



**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

**Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative**

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<http://ptaccollaborative.org/>

**Contact:** Jac Charlier

[jcharlier@tasc.org](mailto:jcharlier@tasc.org)

312-573-8302

### **National Collaborative for Pre-Arrest Diversion Launches Website**

A national alliance of leaders in law enforcement, behavioral health, housing, and community advocacy has launched a resource-rich website to support colleagues across the country facing multiple public health and public safety challenges in their communities.

The Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative (PTACC) was formed in April 2017 to advocate for the expanded use of *pre-arrest diversion* by law enforcement, and advance research efforts for successful program implementation nationwide. Pre-arrest diversion provides an alternative to arrest for people with substance use and mental health conditions, as well as for those who have committed nonviolent misdemeanors. The collaborative consists of practitioners in law enforcement, behavioral health, community advocacy, research, and public policy, with a collective mission to strategically enhance the quantity and quality of community behavioral health and social service options through pre-arrest diversion. PTACC is the national voice of the pre-arrest diversion field and provides vision, leadership, advocacy, and education to facilitate the practice of pre-arrest diversion across the United States.

By establishing its new web presence at [ptaccollaborative.org](http://ptaccollaborative.org), PTACC will provide support to communities across the country looking to start or improve their own pre-arrest diversion initiatives. The website will highlight the efforts of workgroups within PTACC's six Strategy Areas: Leadership; Treatment, Housing, and Recovery; Public Safety; Community, Diversity, and Inclusion; Research; and Policy and Legislation. Together, these workgroups develop resources and tools to help advance pre-arrest diversion across the country and provide guidance to practitioners in the field, their research partners, and community members.

*"We estimate that out of the 18,000 police departments in the U.S., about 550 have started new pre-arrest diversion efforts in the last five years," said Jac Charlier, National Director for Justice Initiatives at the Center for Health and Justice at TASC and Co-founder of PTACC. "This is a time of rapid growth in this newly emerging field, and with many more departments looking to these initiatives to address the opioid epidemic or serious mental illness, the PTACC national website is timely in responding to this growth."*

Arrests for minor, non-violent offenses have resulted in approximately one-third of all adults in the U.S. having a criminal arrest record. The majority of those in jail have not been convicted and almost half are

## PTACC Launches Pre-Arrest Diversion Website

there for a drug-related offense.<sup>1</sup> The average annual cost to detain someone in jail is \$47,000, according to the Vera Institute of Justice.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, conservative estimates consistently show that, for every dollar invested in addiction treatment, which may range from outpatient to residential to medication-assisted recovery, \$4 to \$7 are saved in reduced theft, drug-related crime, and criminal justice costs. When health care-related savings are factored in, those savings are multiplied.<sup>3</sup> Pre-arrest diversion provides law enforcement with an effective alternative through referral to community-based interventions, rather than arrest and the accompanying collateral consequences.

*“The front door of the criminal justice system is the most dangerous door a person can pass through,” said Greg Frost, President of the Civil Citation Network and Co-founder of PTACC. “A simple case of bad judgement, criminal behavior due to drug use or an emerging mental illness that results in arrest, is life-changing. In fact, research shows that arrest, even for a first-time, non-violent misdemeanor, can start a downward cycle that jeopardizes future employment, eliminates education opportunities, reduces access to housing, destroys families, and contributes to additional criminal activity.”*

An estimated two million out of the almost 11 million jail admissions each year are for people with serious mental illness (SMI).<sup>4</sup> Nearly three-quarters of these individuals also have a co-occurring substance use disorder (SUD).<sup>5</sup> This population often has contact with the criminal justice system out of situations that arise from their SUD and/or SMI and generally involve minor quality of life or nuisance crimes. Incarceration of individuals with SUD and/or MI often exacerbates their underlying disorder, impeding their recovery, and increasing their likelihood of recidivism – a detriment to both the individual and the community.<sup>6</sup> Use of early diversion programs for these individuals would keep them from entering the criminal justice system and ensure linkage to crucial treatment and recovery services.

*“When providing treatment services to those in need, we are more effective when we work collaboratively with law enforcement, housing, and other social service agencies. Our real ‘job’ is to create a culture that supports breaking through all barriers and focusing our collective efforts into ‘building bridges’ for the men, women, and families we serve,” said Leslie Balonick, Vice-President of Business and Program Development for the Westcare Foundation, and PTACC Leader.*

Diverting people who have committed nonviolent misdemeanors away from the criminal justice system and towards appropriate treatment or services can support these individuals, helping them avoid falling into the revolving door of the criminal justice system. In this way, pre-arrest diversion leads to increased public safety.

Visit: <http://ptaccollaborative.org/> for more information.

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<sup>1</sup> Wagner, Peter and Sawyer, Wendy. Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2018 (Northampton, MA: Prison Policy Initiative, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Vera Institute of Justice. 2015. The Price of Jails.

<sup>3</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide. (Third Edition). Updated 2018,

<sup>4</sup> Steadman, Henry, et al., “Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness among Jail Inmates.” *Psychiatric Services* 60, no. 6 (2009): 761–765.

<sup>5</sup> Abram, Karen M., and Linda A. Teplin, “Co-occurring Disorders Among Mentally Ill Jail Detainees,” *American Psychologist* 46, no. 10(1991): 1036–1045

<sup>6</sup> Kim, KiDeuk, et al., *The Processing and Treatment of Mentally Ill Persons in the Criminal Justice System: A Scan of Practice and Background Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2015)