



Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD): A multi-site evaluation of North Carolina LEAD programs

Convening on Deflection and Pre-Arrest Diversion

June 29, 2023

Department of Psychiatry, Duke University School of
Medicine

Wilson Center of Science and Justice, Duke Law

Presentation Overview

- Background on LEAD in North Carolina
- Overview of Duke LEAD evaluation
- Evaluation findings
- Policy implications and recommendations
- Dissemination



Duke LEAD evaluation team

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- Ruth Wygle and Grace Feng (Senior research assistants)
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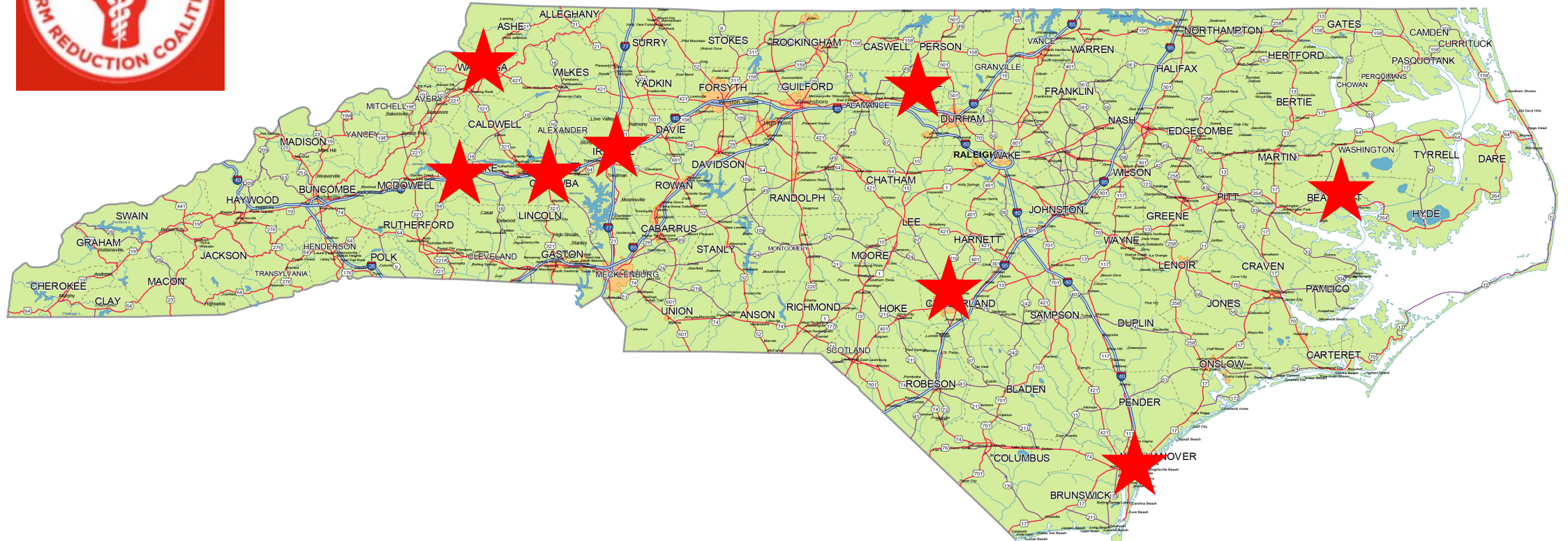
What is Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)?

- Pre-arrest diversion program for people who use drugs and are at risk of being charged with low-level criminal offenses



