection, analysis and reporting;
- Catholic Charities implemented a new client database that has increased our reporting capabilities and is expected to result in further enhancements in 2023;
- Project Managers participated in a nationwide collection of LEAD sites and experts to discuss data strategies;
- Our quarterly reports were redesigned starting with the Q3 2022 report to increase readability and accessibility;
- An evaluation of Albany LEAD was the focus of Adam Vose-O'Neal's PhD dissertation work at Brandeis University; and
- Dr. Tomoko Udo of the University at Albany School of Public Health worked with the initiative to assess data needs for an upcoming three-year evaluation she will be coordinating.



Dr. Tomoko Udo and members of her evaluation team regularly participate in our Data and Evaluation sub-committee meetings





# Albany Police Department and LEAD Communication

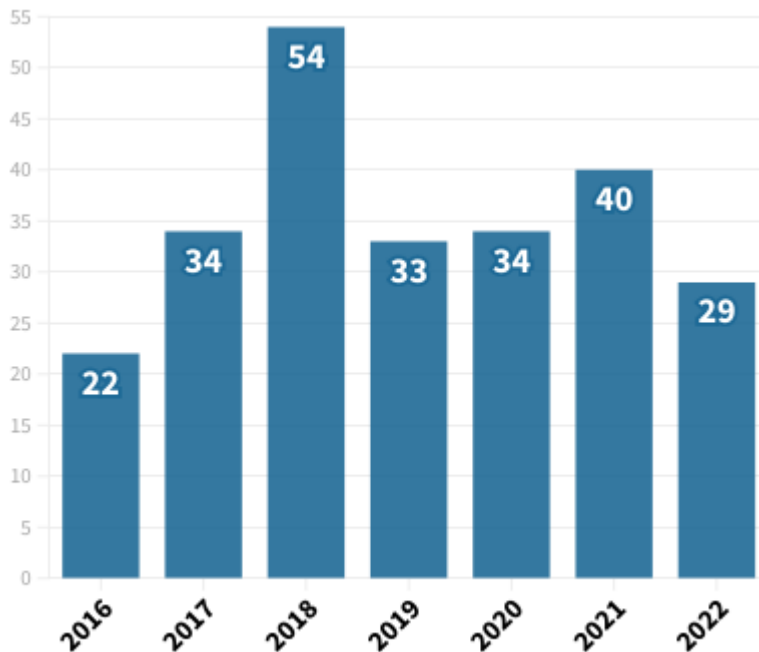
Albany LEAD communicates with APD in many ways:

- **Academy training:** During every APD Academy, recruits spend half a day learning about harm reduction and their role in making diversions and referrals to Albany LEAD.
- **Roll call trainings:** Project managers and case management staff also periodically appear at beginning of shift roll call meetings to remind patrol officers about diversion and referral through Albany LEAD and to share updates.
- **Quarterly Communicator:** In every quarter of 2022, an "APD Communicator" was sent to officers providing information about making diversions and referrals, highlighting specific charges that could be diverted, and sharing client stories.



APD sub-committee members present at an APD Academy training

## Number of Officers Participating in Diversion/ Referral



While the APD LEAD sub-committee of supervisors and officers focuses much of their time on LEAD, all officers may make LEAD diversions and referrals, and many do so in each year. However, we saw fewer officers participating in diversions during 2022. While we may not know all of the reasons we do know that APD was understaffed during the year, and working on recruitment.

We also learned, through some preliminary evaluation results, that officers were likely to find our diversion process and eligibility criteria confusing. Project managers worked with APD and with our Policy Coordinating Group to address these challenges. Work toward this end will continue in 2023.

# Working Toward Racial Equity

## ALBANY LEAD STRATEGIES TO GROW LEAD AND INCREASE RACIAL EQUITY 2022

### Data

- Reviewed diversion and arrest data quarterly

### Training

- Presented to APD training academy

### Communications

- Annual report released

### Policy Review

- Held sub-committee meetings to review eligibility criteria

### Communications

- Launched Albany LEAD website
- Launched Albany LEAD social media
- Developed stakeholder flyer

### Policy Changes

- Policy group approved updates to pre-arrest eligibility criteria
- Attended roll call trainings at APD to introduce social contact referrals

**Q1  
Jan-  
March**

### Communications

- Developed quarterly APD Communicator (sent all four quarters)

