

DEFLECTION: Law Enforcement/First Responders, Treatment Services, and Communities Working Together for Public Safety and Public Health

Whether pre-arrest or pre-filing, deflection is a new partner for your police officers.

Over the past decade, the field of deflection has grown as law enforcement/first responders, behavioral health, and communities work together to address illegal drug use, reduce drug-related crime, and prevent overdose. Deflection connects people to treatment and other services helping to keep families together. More than 1,600 communities across the U.S. now are estimated to have a deflection initiative.

WHAT IS DEFLECTION?

Deflection is an early, “upstream” approach to addressing substance use issues before a crisis such as an overdose, arrest, or mental health episode takes place. Deflection offers a framework for community partners—including public safety (e.g., law enforcement, first responders) and public health (e.g., treatment, recovery support)—to collaborate in developing pathways to supportive services for people who use drugs. Deflection gets them on the road to recovery and reduces criminal behaviors.

WHO BENEFITS FROM DEFLECTION?

Deflection is advantageous for law enforcement/first responders, affected individuals, and communities at large, including taxpayers.

- **Law enforcement/first responders** benefit from the opportunity to build positive community relations by connecting people to services rather than arresting them or taking no action. Deflection also reduces the burden on police to address social issues, instead freeing up time for officers to focus on more serious offenses.
- **Individuals** and their family members benefit by getting treatment and services they need instead of becoming involved in the justice system.
- **Communities** benefit from a shared public safety and public health approach that reduces crime while promoting recovery and well-being. Taxpayers benefit too, as deflection offers a more cost-effective response to substance use-related issues.

BRINGING DEFLECTION TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Our team at TASC’s Center for Health and Justice has extensive experience helping states, counties, tribal communities, and urban, suburban, and rural municipalities develop their own deflection initiatives. To learn more, or to discuss how deflection might work for your community, contact Jac Charlier (jcharlier@tasc.org) or Carey Deacon (cdeacon@tasc.org).

ABOUT TASC’S CENTER FOR HEALTH AND JUSTICE (CHJ)

TASC’s Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) is a national leader in developing real-world policy and practice solutions at the intersection of justice and behavioral health. We partner with government bodies, justice systems, service providers, and communities to help develop practical, systemic strategies that effectively reduce arrest and recidivism, saving taxpayer funding, while decreasing substance use and related health issues. Contact us or visit our website to learn about our work in deflection, diversion, reentry, and more.



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