



Costs, Cost Savings, and Effectiveness of a Police-led Pre-arrest Deflection Program



In an attempt to address the opioid epidemic and misuse of other substances, like methamphetamine, the **Tucson Police Department (TPD)** implemented a pre-arrest deflection program starting July 1, 2018. TPD's **Deflection Program** seeks to reduce opioid and other substance misuse by taking advantage of daily interactions of patrol officers with community members as opportunities to identify individuals who have substance use issues, provide a brief intervention to encourage engagement in treatment, offer deflection to a treatment provider, distribute resources related to treatment, and immediately transport individuals to a substance misuse treatment provider. TPD's Deflection Program allows patrol officers the discretion to **"deflect"** individuals with substance use problems such that officers **encourage them to seek treatment and offer immediate transport to a treatment provider *instead of arresting them***. Under the Deflection Program, community members can approach a TPD facility or officer and request help connecting to a treatment provider without being charged for possession of drugs or paraphernalia – this is TPD's **Angel Program** component of the Deflection Program. TPD's Deflection Program's primary partnering substance misuse treatment provider is **CODAC Health, Recovery & Wellness, Inc.** This report presents ongoing implementation costs and effectiveness of TPD's Deflection Program as well as cost savings as compared to arrest.



Overall Ongoing Costs of Implementing the TPD Deflection Program

TPD Deflection Program specialists from TPD's specialized Substance Use Resource Team (SURT) provide a 2.5 hour training related to the Deflection Program to new officers during their police academy training. SURT also provides a 30-minute Deflection Program refresher training twice a year to all patrol officers. These trainings focus

on taking a respectful and non-judgmental approach to interacting with individuals who have substance use issues. They provide information on, for example, substance use disorders (SUDs); SUD treatment and recovery; and TPD Deflection Program impact, eligibility criteria, and referral and reporting procedures.

Annual Training Costs*

Type of Training	TPD Personnel Cost to Provide Training	TPD Personnel Cost to Receive Training
Academy training for newly hired officers	\$475	\$5,898 - \$6,553
Refresher trainings for all patrol officers	\$4,556	\$11,266

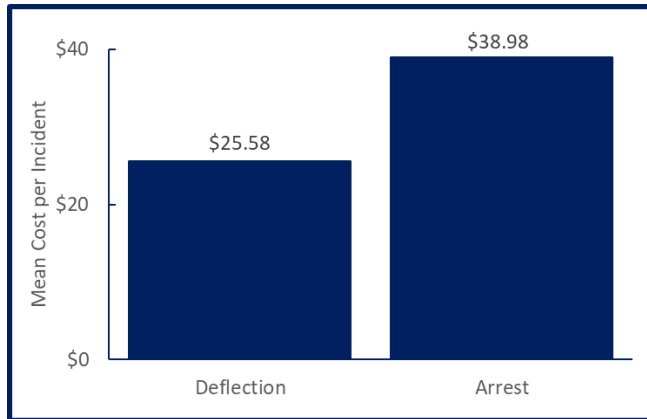
*Personnel cost reflects salary and employee-related expenses (ERE).

The total annual implementation training cost-\$22,195 to \$22,850-is minimal and represents opportunity costs because training activities are standard to TPD operations and occur regardless of the Deflection Program.



Overall Costs Per Deflection and Arrest

During a 3-year period, patrol officers completed 2,129 deflections away from arrest and to substance misuse treatment. All of these deflection incidents included a brief intervention to encourage engagement in treatment. Of these deflections, 965 additionally included immediate transport to a substance misuse treatment provider.



Encouraging individuals to consider substance misuse treatment and deflecting them to a treatment provider takes less time on average than arrest, 48.5 versus 73.9 minutes. costs less per incident than arrest.

Because of the saved time, deflection incidents cost \$25.58 in personnel cost (salary and ERE) compared to \$38.98 per arrest.

This time difference translates to an average cost savings of \$13.40 per incident related to officer time, a total saving of \$28,529 across all 2,129 deflection incidents.

Potential cost savings of \$48,564 in jail housing expenses.

In Arizona, the average cost to house someone in jail is estimated to be \$114 per day in 2021 dollars (Scharbach, 2016). If 20% (426) of the 2,129 deflection incidents would have resulted in one night in jail if not for the Deflection Program, then the Deflection Program would have saved the local justice system **\$48,564**.

Potential cost savings of \$601,512 in justice system expenses.

