

DIVERSION NEWS



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESOURCE DEPARTMENT, ORANGE COUNTY, NC VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1 • FALL 2022

DIVERSION/DEFLECTION

The CJRD administers diversion and deflection programming for youth, first time adult offenders, people with behavioral health issues and prior criminal legal involvement, and people experiencing homelessness.

The purpose of deflection and diversion programs is to reduce the harm of legal system involvement for individuals by diverting them to therapeutic and educational resources through law enforcement and court system referrals.

Participants work with a diversion coordinator to complete a diversion plan that addresses accountability, harm reduction, collateral consequences of legal system involvement, and education and treatment or service referrals.

CJRD Diversion Programs include OC-PAD, YDP, SOHRAD, and the Lantern Project.

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OC-PAD serves adult first time offenders in certain misdemeanors.

www.orangecountync.gov/OCPAD

Desmond Frierson: dfrierson@orangecountync.gov

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The Lantern Project serves adults with substance use disorders and/or behavioral health issues.

www.orangecountync.gov/LanternProject

Megan Pickard: mpickard@orangecountync.gov

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The Youth Deflection Program (YDP) serves youth 17 and under who commit low level non-violent offenses.

www.orangecountync.gov/YDP

Tami Pfeifer: tpfeifer@orangecountync.gov

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Street Outreach, Harm Reduction, and Deflection (SOHRAD) works with people experiencing homelessness.

www.orangecountync.gov/SOHRAD

Tiffany Hall: tihall@orangecountync.gov



Orange County and CJRD staff at Overdose Awareness Day 2022

Cait Fenhagen, Landon Weaver, Andrew Overdon, Ian Goymer, Hannah Neukrug, Allison Zirkel, Macon Hollister, Tauheedah White, Erin McGovern, William Bullard, Sarah Holsapple, Kat Weis.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department (CJRD) is to safely reduce unnecessary pretrial incarceration, increase jail alternatives and diversion opportunities, reduce the number of individuals with behavioral health issues facing justice involvement and incarceration, reduce recidivism, reduce racial and economic disparities, and increase public safety by providing treatment and support for individuals involved in Orange County's criminal legal system.



Orange County Courthouse
106 E. Margaret Lane, Hillsborough, NC 27278
(919) 245-2303

www.orangecountync.gov/CJRD



ORANGE COUNTY PRE-ARREST DIVERSION (OC-PAD) PROGRAM

The purpose of the Orange County Pre-Arrest Diversion (OC-PAD) program is to provide law enforcement officers discretion to divert individuals who commit OC-PAD eligible misdemeanor offenses away from the criminal legal system to resources and programming that educate, address therapeutic needs, and reduce the harm of court involvement and the collateral consequences of having a public/criminal record.



For certain low-level misdemeanors, instead of issuing a criminal citation or making a formal arrest, the officer or district attorney will refer the individual to OC-PAD. The Diversion Coordinator meets with the referred individual to complete an intake assessment and prepare a diversion plan that includes programming tailored to address the behavior/actions of the alleged offense(s). For example, a diversion plan could include community service, mental health and/or substance use treatment, and educational and restorative justice opportunities.

Once the individual successfully completes the requirements of their diversion plan, their file is closed, charges are not filed and the matter is dismissed without any public record.

