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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Denver Police Department**

Sonny Jackson, Public Information Officer  
[Sonny.Jackson@Denvergov.org](mailto:Sonny.Jackson@Denvergov.org), 720-913-6534

**Denver District Attorney's Office**

Carolyn Tyler, Director of Communications  
[Carolyn.Tyler@Denverda.org](mailto:Carolyn.Tyler@Denverda.org), 720-913-9025

**Denver City Attorney's Office**

Mike Strott, Deputy Communications Director  
[Mike.Strott@Denvergov.org](mailto:Mike.Strott@Denvergov.org), 720-865-9031

### **Denver Pilot Program Will Address Low-Level Drug and Prostitution Crimes**

**DENVER** – Denver officials today announced the launch of an innovative pilot program to address low-level drug and prostitution crimes: the [national LEAD](#) (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) program. Rather than being arrested, incarcerated and prosecuted, LEAD-trained Denver Police officers will redirect people facing substance use and/or prostitution charges to case management and community-based services. LEAD program participants will immediately begin receiving support services – including housing, job training, substance use treatment and mental health treatment which are being provided through either [Addiction Research and Treatment Services \(ARTS\)](#) or the [Empowerment Program](#).

“The Denver Police Department is committed to reducing crime and social harms in Denver by focusing on prevention,” said [Denver Police Chief Paul Pazen](#). “Understanding why these crimes are occurring, can provide a better idea of how to help offenders not commit crimes in the future. The LEAD program is a great tool that officers can use to help people; rather than citing or arresting people for low-level crimes.”

The goals of the LEAD program are to:

- engage community members with mental health and substance-use issues to offer them trauma-informed and harm reduction-based services
- reduce recidivism rates for community members who are frequently arrested for low-level crimes often due to unaddressed mental health or substance use issues
- save taxpayer dollars by diverting people with mental health or substance-use issues from the criminal justice system and offering them more appropriate and cost-effective services, and
- free up law enforcement to focus on the many other pressing issues.

“LEAD gives Denver Police officers an innovative and effective way to address the untreated behavioral health needs of the most vulnerable members of our community,” said Kevin Kelly, LEAD Program Administrator with [Denver’s Office of Behavioral Health Strategies](#). “With this program, we can prevent people from getting caught in the endless cycle of incarceration, saving taxpayer money. And we can empower people to live better who are typically facing extraordinary barriers to accessing the services they need.”

“By implementing the LEAD program, we’re giving people a first chance before a second chance is needed,” said [Denver District Attorney Beth McCann](#). “Nationally, LEAD has shown it can improve public safety and public order while reducing the criminal behavior and incarceration of those who participate. By partnering with ARTS and the Empowerment Program, program participants will benefit from the expertise of these leading service organizations and receive the specific support they need to put their issues with prostitution and drug use behind them.”

Denver’s Office of Behavioral Health Strategies will implement the LEAD Pilot Program in Denver Police Department Districts 1, 2 and 6 thanks to a \$560,707 grant provided by the Colorado Department of Human Services’ Office of Behavioral Health. Denver has contracted with Addiction Research and Treatment Services (ARTS) and Empowerment Program to work with the program participants. In order for Denver to request additional funding, the pilot program will be evaluated by an independent evaluation team as to whether LEAD resulted in reductions in drug use and recidivism, whether LEAD is more cost-effective than traditional criminal justice processing, and whether LEAD has had a positive impact on Denver’s quality of life. Denver is one of four Colorado communities to receive LEAD funding.

“LEAD is an opportunity to help break the cycle of incarceration for those struggling with addiction and mental health issues,” said [Denver City Attorney Kristin M. Bronson](#). “We are excited to have a dedicated assistant city attorney that will be the central point of contact and liaison for the Empowerment Program, ARTS, DPD and the Denver DA’s office. This attorney will help bridge the gap between not only the community-based agencies and prosecutors, but also will make sure that our office and the Denver DA’s office are working collaboratively to provide alternative answers for this high-risk population.”

The LEAD stakeholder group includes the Denver Police Departments Districts 1, 2, 6, the Citywide Impact Team and the Vice Unit, the District Attorney’s Office, the City Attorney’s Office, the Office of Behavioral Health Strategies, Addiction Research and Treatment Services (ARTS), the Empowerment Program, the Office of the Colorado State Public Defender, the Municipal Public Defender of Denver, the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition and the Denver County Court. Inspired by “arrest-referral” programs in the United Kingdom, LEAD was started in King County, Washington as a collaboration of stakeholders motivated by a shared dissatisfaction with the outcomes and costs of traditional drug law enforcement.

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