Justice system costs per arrest that results in conviction can be more than \$2,824 per event in 2021 dollars (McCollister et al., 2018). If 10% (213) of the 2,129 deflections would have resulted in conviction of charges if not for the Deflection Program, then the Deflection Program would have saved the local justice system **\$601,512**.

Characteristics of Individuals Enrolled in Evaluation

Participant Descriptors	Deflected (n=93)	Arrested (n=86)
Female	25.8%	12.8%
Hispanic	41.0%	52.0%
Racial minority status	31.2%	30.2%
Age	34.3	33.4
Currently/Recently Homeless	54.0%	70.0%
Living in a Controlled Environment	12.0%	8.0%
Currently Employed	13.0%	20.0%

179 people who had been deflected or arrested for substance-related charges participated in a longitudinal study that examined effect of deflection, compared to arrest, on substance misuse, criminal activity, and mental health issues.

Overall, 19.6% were female, 46.0% were Hispanic, and 30.7% were of racial minority status.

Participant ages ranged from 18 to 64 years old (*Mean* = 33.8).

At time of deflection or arrest incident, a substantial proportion of the participants was currently or had recently experienced homelessness and a small proportion was currently employed.

TPD officers provided all deflected individuals a brief intervention of encouragement to engage in treatment and printed resources. 48.4% of the deflected individuals were immediately transported to a treatment provider.



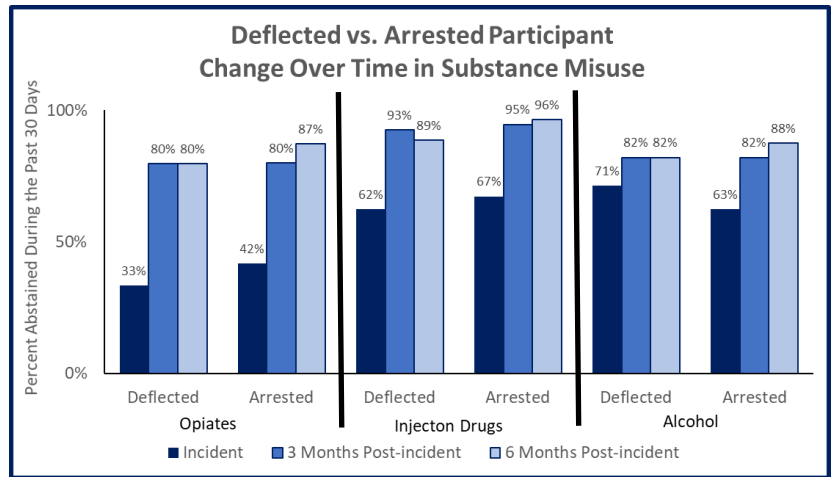
Comparison of Deflected and Arrested Study Participants Related to Change Over Time in *Proportion of Participants Experiencing Key Outcomes**

Results indicate that deflection to encourage engagement in substance misuse treatment and arrest were both effective at decreasing the proportion of participants engaging in substance misuse.

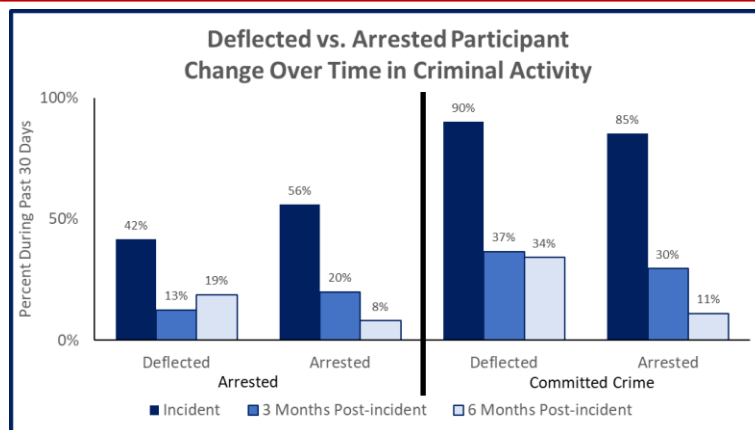
A much greater proportion of deflected and arrested participants abstained from...

- Misusing opiates,
- Using injection drugs, and
- Using alcohol

...during the past 30 days at 3 and 6 months post-incident than at the time of the deflection or arrest incident.



Results also indicate that deflection and arrest were both effective at decreasing the proportion of participants engaging in criminal activity and experiencing mental health issues.



A much smaller proportion of deflected and arrested participants ...