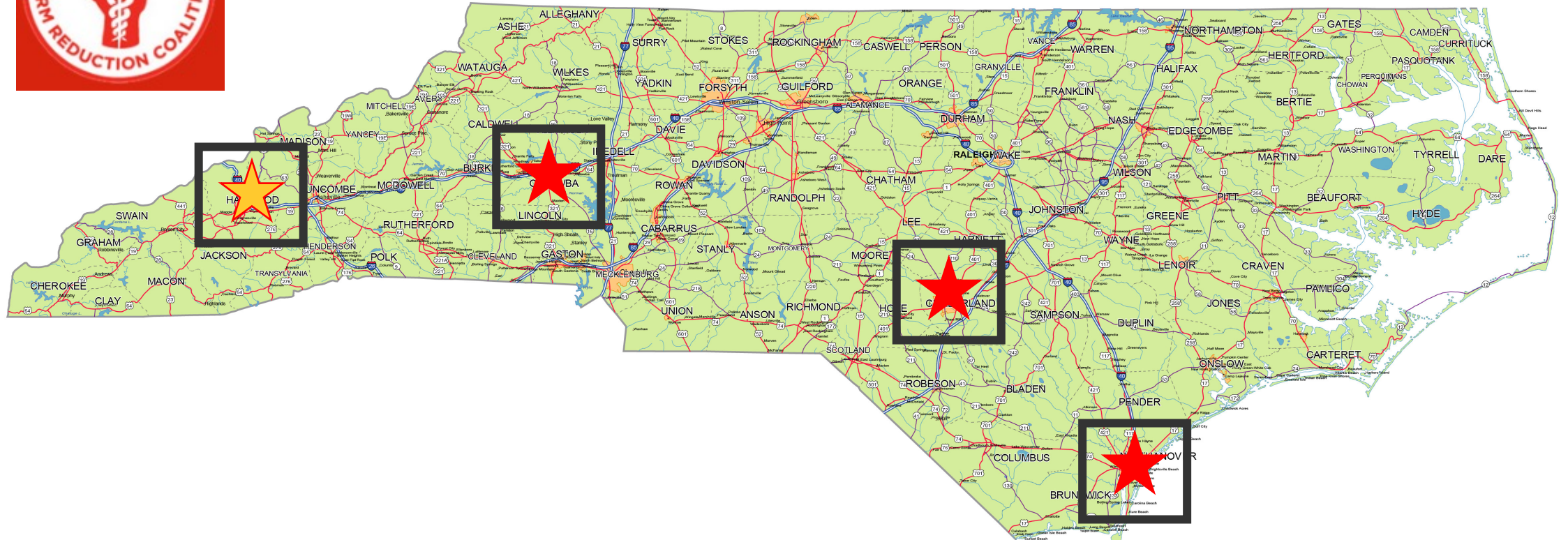
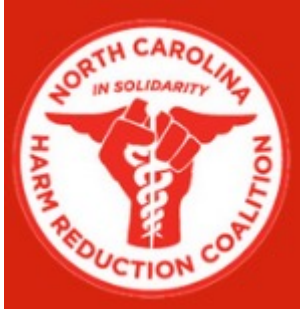
LEAD in North Carolina

NC LEAD programs: Orange County, Fayetteville, Wilmington, Washington (in Beaufort County), Catawba County, Burke County, Watauga County, Iredell County



