



The Lantern Project

Diversion, Deflection & Reentry Program

For Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder and Substance Use Disorder

Summary of Program: The purpose of The Lantern Project is to provide access to care for individuals with Substance Use Disorder and Opioid Use Disorder who are intersecting with the criminal legal system. Originally grant funded through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse and currently funded through Orange County Opioid Settlement funds, this project uses diversion and reentry strategies in order to enhance outreach and harm reduction services that are offered to individuals who might come into contact with the criminal legal system, to improve healthier outcomes, and to reduce recidivism. The Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department partners with Freedom House Recovery Center to provide various services including assessments, medication management and peer support. Furthermore, the Project has the support of Orange County law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, court stakeholders and the behavioral health community and receives referrals from law enforcement officials, jail personnel, court personnel, district attorneys, and magistrates for individuals who are eligible for the program.

The Recovery Diversion Coordinator receives referrals from community partners for those who have a history of substance use and have intersected with the criminal legal system. Referrals are connected to specialized treatment, recovery supports, and harm reduction services. This allows individuals to prioritize their physical and mental health in the community, as opposed to in a court or detention setting. The specialized diversion or deflection plan will incorporate holistic services based on the individuals' needs and may include substance use treatment, housing assistance, mental health counseling, harm reduction materials, restorative justice measures, peer support and vocational opportunities.

The Reentry Navigator meets with individuals who are currently detained or are who are recently released from state prison and creates comprehensive reentry plans to meet their individual needs. This Reentry Recovery Navigator works with the individuals to make sure they have access to the care and support they need in order to have a seamless, supported, and smooth transition back into the community. These reentry plans may consist of housing assistance, vocational services, substance use treatment, mental health counseling, peer support and harm reduction materials and education.

Eligibility:

- Individual is at least 18 years old
- Individual has a history of substance use
- Individuals may have an open or pending court case (felony or misdemeanor).
- Individual can have a criminal background
- Individual is currently detained or has been released from prison within the past month (Reentry)
- Referrals can be pre-charge or post-charge (Diversion)
- Diversion and Deflection Charge Restrictions
 - No domestic violence charges, unless approved by District Attorney
 - No Chapter 20 traffic charges
 - No charge that involves the use of a weapon
- Final discretion on diversion referral remains with law enforcement officers and the District Attorney's Office

Referral Process—Diversion:

- Law Enforcement Official or District Attorney determine that there is probable cause to issue a citation or criminal charge against the individual
- Law Enforcement Official or District Attorney believe there to be an underlying substance use issue that led to the alleged citation or charge
- Law Enforcement Official or District Attorney determines eligibility for individual and provides them with information related to The Lantern Project and tells them to contact the Recovery Diversion Coordinator within 72 hours
- Law Enforcement Official or District Attorney completes The Lantern Project referral form and sends completed referral and a copy of the Incident Report (IR) to the Recovery Diversion Coordinator within 48 working hours

Referral Process—Reentry:

- Jail personnel, Pretrial Coordinator, or Local Reentry Council will send referral to Reentry Navigator for an individual who is currently detained and has a substance use history
- Reentry Navigator will meet with individual and assess individual's needs
- A specialized Reentry Service Plan will be created for the individual upon their pending release from detention or state prison
- The Reentry Navigator will work with the individual upon their reentry to make any additional referrals or service connections that would best benefit the individual's overall well-being

- Reentry Navigator will provide harm reduction materials and education to individuals upon release from jail or prison

Intake Process:

- Recovery Diversion Coordinator receives referral and Incident Report
- Recovery Diversion Coordinator schedules initial appointment with the individual within 7 days of receiving the referral
- At the initial meeting, the intake form and interview is completed, an affidavit of indigency is completed, the Release to Opt-in is signed, a general release is signed, the Diversion/Deflection Service Plan is created
- The Diversion/Deflection Service Plan may include, treatment or mental health services, vocational opportunities, housing, harm reduction materials, up-to-date COVID-19 education, and various other programming based on individual needs
- No admission of guilt is requested or required
- A referral can also come from an EMS or hospital worker after someone might have been hospitalized due to an overdose or misuse of substances
- If the individual does not make contact with the Diversion Coordinator after 72 hours of being arrested or deflected by the police, the Diversion Coordinator will reach out to community partners and networks to see if they can establish connection with the individual and introduce the project to the individual
- Diversion Coordinator will provide COVID-19 information to individuals with a SUD and OUD in Orange County and provide PPE, access to care, testing, and vaccinations if needed or interested

Recovery Diversion Coordinator:

Megan Pickard, CPSS, 336.264.9084

Reentry Recovery Navigator:

Jennifer Cole, MS, CADC, CPSS, 919.969.3220