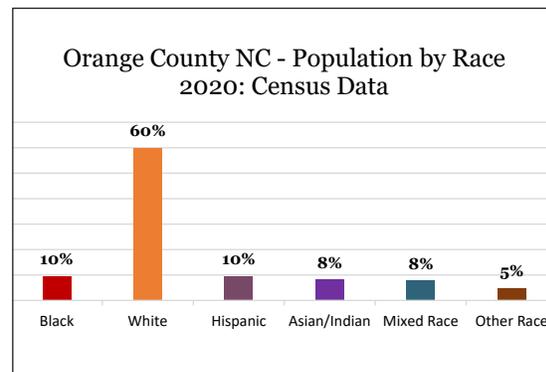
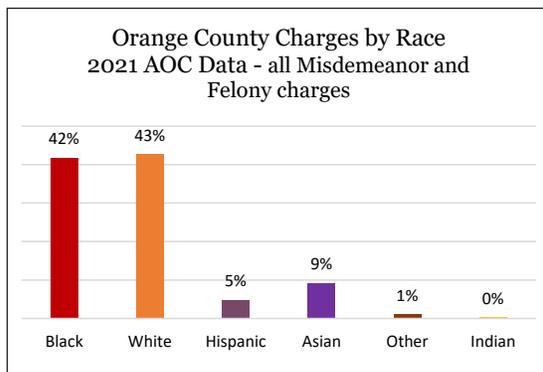
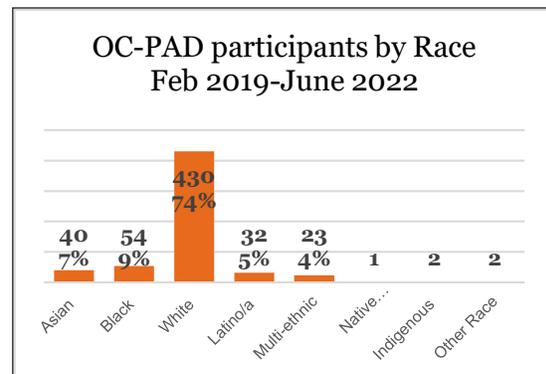
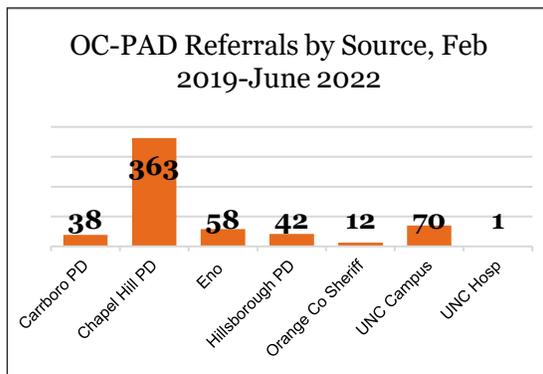
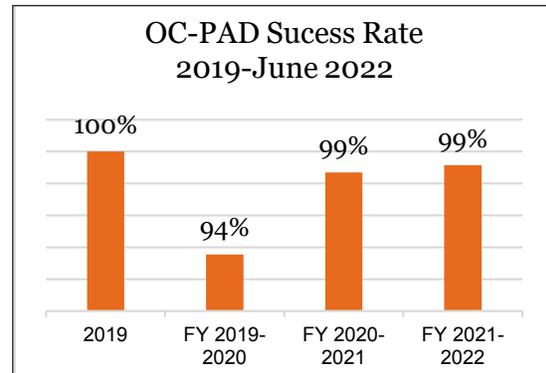
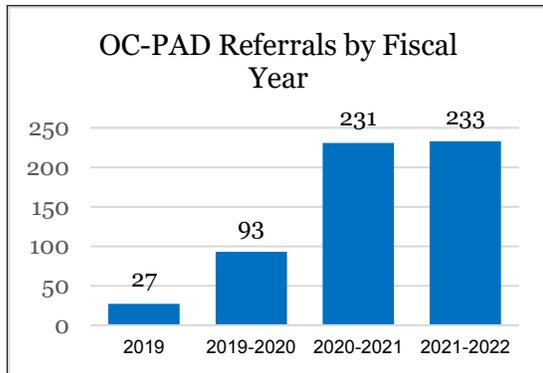
Success

OC-PAD participants consistently have very high rates of successful graduation. Participants also report in exit interviews that they valued the program and the coordinator's collateral consequence education.

Challenge

The demographic data makes it clear that OC-PAD is primarily serving white offenders and UNC students. The demographic data for participants does not reflect the county or justice-involved population. In order to respond to this disparity, law enforcement agencies review their charging data for eligible cases and the CJRD has created a new deflection program to support individuals impacted by disproportionate policing and prior justice involvement.

OC-PAD DATA (OC-PAD began in February of 2019)





HARM REDUCTION
Means Respect,
Dignity, Compassion

THE LANTERN PROJECT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIVERSION

The Lantern Project is a pre-arrest deflection, post-charge diversion and reentry program that works with individuals who struggle with substance use disorders and varying behavioral health needs that has been around for over a year. It is grant-funded by the NC Department of Health and Human Services.



The deflection component works with individuals who have been referred pre-arrest by law enforcement. The diversion component works with individuals who have pending charges in Orange County that stem from their substance use and behavioral health symptoms. Through collaboration with the District Attorney's office, there are a number of misdemeanor and felony charges that their office has agreed to deflect or divert to the Lantern Project in lieu of a formal charge or for a dismissal or more favorable disposition if they engage with the Lantern Project.

The Lantern Project meets with the individual and sees what services and supports they might benefit from, and helps connect them to specialized and individualized supports by utilizing harm reduction materials and various treatment supports around the community. The Lantern Project assists with connection to treatment programs, helps with medications, provides phones and phone service for individuals, helps with transportation to appointments and court dates, and works with other members of the Lantern Project, including a Peer Support Specialist, Reentry Navigator, and Clinician, if needed, in order to provide additional case management support and treatment referrals.