### Outreach

- Attended local BID meetings,
- Conducted business outreach with the Center for Law and Justice, APD, and Catholic Charities

### Outreach

- Met with 12 other organizations and attended two tabling events

### Process Review

- Met with the APD sub-committee to discuss documentation and process for diversion and referral

### Policy

- Finalized social contact policy

### Process

- Piloted social contact referrals with APD
- Developed simplified LEAD criteria/process business cards for APD

**Q2  
April-  
June**

**Q3  
July-  
Sept**

**Q4  
Oct-  
Dec**

During 2022, the initiative employed a number of new strategies in order to increase engagement in Albany LEAD more broadly, and racial equity in diversions and referrals more specifically.

We focused on four areas in service of this goal:

- **outreach,**
- **communications,**
- **policy review/revision, and**
- **process review/revision.**

Some of these changes were not implemented until the end of the year, such as simplified eligibility criteria, and the addition of a newly divertible charge, Criminal Mischief 3rd.

Additional strategies identified for 2023 include increased outreach and tabling events, and more regular reporting of year-to-date racial breakdowns of diversions and referrals.



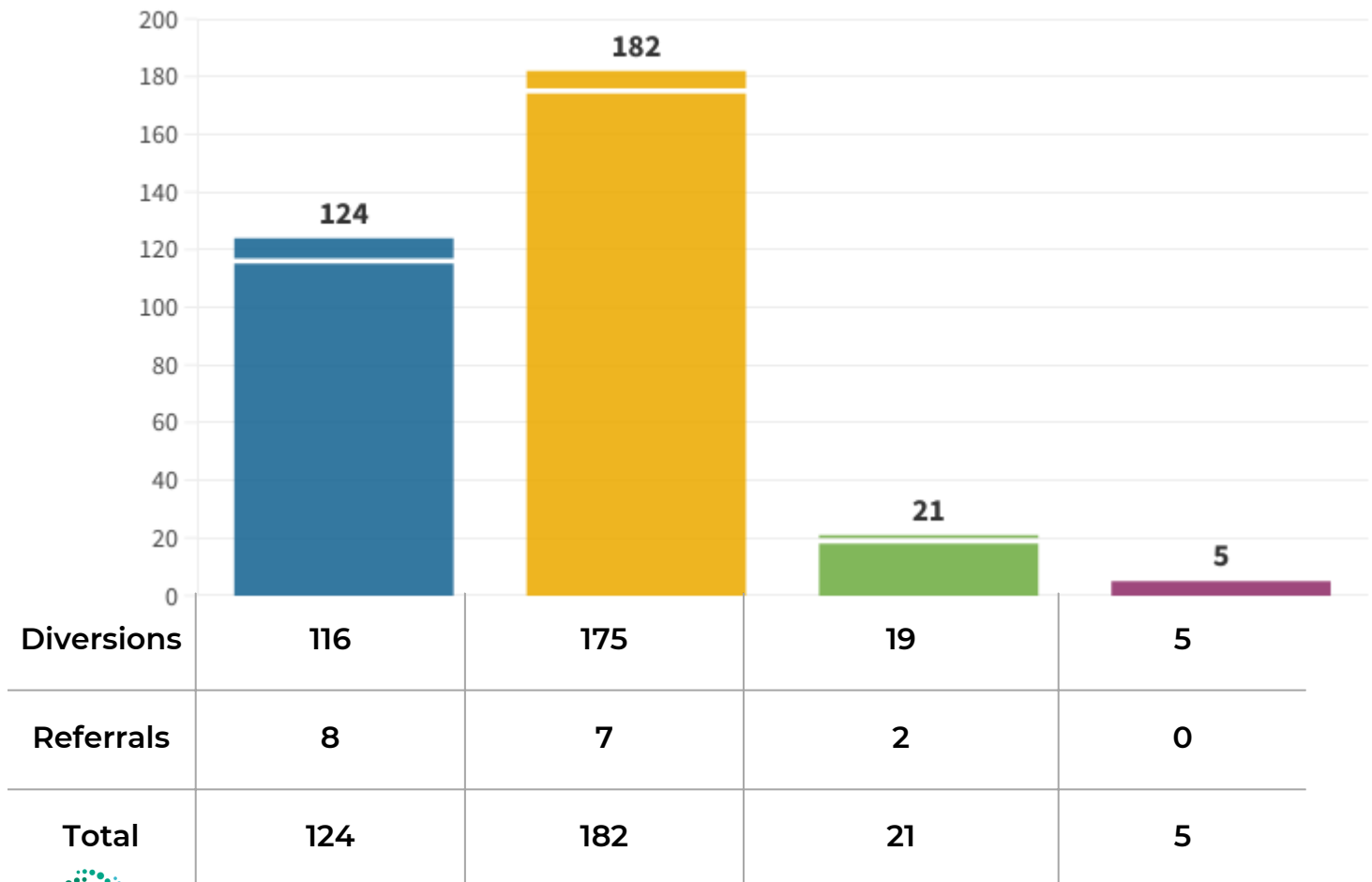
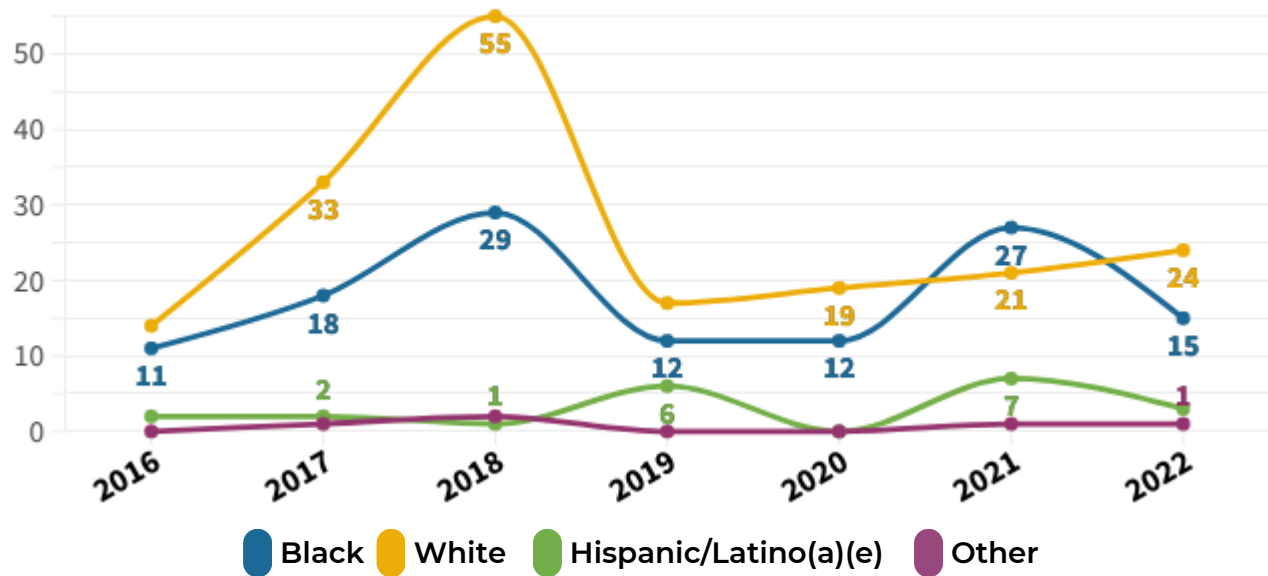
Examples of new communication strategies from Albany LEAD to APD





# Diversions/Referrals Over Time

We track, and regularly discuss, the racial breakdown of people who are diverted and referred to LEAD. Our goal is to engage a similar proportion of those who are arrested in receiving LEAD services. We continue to strive toward this goal.