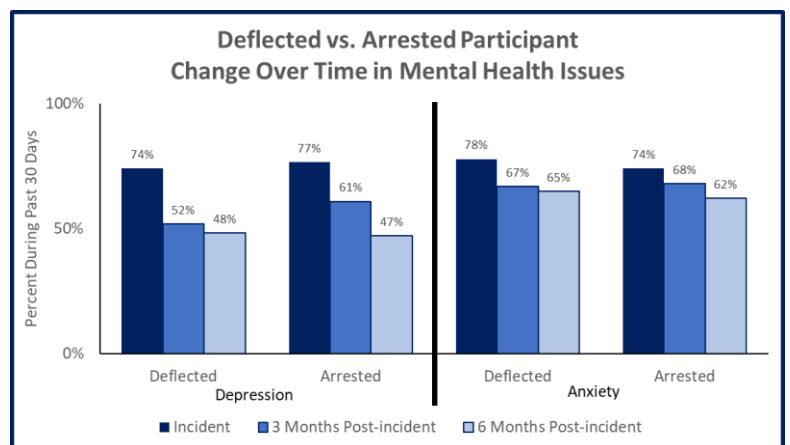
- Was arrested and
- Engaged in criminal activity

...during the past 30 days at 3 and 6 months post-incident than at the time of the deflection or arrest incident.

A smaller proportion of deflected and arrested participants experienced...

- Serious depression and
- Serious anxiety

..., not due to the use of drugs or alcohol, during the past 30 days at 3 and 6 months post-incident than at the time of the deflection or arrest incident.



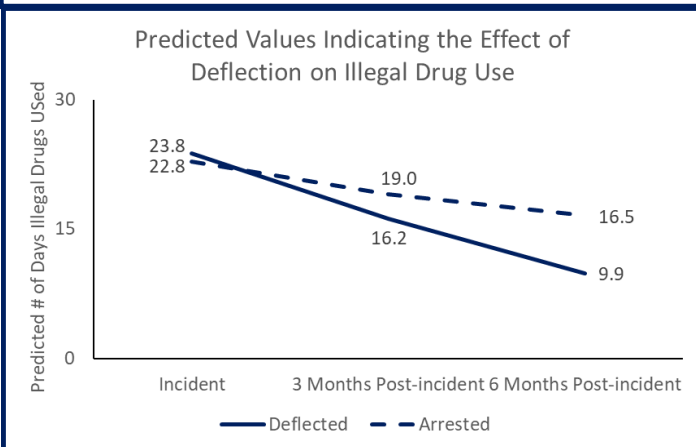
*These analyses utilized data from only those study participants who provided data at time of incident and at 3 and 6 months post-incident. They also examine change in proportion of participants experiencing the outcomes *without* considering the impact of other factors, such as treatment readiness or amount of time participants spent in a controlled environment, such as jail.

Change Over Time in Frequency of Engagement in or Experience of Key Outcomes*

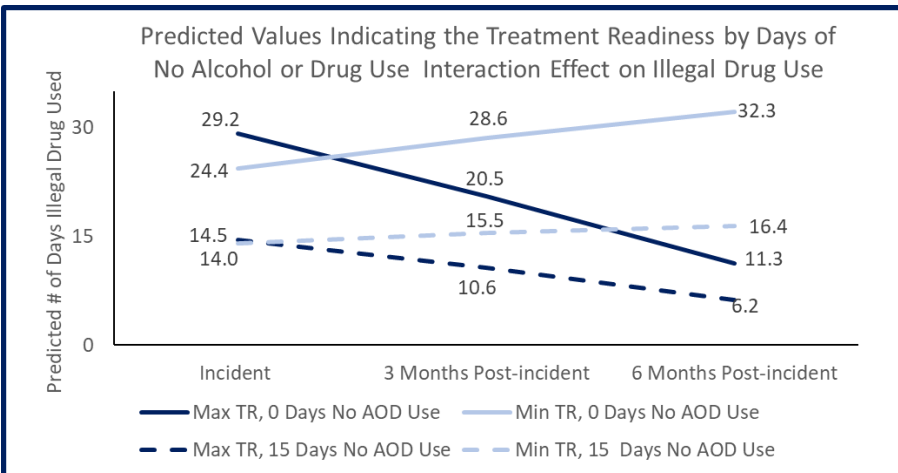
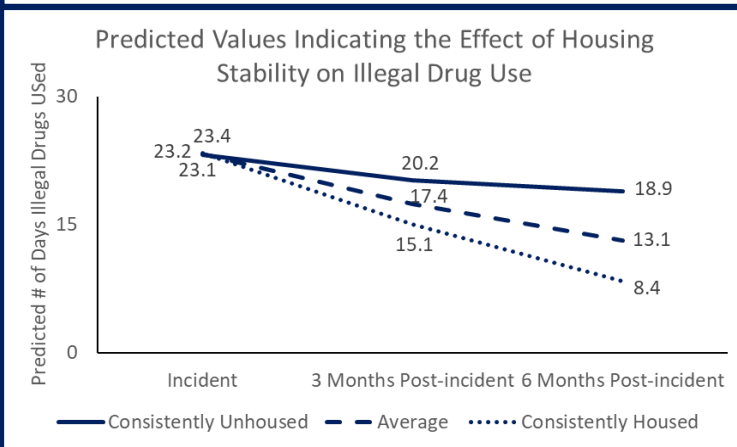
Factors Associated with Illegal Drug Use When Individuals Were Residing in the Community (Not in a controlled environment such as jail)

