CENTER FOR HEALTH & JUSTICE AT TASC

Using Police Data to Highlight Deflection Opportunities

Deflection is a community-led strategy that connects individuals with behavioral health challenges to supportive services, avoiding justice involvement. The six recognized pathways of deflection are Self-Referral, Active Outreach, Naloxone Plus (post-overdose response), First Responder and Officer Referral, Officer Intervention (alternatives to arrest), and Community Outreach. The Bureau of Justice Statistics *2022 Report on Contacts Between the Police and Public* highlights several opportunities for law enforcement to engage with the public and redirect individuals away from the criminal justice system and toward appropriate care, improving public safety and health outcomes.

Insight: Twenty-six percent of police-public encounters involve non-emergency situations that may not require enforcement.

Opportunity: Strong community partnerships through deflection can help provide non-emergency interventions, freeing law enforcement to focus on critical public safety concerns.

Insight: The most common type of police-public encounter, traffic stops, account for 39% of all interactions.

Opportunity: With proper policies in place, some traffic stops could become a touchpoint for deflection, particularly in cases where substance use or behavioral health concerns are evident.

Insight: Most (82%) individuals police encounter are not arrested, meaning these interactions do not result in immediate justice involvement.

Opportunity: In instances where enforcement is not necessary, but individuals may be in crisis or at risk, law enforcement and first responders with knowledge of deflection pathways can provide referrals to treatment, behavioral health services, or community-based support to prevent future encounters and justice involvement.

Insight: Persons ages 18 to 24 were more likely than those in other age groups to experience police-initiated contact (15%), any police contact (25%), and police contact related to a traffic accident (4%).

Opportunity: With the youngest adult age group having the greatest contact with law enforcement, there is a clear opportunity to make an early impact on the lives of young people who may have unmet needs.

Pathways utilized by FY22 - FY24 COSSUP Grantees

Self Referral	23 grantees
Active Outreach	35 grantees
Naloxone Plus	41 grantees
Officer & First Responder Referral	46 grantees
Officer Intervention	33 grantees
Community Response	17 grantees

Actionable Steps:

Implement training on deflection strategies for non-emergency encounters.

Increase coordination with community-based treatment and support services.

Develop policies that integrate deflection pathways into routine encounters.

Leverage data around local police encounters to refine and expand deflection initiatives.

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Original report prepared by the *Bureau of Justice Statistics* at:
https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cbpp22.pdf.

Why This Matters

These stats show many police encounters don't require enforcement. Deflection partnerships help redirect non-police matters—such as substance use, mental health, and housing—away from law enforcement, allowing officers to focus on core public safety while supporting community well-being.