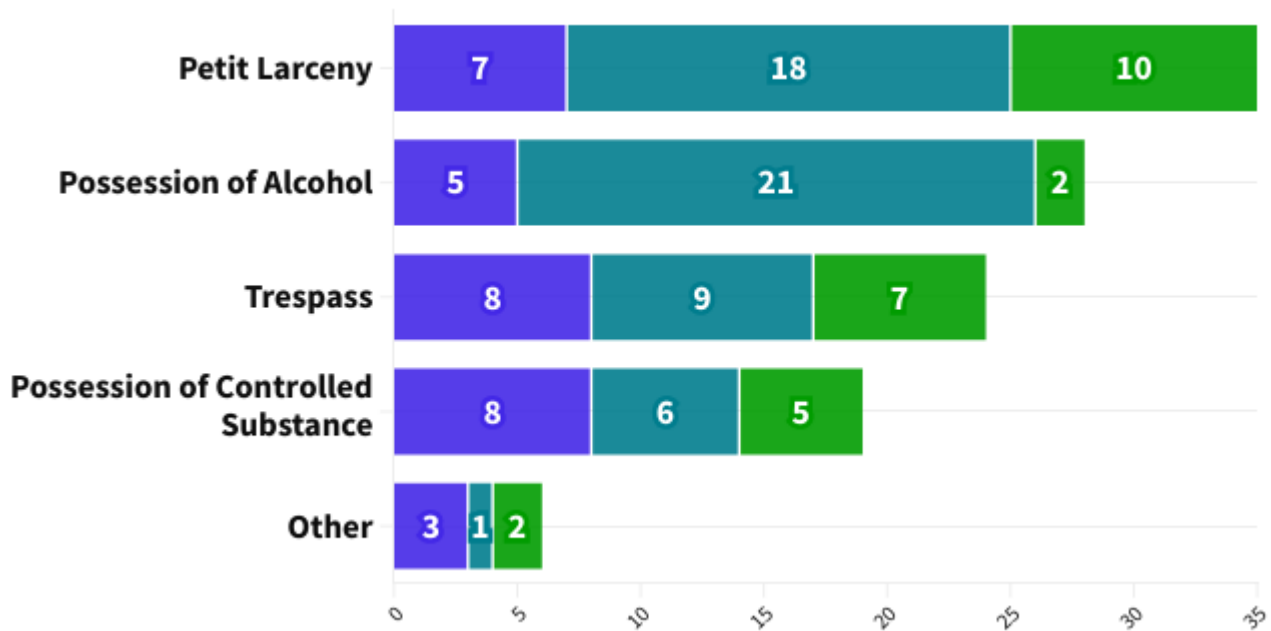


# Diverted Charges

A few charges comprise most of the diversions to Albany LEAD over the past three years: **Petit Larceny, Possession of Alcohol, Trespass, and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance**. In 2021, we saw an increase of diversions on Possession of Alcohol, which dropped off again in 2022. In 2022, we highlighted charges of Petit Larceny (theft) and Trespass (being somewhere without permission) to APD in our quarterly communicator. There appear to be additional opportunities for diversion on these charges as they may be related to unmet needs, and could represent a good opportunity for case management intervention.

## Types of Charges Diverted:

2020, 2021, 2022



“I'm so proud of myself I'm crying. And I need to thank Diana for telling me to stay active, because this is such a great feeling...”

A longstanding client of Albany LEAD, originally diverted for Possession of a Controlled Substance, shared pride in the achievement of multiple goals, despite serious challenges