- As mental health worsened, individuals used illegal drugs more frequently.
- Individuals who were consistently employed engaged in fewer days of illegal drug use 6 months after their deflection or arrest incident compared to individuals who were less consistently employed.

Deflection was associated with a greater reduction in frequency of use of illegal drugs. As shown below, at 6 months post-incident, individuals who were deflected engaged in 6.6 fewer days of illegal drug use than those who had been arrested.



Housing was associated with a greater reduction in frequency of use of illegal drugs. As shown below, at 6 months post-incident, individuals who were consistently housed engaged in 10.5 fewer days of illegal drug use than those consistently unhoused.



The effect of treatment readiness (TR) on change over time in illegal drug use depended on frequency of use of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) at time of incident.

Among individuals who had maximum (Max) TR, those with 0 days of AOD abstinence at time of incident (compared to those with 15 days) had the greatest reduction in illegal drug use through 6 months after their deflection or arrest

incident. Individuals who had minimum (Min) TR at time of incident increased illegal drug use over time.

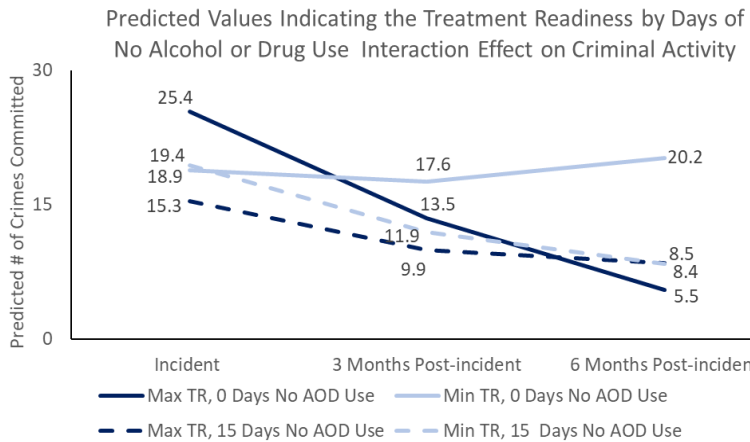
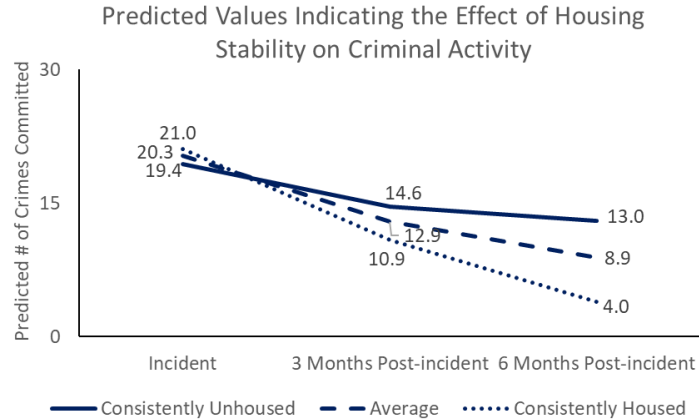
In sum, deflection was more effective than arrest in reducing frequency of illegal drug use. Mental health issues, employment stability, housing stability, and treatment readiness, in combination with AOD use at time of incident, also impacted change over time in frequency of illegal drug use.

*A more detailed presentation of results of analyses comparing deflected to arrested study participants on change over time in frequency of engagement in or experience of key outcomes is available by request from Josephine Korchmaros, jkorch@arizona.edu.



**Factors Associated with Criminal Activity When Individuals Were Residing in the Community
(Not in a controlled environment such as jail)**

Housing was associated with a greater reduction in criminal activity. At 6 months post-incident, individuals who had been consistently housed committed 9.0 fewer crimes than those consistently unhoused.