One Success Story:

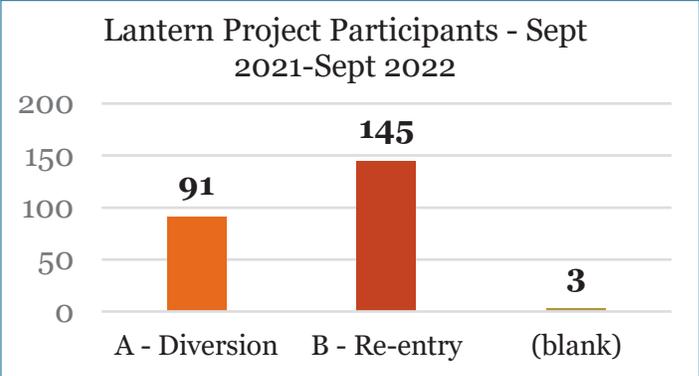
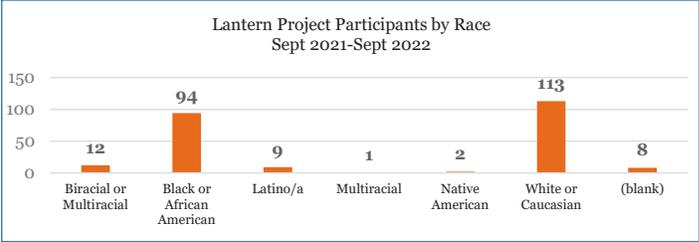
We were able to connect a woman who was charged with stealing a motor vehicle with the Lantern Project and realized she was struggling with managing her Opioid Use Disorder. This individual had recently come to Orange County as a way to escape from her abusive husband and was on methadone but couldn't figure out how to enroll into a methadone program in Orange County.

We were able to refer her to ADATC for treatment and stabilization while we created a holistic aftercare plan for her. The Lantern Project was able to connect her to a local methadone clinic and get her into an Oxford House. She has been in housing for over a month and has already secured a job and is doing what she needs to do to prioritize her recovery and overall health and well-being.

One Challenge Story:

One individual had been having numerous interactions with the police which was because of an untreated mental illness. With the help from the Lantern Project he was able to get a more thorough and accurate mental health diagnosis and was connected to medication management. He met the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team criteria because of his Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI) but it was extremely difficult to find an ACT team that would accept him.

Numerous teams did not accept him because they were at capacity, or felt he didn't meet the eligibility, even though he was diagnosed with a SPMI. It is extremely challenging to try and find individuals mental health treatment that meets the level of care they need. We are hopeful that he will be connected to another ACT team in the area, but if they continue to push people out or say they are at capacity, he will likely decompensate again and not be able to live the life he is entitled to live.



The Lantern Project stocks a free Narcan vending machine located in the lobby of the Orange County Detention Center. The free Narcan kits include Narcan nasal spray and instructions for use.

Narcan works to reverse an opioid overdose by blocking the opioid receptors in the brain and restoring normal breathing. The machine also stocks free fentanyl test strips and Covid-19 tests.



The vending machine is located in the lobby of the Orange County Detention Center at 1200 US-70 West, Hillsborough NC (across from the DMV) and is available to the public 24 hours/day.

YOUTH DEFLECTION PROGRAM (YDP)

The Youth Deflection Program (YDP) at the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department (CJRD) is in place to minimize unnecessary juvenile justice involvement for young people. Research shows that deflection and diversion programs are more effective in reducing recidivism than conventional juvenile justice intervention.

Getting arrested in adolescence or having a delinquency case filed in juvenile court can damage a young person's future and increase the likelihood of subsequent involvement in the legal system. Compared with youth who are diverted, youth who are arrested and formally petitioned in court have far higher likelihood of subsequent arrests and school failure. Pre-arrest and pre-court diversion can avert these bad outcomes. (The Sentencing Project, August 2022)

So what does deflection look like?

"Alex," a middle school student, decided they would tag the bathroom stalls with spray paint at their middle school. Fumes, reports from other staff, and a security camera gave them away. Alex was called to the principal's office and met by a school resource officer (SRO). Defacing a public building would traditionally lead to a petition being sent to the Department of Juvenile Justice, leading to a diversion plan or court with a court counselor. The SRO at this particular school recently learned about the Youth Deflection Program (YDP) with CJRD and decided that Alex met the requirements (first time offender, misdemeanor offense).

The YDP coordinator met with Alex and their parents to explain the program. The coordinator got to know Alex, spoke to their parents about their strengths and challenges, and developed a deflection plan for them to complete. If they completed it successfully in 90 days no further action would take place and the referring officer would close the case, leaving them with no juvenile record.

The coordinator learned that Alex was a creative person who loved drawing and painting, and came from a family that cared about giving back to the community. After discussing what happened at school the coordinator and Alex came to this thought and question. Alex's actions (tagging the school bathrooms) brought negative energy and spirit into the school -- how could they replace it with something positive and repair the harm? The answer was a mural for the school. Alex could use their talents to give back to the school.