Duke LEAD 4-site Evaluation

Evaluation sites: Fayetteville, Wilmington, Catawba County, and Waynesville

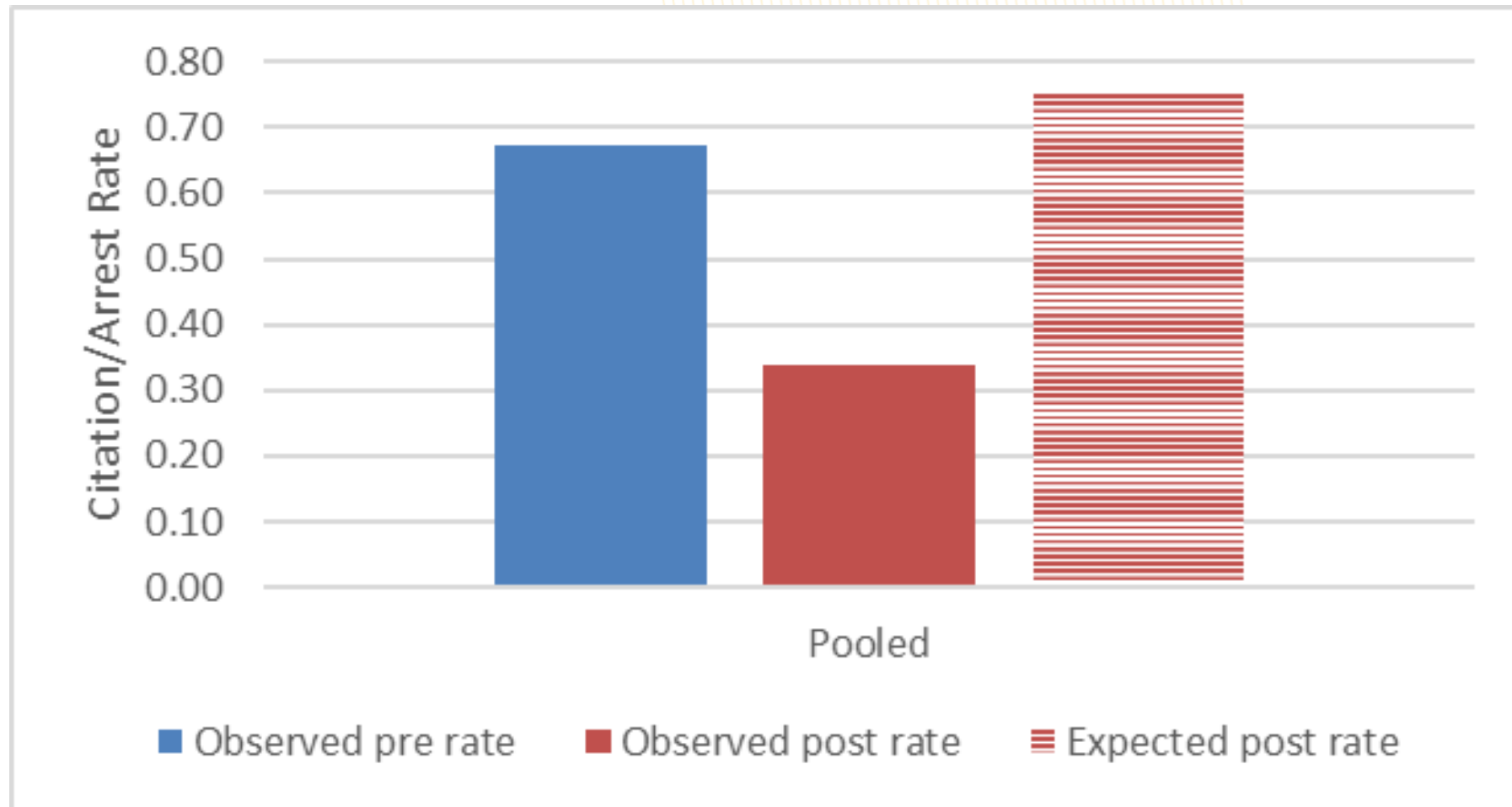


Duke NC LEAD Evaluation: Data Collection

- Mixed-methods evaluation of program processes and outcomes
- Data collection across 4 evaluation sites:
 - 22 LEAD participant surveys/interviews
 - 27 in-depth stakeholder interviews
 - 4 focus groups with law enforcement officers
 - Administrative CJ, behavioral healthcare, and program data for **244** individuals