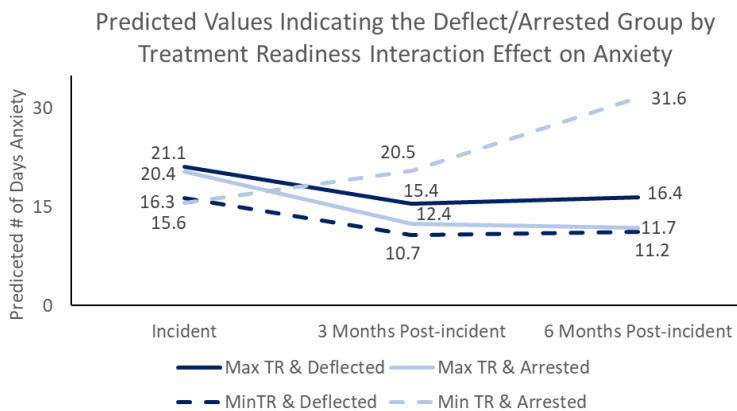


The effect of treatment readiness (TR) on change over time in criminal activity depended on frequency of use of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) at time of incident.

Individuals who had maximum (Max) TR and 0 days of AOD abstinence at time of incident had the greatest reduction in number of crimes committed through 6 months after time of incident. Individuals who had minimum (Min) TR and 0 days of AOD abstinence at time of incident increased the number of crimes they committed.

In sum, housing stability and treatment readiness in combination with AOD use at time of incident impacted change over time in frequency of criminal activity.

Factors Associated with Experience of Serious Anxiety Not Due to Use of Drugs or Alcohol



The effect of being deflected or arrested on change over time in serious anxiety depended on treatment readiness (TR).

Individuals who were arrested and had minimum (Min vs Maximum [Max]) TR at time of incident experienced a substantial increase in days experiencing serious anxiety through 6 months post-incident. The other groups were similar to each other and experienced a decrease in serious anxiety post-incident.

In sum, deflection in combination with treatment readiness at time of incident impacted change over time in experience of serious anxiety. Notably, arrest increased frequency of experiencing serious anxiety in individuals who had low treatment readiness at time of arrest.



Costs Associated with Outcomes

On average, deflected study participants reported **7.7** fewer nights in prison or jail at 3 months post-incident and **6.3** fewer nights in prison or jail at 6 months post-incident.

Mean Nights in Jail or Prison During Past 30 Days		
Group	3 Months Post-incident	6 Months Post-incident
Deflected	12.3	11.1
Arrested	20.0	17.4

At a cost of housing in jail or prison of approximately \$100 per day in 2021 dollars, this translates into ...

Average cost savings per deflected individual of ~\$700 in jail/prison housing expenses during the past 30 days at 3 or 6 months post-deflection.

If assume a consistent difference between arrested and deflected participants throughout the 6-month period, average total cost savings per deflected individual equaled ~\$4,200 in jail/prison housing expenses during the 6 months post-deflection.

Conclusion

The primary goals of TPD's pre-arrest Deflection Program were to reduce substance misuse and related criminal activity, and to improve the well-being of participants. Overall, the Deflection Program achieved these goals. Deflection was as effective as arrest at increasing the proportion of participants abstaining from substance misuse and decreasing the proportion of participants engaging in criminal activity and experiencing mental health issues from time of deflection or arrest incident to 6 months post-incident. Moreover, deflection was more effective than arrest at decreasing use of illegal drugs over time from time of incident to 6 months post-incident and reduced frequency of experience of serious anxiety over time regardless of treatment readiness at time of incident.

Overall, study findings suggest that pre-arrest deflection programs, like TPD's Deflection Program, are generally as effective, and in some ways more effective, than arrest at reducing substance misuse, criminal activity, and mental health issues. Moreover, pre-arrest deflection programs have other meaningful benefits, including more efficient use of police officer time in responding to calls for service, decreased justice involvement for individuals who have substance use issues, and, consequently, substantial potential cost savings to the justice system.

For more information about the comprehensive evaluation of TPD's Deflection Program, contact Josephine Korchmaros, Ph.D., at jkorch@arizona.edu.

Suggested reference: Korchmaros, J. D., Bentele, K. G., Granillo, B., & McCollister, K. (2022). Costs, Cost Savings, and Effectiveness of a Police-led Pre-arrest Deflection Program. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, Southwest Institute for Research on Women.

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