

05 Deflection First Arrest Rare

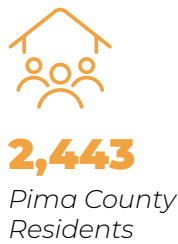
DEFLECTION FIRST, ARREST RARE

Police-led deflection programs allow police officers to replace an arrest with connections to community-based crisis centers or treatment providers for individuals with behavioral health concerns (mental health and substance use). When police officers deflect individuals to these local providers, it **removes the court system entirely**, eliminates the collateral consequences of the criminal legal system involvement, and prioritizes getting someone access to services.

However, in some deflection-eligible cases, police may still **arrest** an individual including **when a victim requests an arrest or an individual declines treatment**. Increasing equity in communities and equity in access to services requires police to consider if an arrest is necessary at all for a deflection-eligible event.

DRAWING LESSONS FROM RESEARCH SITES

In 2011, Pima County, Arizona opened the Crisis Response Center (CRC) and **accepts deflections** by any law enforcement agency in the county.



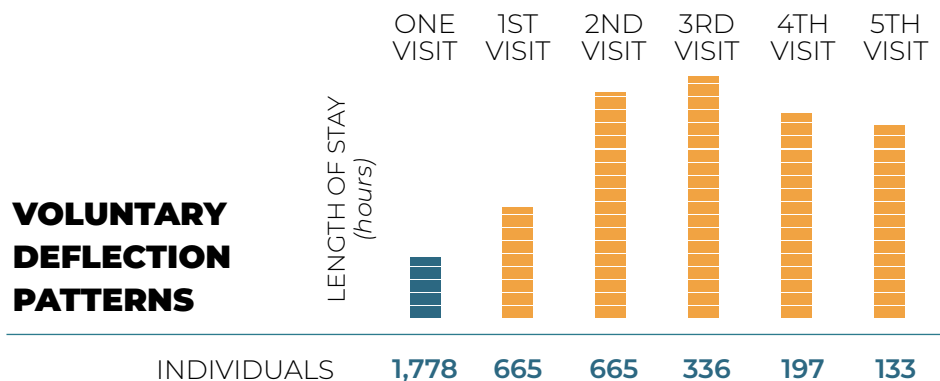
Between July 2018 and March 2020 **accepted a police-led deflection to the CRC in lieu of an arrest and a jail booking.**



of these **2,443** residents were only deflected **once** by police.



of those who returned to the CRC **at least one more time** through a police-led deflection, they stayed longer than their first visit.



- Individuals who only went to the CRC one time
- Individuals who went back more than once

04. Police as Frontline Educators

Further, officers involved with the police-led deflection program in Pima County, Arizona comment that sometimes individuals will **decline treatment or a victim will request an arrest**. Officers from Pima County describe several reasons why individuals decline deflections even when they know it's in place of an arrest. They explain some individuals had previous experiences with victimization at treatment facilities, describe anxiety and fear about **withdrawal symptoms**, fear stigma of not **completing the program**, and concerns with **fees, insurance, and rules**. Importantly, these reasons are **not mutually exclusive**. People may consider several of the concerns described by Pima County officers at any one time when approached by police for deflection. It is clear treatment initiation is a **complex issue** and declining a deflection which leads to arrest ultimately punishes individuals for their fears, anxieties, and previous experiences.

CHALLENGING POLICE TO GO BOLDER

Given the **complexity** of these reasons, it is important police officers and their departments don't confuse declining a deflection and opportunity for access to treatment with strict ideas of **"a lack of willingness to go to treatment."** It is far **more complicated than simply willingness to go**.

When deflections by police operate as the primary response to behavioral health or crisis calls, then police can broker access to treatment providers for people who are traditionally excluded from these services – homeless individuals, individuals currently using substances, and individuals who do not know how to navigate health systems and afford treatment. Importantly, it increases equity of access to services while dismantling practices that keep individuals in cycles of crisis.

DEFLECTION FIRST
ARREST RARE



"Deflection first, arrest rare" as a principle for police practice asks officers to rely heavily on deflection as the primary response rather than offering it as often or even less than arrest. In this way, arrest is the exception not the rule.

LEARN MORE

about the impacts of police-led deflection strategies on jail reduction efforts

WE BLOGGED ABOUT IT



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