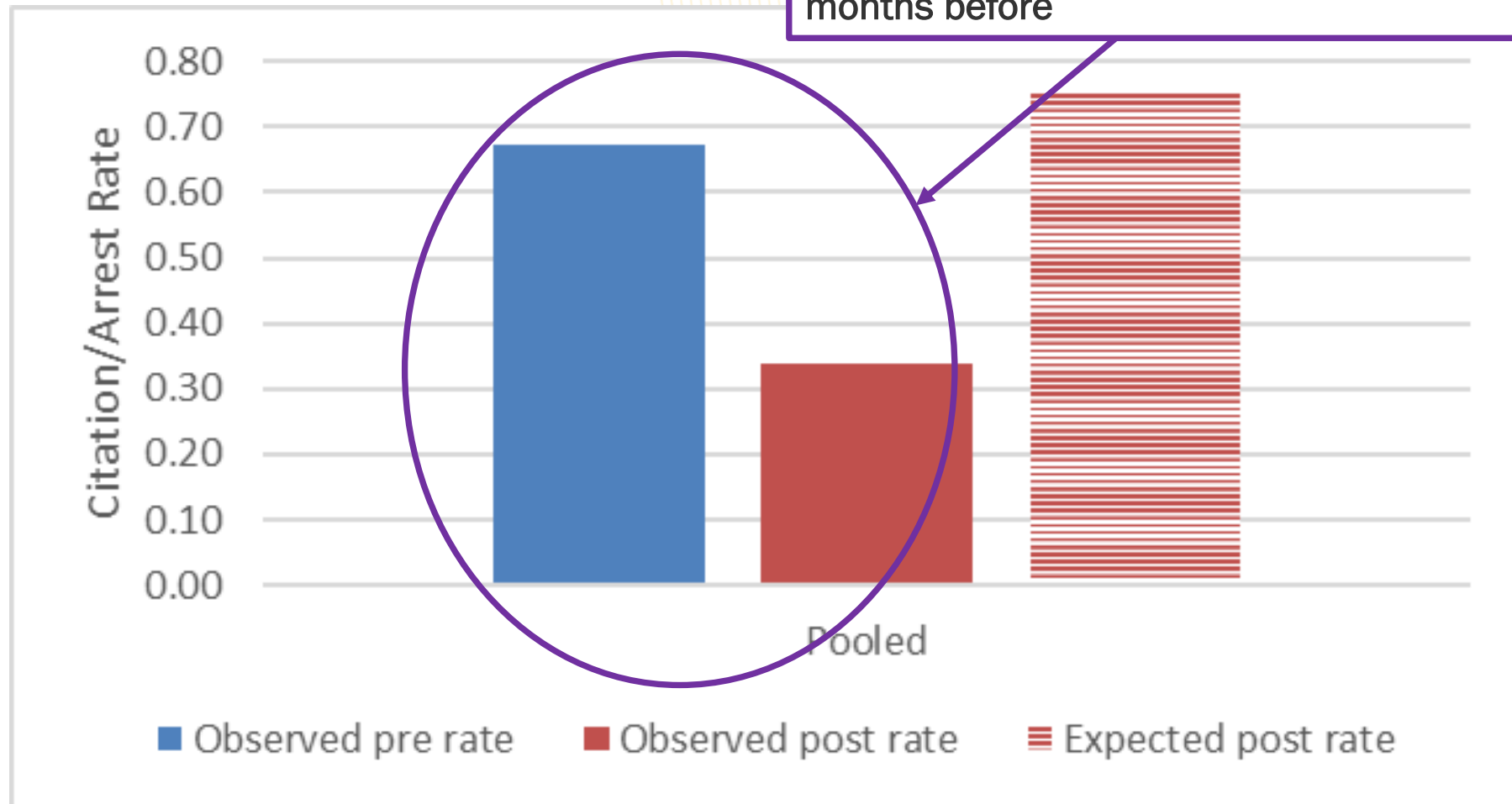


Findings – Citation/arrest rates before and after referral to LEAD



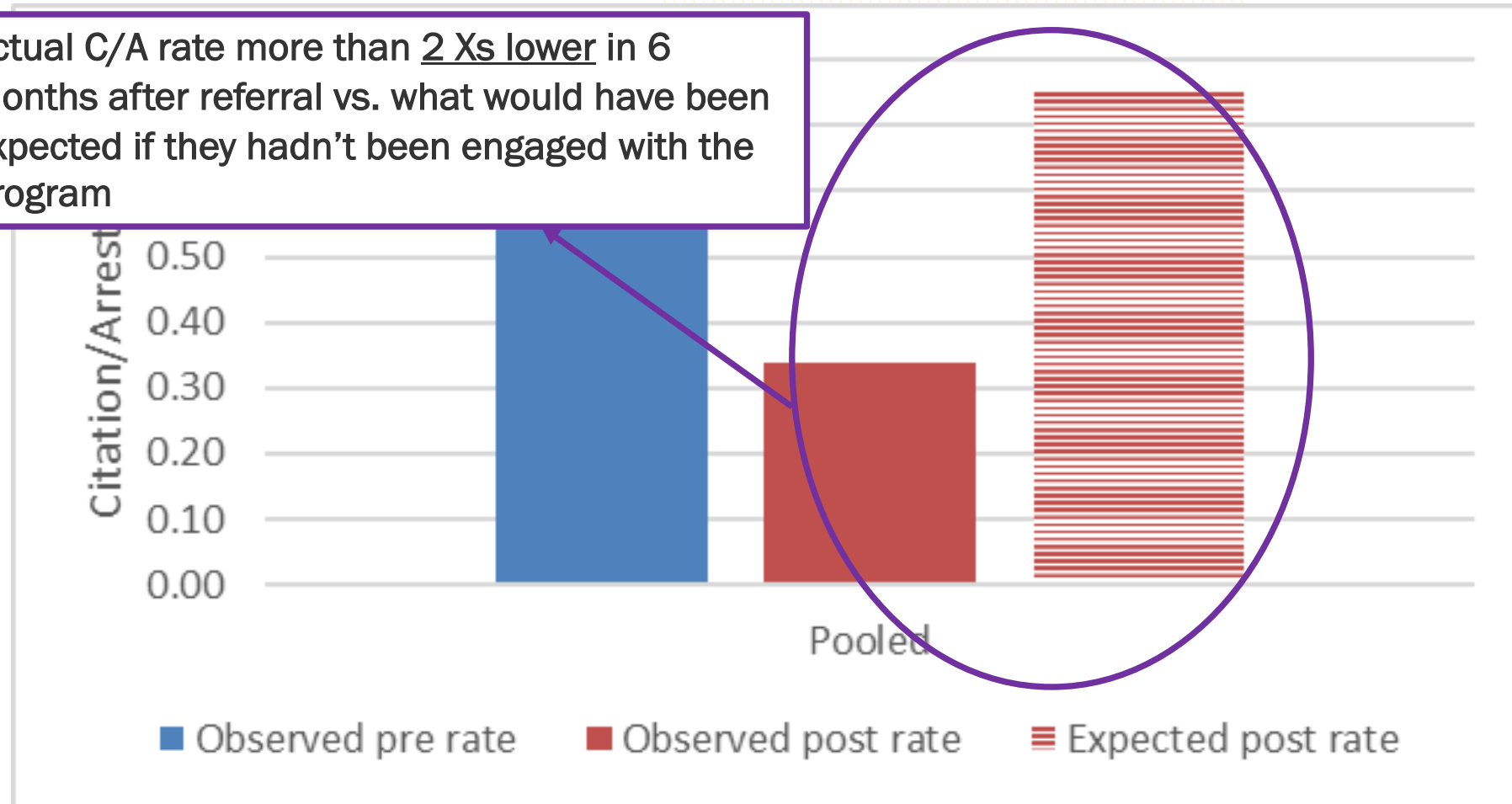
Findings – Citation/arrest rates before and after referral to LEAD