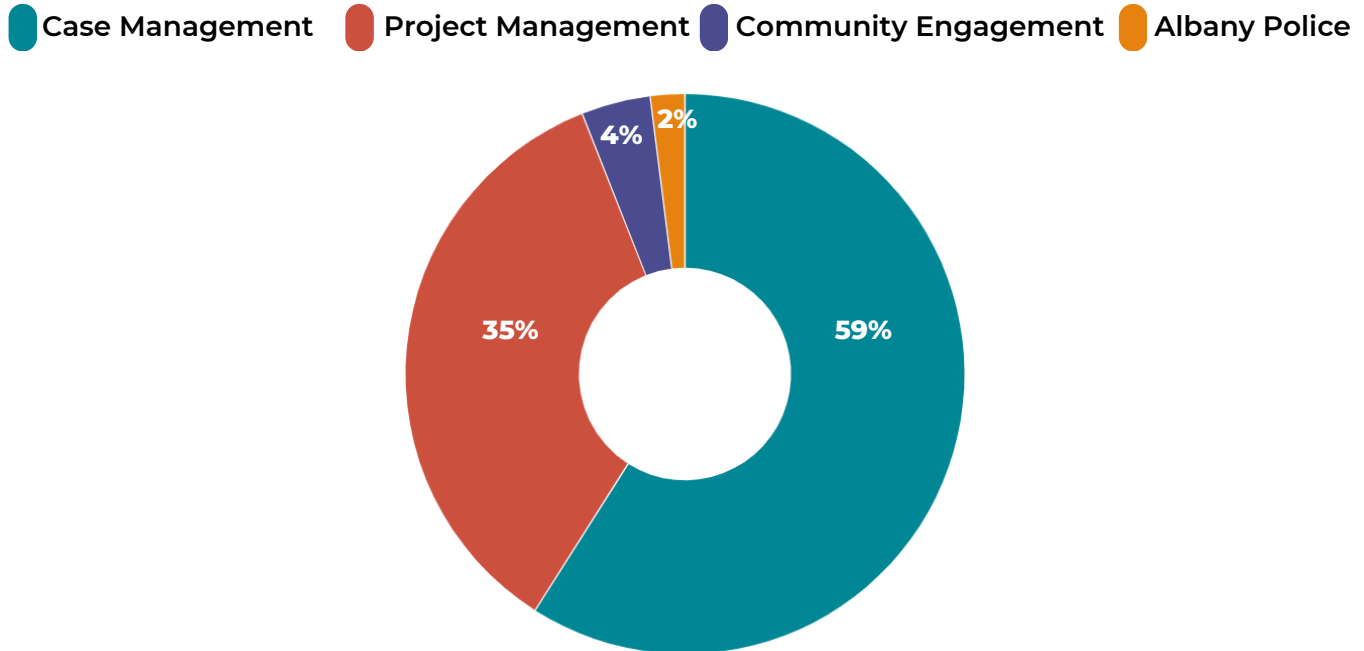
Diana Macy,  
Case Management Coordinator

# Expenses and Resources

Staff costs for case managers who work directly with LEAD clients to address their service needs made up more than half of the total \$598,253 in LEAD spending during 2022, followed by expenditures for project management.

## Albany LEAD Expenditures, 2022

(Excludes in-kind spending)



Albany LEAD has relied on a changing mix of federal grants, private grants, financial and in-kind support from the City of Albany and Albany County, as well as other temporary resources, since its implementation in 2016. Major resources supporting operations during 2022 included:

- A U.S. Department of Justice grant awarded to Albany County on behalf of LEAD;
- A private foundation grant through the LEAD Support Bureau;
- Community Development Block Grant/CARES Act funding to Albany County through New York State;
- Albany County budget funding to support LEAD project management;
- A New York State Department of Health- Office of Drug User Health grant to Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services; and
- A New York State legislative grant to Albany County on behalf of Albany LEAD, secured by Assembly Members Patricia Fahy and John McDonald.

A second major U.S. Justice Department grant for Albany LEAD, totaling \$1.26 million, was announced in September 2022. It will support a new street-based clinical treatment initiative; a three-year program of independent evaluation and enhanced data reporting; additional case management capacity in the City of Albany; and expansion of LEAD to new jurisdictions within Albany County.





# Current Challenges and Future Directions

## Challenges

In 2022, our initiative struggled with **staffing and recruitment** of new case management staff. We find the provision of harm reduction-based case management takes very special, dedicated people, and continue our efforts to add additional members to our team.

Case managers reported struggling to find **appropriate housing** for clients over the year. We saw two shelters close during the year, and safe, stable, affordable, permanent housing often lie out of reach for our clients. We will continue to uplift these needs with our stakeholder groups.

As our systemic approaches to the criminal legal system, mental health, substance use, and poverty evolve, our initiative sees value in returning to our **foundational goals and mission**.

We expect to engage our stakeholders in discussions around our shared vision in 2023.

Albany LEAD also seeks to **better understand community needs** related to our work, and to demonstrate responsiveness to those varied viewpoints and concerns. We will strive to increase our community engagement in the year ahead.



## Future Directions

Project managers spend a great deal of time considering **new partnerships** that will increase collaboration and the effectiveness of our work. We look forward to establishing more official ties with other community groups and organizations in the near future.

We are also looking forward to **engaging new jurisdictions** in Albany County in LEAD.

A three year federal grant will allow us to partner with the Department of Mental Health to add a **clinician to our team**, who will meet clients wherever they are to provide assessments and treatment that are necessary for housing access, to meet court mandates, and to help clients meet their own goals for their health and wellbeing.

We also look forward to receiving the first **results of evaluation** activities, and using the information gained to implement additional policy and practice changes.





**ALBANY**

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