The coordinator referred Alex to a community partner, INKounter. Through INKounter Alex designed a mural with the school mascot for the SRO's office door. A mural artist was assigned to mentor them through the project. Alex also completed community service hours and a reflection journal reflecting on their actions, feelings and restorative questions.

Responsibility and repairing harm

Alex took responsibility for their actions and repaired the harm by completing the art project at school and moving through the restorative justice questions in their journal.

Community Service

They gave back to others in their community through 15 hours of service.



Increased self-worth

They completed a project that they felt proud of and others are noticing and praising.

Mentorship and connections

They grew relationships with positive adults, YDP coordinator, INKounter's artists and the school resource officer.

Skill Building

Alex learned new artistic skills and self-expression skills.

Growing purpose and passion

Alex is already designing more art projects they want to complete at their school.

This example illustrates how deflection programming gives us the opportunity to design meaningful plans outside of court involvement that can respond to a young person's needs (usually the reason they make poor choices), creatively find ways to repair harm, build the young person up and address possible mental health and substance challenges.

STREET OUTREACH, HARM REDUCTION, AND DEFLECTION (SOHRAD)

The Street Outreach, Harm Reduction & Deflection program (SOHRAD) works with the unsheltered population of Orange County by connecting them with housing and other supportive resources. These resources can range from mental health, substance use treatment, medical care, legal documentation, criminal justice assistance, etc. Another component of SOHRAD is harm reduction and diversion.

SOHRAD works with local law enforcement agencies to divert individuals who have been involved in low-level offenses away from arrest and with a warm handoff towards appropriate treatment options.

We also provide harm reduction information and materials, education supplies, and linkage to resources. SOHRAD uses a relationship-based model to provide ongoing engagement and case management for people living unsheltered.

SOHRAD is co-managed by the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department and the Orange County Housing Department.



Referrals

We get referrals from everywhere

- Self-referral
- Friends/families
- Housing Helpline
- Concerned businesses
- Concerned citizens
- Mental health agencies
- Law enforcement
- Department of Social Services
- IFC/CEF
- Local churches

Outcomes

- **Total # of people served: Over 290**
- Entering permanent destinations: 91 (40 with Housing Choice Vouchers)
- Entering transitional housing/shelter: 73
- Entering other temporary destinations (friends/family, motel, etc.): 31
- Obtaining funded services (supplies, food, transportation, etc.): Over 240
- Receive COVID-19 vaccine from Mobile Unit: 26
- Provided clinical support: Over 115
- Law enforcement deflections: Over 135

Success story

We were introduced to a female through the Chapel Hill Police Crisis Unit. She had worked as a police officer many years back, until life circumstances challenged her ability to retain her job. She had been homeless and sleeping in her car for over 3 years I believe.

She was skeptical about working with others, but we finally convinced her to work with us on getting her a voucher to assist with her housing search since she was over the age of 60 and was on a fixed income. She was very reluctant to accept any type of services, but after months of working with her and meeting with her, she finally decided that she was open to financial housing assistance. We applied for the voucher and she received it (along with extra funding).

About two months later, she had been approved for a unit and was preparing to move in.

We consider her a success story because homelessness can impact any person from any background, race or socioeconomic status. Had our program not existed, her pride, vulnerability, and feelings of shame would not have allowed her to seek assistance. With a referral from the Police Crisis Unit, SOHRAD was able to develop a trusting relationship that led to her housing and stability.

A blue rectangular graphic with white text and an icon. The text reads "Help for people experiencing homelessness" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below the text is a white icon of a person sitting on a bench.

Help for people experiencing homelessness

CONNECT TO HOUSING AND SERVICES

Orange County Housing Helpline

- Homelessness prevention
- Eviction prevention
- Shelter referrals
- Permanent housing
- Connections to security deposits, utility deposits, rental assistance

(all program availability dependent on funding)

Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm
(919) 245-2655, housinghelp@orangecountync.gov

In-person drop-in hours: Mondays, 9am-1pm

IFC Commons
110 West Main St, Carrboro

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30am - 4pm

Southern Human Services Center
2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill



HELP FOR PEOPLE LIVING UNSHELTERED

Street Outreach, Harm Reduction and Deflection (SOHRAD) team

- Welfare checks for people living outside or in cars
- Connections to housing & services
- Case management and peer support
- Harm Reduction outreach
- Law enforcement deflection or warm hand-off where safety is not an issue

Monday-Friday, 8am-9pm

Saturday, 12 noon-9pm

(919) 886-3351, SOHRAD@orangecountync.gov

Chapel Hill Police Department Crisis Unit Hours:
Monday-Friday: 7am-12:30am