C/A rate 2 Xs lower in 6 months after referral vs. 6 months before

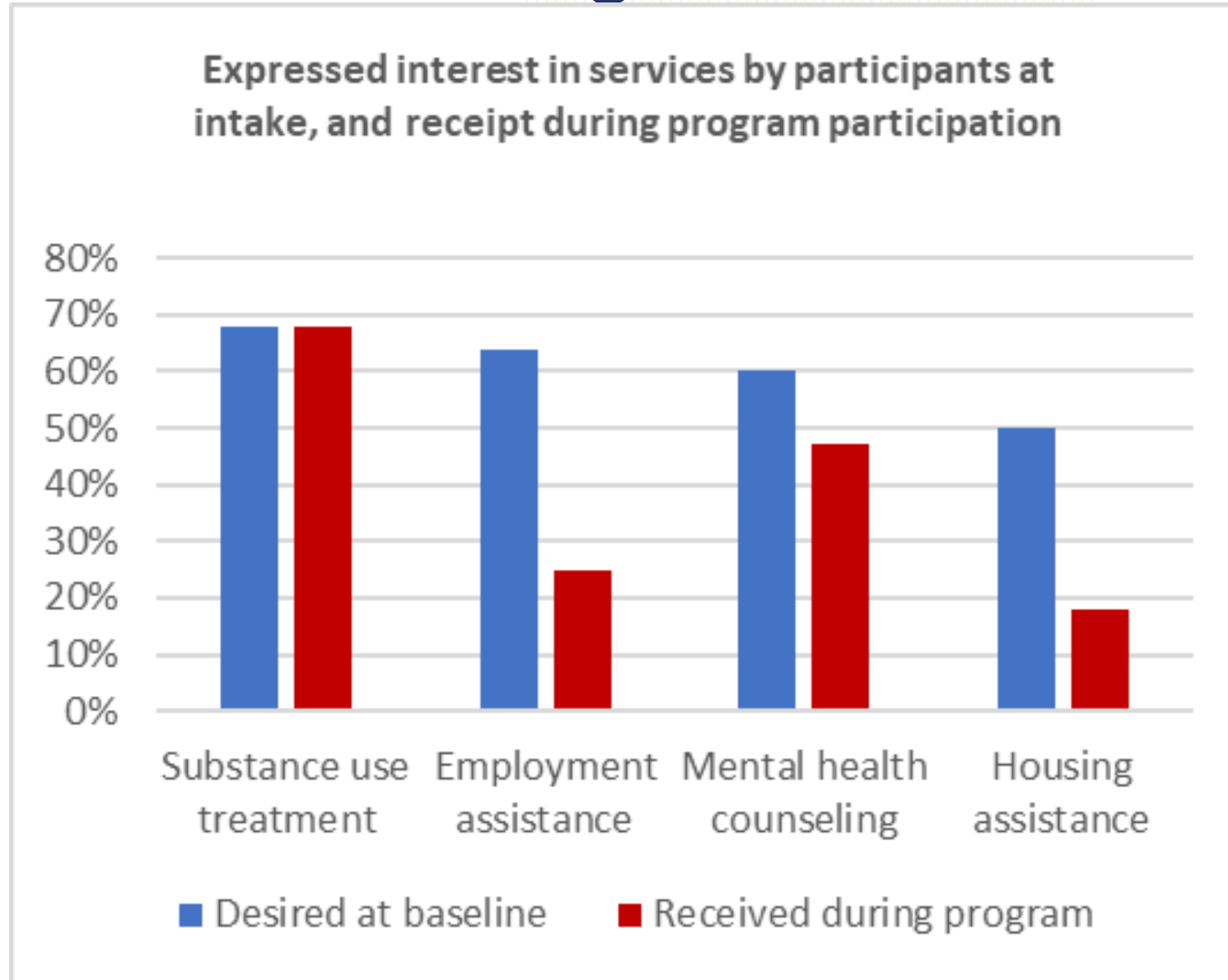


Findings – Citation/arrest rates before and after referral to LEAD

Actual C/A rate more than 2 Xs lower in 6 months after referral vs. what would have been expected if they hadn't been engaged with the program



