



CORE PRINCIPLES FOR POLICING ROLE

Officer and front line supervisor “ownership”.

This is a new role and one that relies on their discretion and expertise. Officer indifference or negativity will seriously limit LEAD’s effectiveness. Periodic review with involved officers to identify and fix operational issues goes a long way to establishing a sense of line officer ownership over the program.

Key role of sergeants/front line supervisors in operational design. Involving sergeants who will make or supervise discretionary decisions to refer LEAD participants in designing the operational protocol is critical. They have to make this work despite initial skepticism and confusion, and need it to actually work operationally in order to give it their sincere backing. Contributing to designing the operational protocol is one way to ensure this.

Using highly-regarded, proactive units. Because this is a new role, launching LEAD with officers in prestigious, hard-charging assignments that make drug arrests helps ensure the program is regarded as “real” police work.

Engaging patrol and patrol supervisors. Despite the value of beginning with specialized proactive units, eventually, for the program to have an effect at the neighborhood level, patrol officers and their supervisors must be integrated and must make use of the program. Otherwise the bulk of appropriate suspects and cases will go through “system as usual” processing.

Peer to peer training by sergeants and officers.

This is vastly more effective in explaining LEAD than simply directives from commanders or pleas by outsiders to use the program. LEAD is a new and additional tool, and when explained as such by officers who actually use and like it, skepticism is lowered.

Detailed training on social service challenges facing people who are homeless and/or struggling with addiction. Such training helps debunk myths that if people wanted help they already would have gotten help or that getting housed and getting treatment is just a matter of willpower. In particular, criminal history-based exclusions from housing and other benefits are rarely understood by officers.

Detailed operational protocol. The operational protocol should guide the way discretion will be used by officers and sergeants, specify who makes decisions and how those decisions are documented, and ensure that LEAD referrals are streamlined and fit into officers’ normal business practices.

No more onerous than “business as usual.” LEAD must be “just another tool” for officers. To that end, LEAD referrals should be no more time consuming or difficult than it is to book someone into jail and refer them for prosecution.

Documenting the decision to divert or not divert eligible arrestees. Since the program relies on officer/sergeant discretion, documenting how that discretion is used is important for review and re-training.

Clearly articulating situations where LEAD is not a good fit. LEAD is designed to engage addicted and/or mentally ill people whose criminal behavior is motivated by illness and subsistence needs. Referral of individuals whose behavior is motivated by other factors (profit, involvement in an organized drug distribution operation) will disappoint officers and community leaders because the program's resources are not capable of substituting for those motivations.

Creating an operational workgroup.

This is a forum for line officers and sergeants to share expertise and insights with case managers and prosecutors in a way that builds cooperation and mutual respect.