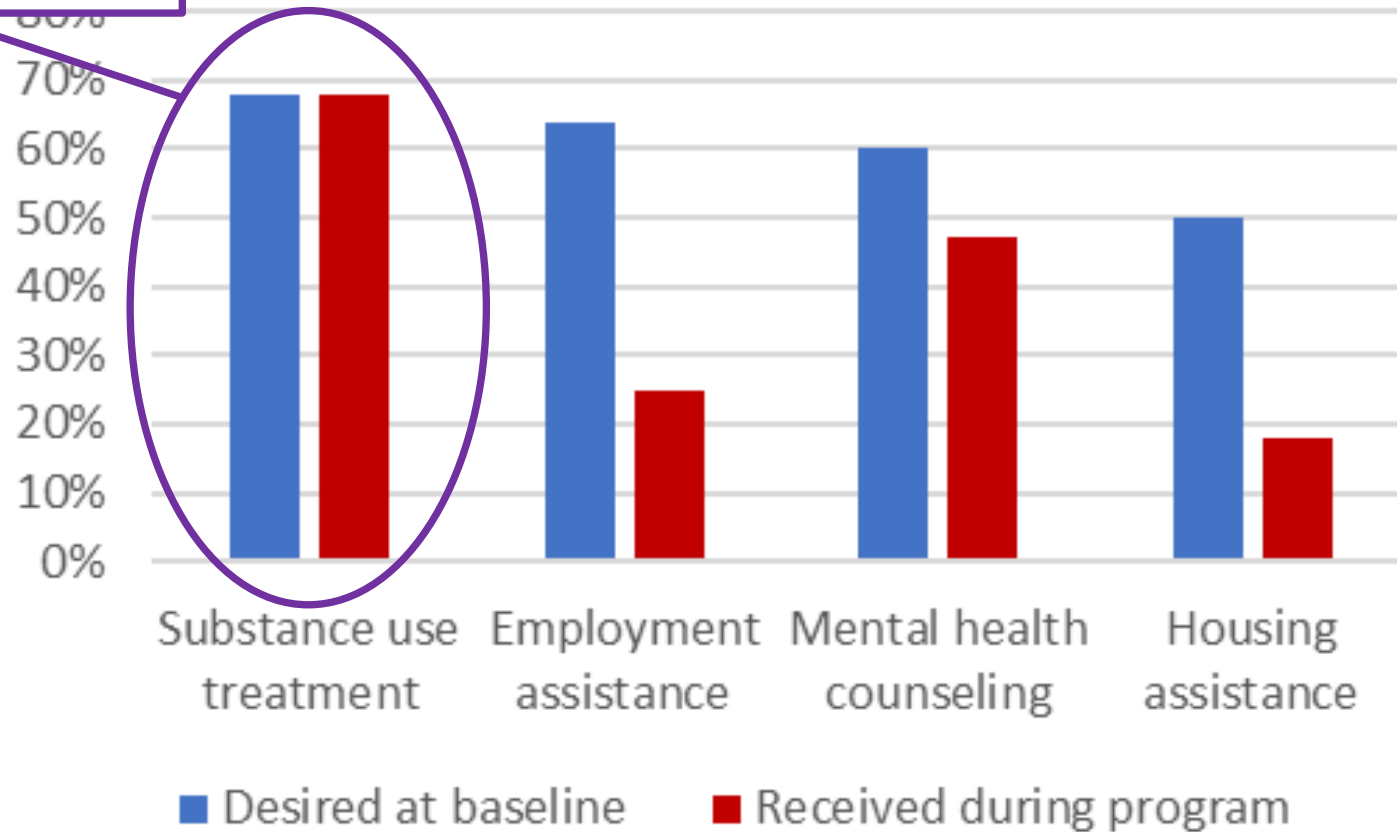
Participant service use during LEAD



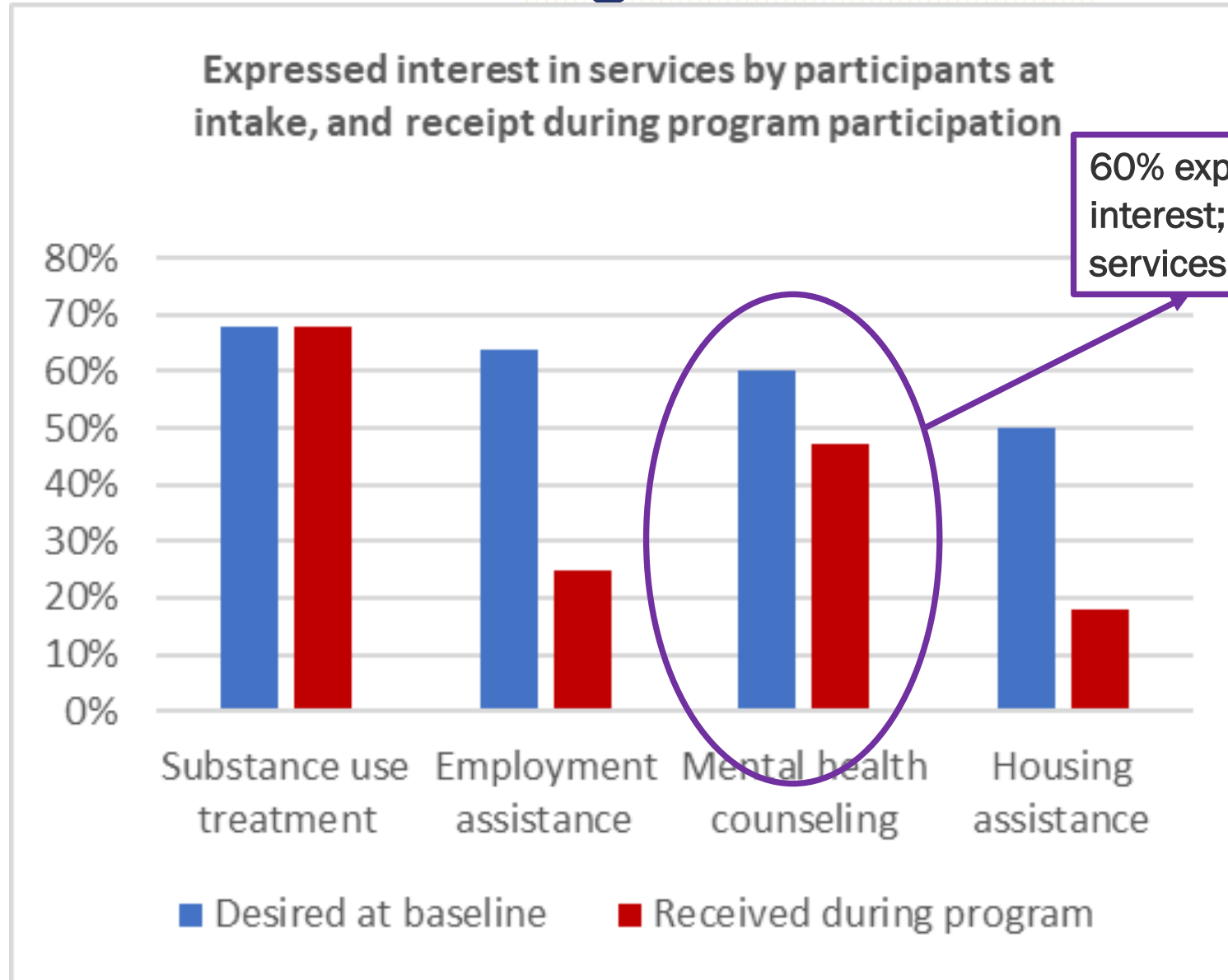
Participant service use during LEAD

Expressed interest in services by participants at intake, and receipt during program participation

68% expressed interest; 68% received services



Participant service use during LEAD



Findings (highlights!) – Process evaluation

- More social referrals (70%) than arrest diversions (30%)
- LEAD referrals and enrollments were disproportionately composed of females (60%) and white people (83%) as compared to the demographics of people with LEAD-eligible drug charges living in the programs' jurisdictions
 - White females were most likely to be referred and enroll
- On average, 50% of individuals referred to LEAD went on to enroll (range of 31-67% across sites)



Select process evaluation findings – referrals and enrollments

Facilitators:

- Supportive policing culture in law enforcement agencies fostered buy-in
- Capacity to conduct warm hand-offs between officer and LEAD staff 24/7 may increase enrollment
- Community-initiated referrals extended reach of the program

Barriers:

- Restrictive eligibility requirements precluded referrals for some people who could benefit from LEAD
- Lack of trust in law enforcement among referred individuals decreased participant acceptance of LEAD
- Lack of officer buy-in and awareness of LEAD decreased number of referrals



All stakeholder groups strongly valued their LEAD programs and the impact it had

Impact on LEAD participants

“Without LEAD, I wouldn’t be where I’m at today – hands down. I mean it is a vital part of what got me clean and got me off the street and got my kids back in my home and made me feel like I’m doing what I need to do to contribute and be a better person. I mean I really owe every good thing I have in my life right now to signing them papers that day.” [program participant]

Impact on LEAD program partners

“I like the fact that it’s collaborative between law enforcement, [DA’s office], and social workers. It’s neat having all of those different people in a room talking about stuff...Us educating social workers and psychologists...about law stuff, and them educating us about treatment. You just learn a lot...through those meetings. [DA’s office representative]

Impact on community

“It keeps people out of the local jail, because like I said a lot of them can’t make bond, and they may stay in there for a while, which impacts their whole family system, so it’s a ripple effect. So, I think it’s got a huge impact in the trajectory of the individual and their family.”
[Behavioral healthcare representative]



Opioid settlement funds: Opportunities to expand LEAD

- North Carolina to receive \$750 million
 - 85% of funds will go to counties and municipalities
- Majority to be spent on opioid treatment and prevention
- Evidence-based criminal justice diversion programs, such as LEAD, are among the delineated approved uses for the funds
- This funding is an opportunity to not just adopt LEAD, but to improve its outcomes and strengthen its impact



Recommendations for optimizing LEAD

- Explicitly address racial equity considerations in program policies and procedures
 - Improving outreach to communities of color
 - Address strategies to reduce racial inequities in arrests and referrals
 - Engage community members in creating program plan
- Hold regular officer trainings grounded in harm reduction principles to increase program awareness and buy-in
- Expand eligibility to be as inclusive as possible of people who use drugs and could benefit from program services and to further racial equity aims



Recommendations for optimizing LEAD

- Aim for warm hand-offs from law enforcement to LEAD staff after every referral to increase the rate of enrollment
- Systematically track demographic data on referrals
 - Including those considered for referral but deemed ineligible and those eligible for referral but who were not referred to LEAD
- Encourage and strengthen participant and community engagement
 - If possible, establish maximum caseloads for LEAD staff
 - Engage with already active community organizations to maximize participant support



Evaluation products

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEAD PROGRAM DATA TRACKING

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion: An Evaluation of North Carolina Programs, Duke Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, and Duke Opioid Collaboratory

Summary list of recommendations

(Detailed recommendations in subsequent pages)

General Data Tracking Suggestions:

1. Use a custom LEAD data tracking app.
2. Use electronic forms whenever possible.
3. Add instructions to all forms.
4. Incorporate regular data collection training.

Data Practices for Referral Process:

1. Track people who decline LEAD and reason why.
2. Track people who officers would like to refer but can not due to ineligibility.
3. Create plan for program to follow-up with people who decline law enforcement referrals.
4. One staff person keeps all referral forms for long-term tracking and review.
5. Run regular reports for people who are not referred to LEAD but charged with LEAD eligible drug charges.
6. Add crime incident code for LEAD to RMS to be used in incident reports.
7. Document time it takes to make a referral.

Data Practices for Program Engagement:

1. Take comprehensive, consistent, and de-identified LEAD program notes for everyone referred to program.
2. Establish definitions for different groups referred to program and update regularly.
3. Ensure key dates are accurate and tracked consistently.
4. Track outcomes of interest regularly.



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Advancing Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion in North Carolina

December 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

As part of a national settlement agreement with opioid manufacturers and distributors, North Carolina will receive \$750 million to help fight the opioid crisis over 18 years beginning in 2022.¹ “These funds will be used to support treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and other life-saving programs and services in communities throughout the state.”² Pursuant to a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the state and local governments, 85% of the North Carolina settlement funds will go to 100 counties and 17 municipalities. These funds present an unprecedented opportunity for local governments to improve their response to drug use. Among the “evidence-based, high-impact strategies”³ that localities can opt to pursue with the funds under the MOA are criminal justice diversion programs.⁴

The Duke University School of Medicine and the Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Duke”) recently completed a multi-site evaluation of one such diversion program in North Carolina.⁵ Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) is a pre-arrest criminal justice diversion program for people who use



Thank you!
Questions?

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