LEAD SEATTLE · KING COUNTY | COLEAD

QUARTERLY REPORT

Q4 2025 • OCTOBER - DECEMBER

CITYWIDE

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SUMMARY

CITY-WIDE, YEAR-TO-DATE

894 CLIENTS

At the end of Q4 2025, LEAD/CoLEAD's Seattle roster contained 894 clients.*

33,056 SUBSTANTIVE MEETINGS

These figures blend CoLEAD and LEAD outcomes; frequency of meetings increases with CoLEAD because participants are available on site.**

606 REFERRALS

LEAD/CoLEAD received 606 referrals for individuals needing support.



A CLOSER LOOK

* This includes active clients who are working with case managers on goals, as well as a smaller number of outreach clients who are in a rapport-building process with case managers. It also includes a small number of alumni clients who may be largely stabilized and self-sufficient, but for whom continued case manager support is beneficial as they set up their lives — even if it's just a few check-ins per year.

** LEAD has undergone a series of performance evaluations to test client outcomes, recidivism, and other metrics. One study found that each meeting between a participant and case manager increases that person's likelihood of gaining shelter or permanent supportive housing. The actual likelihood of gaining these resources depends on many factors, including the regional supply of shelter and housing.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CITY-WIDE, YEAR-TO-DATE

694 Connections to behavioral health programs

2,914 Connections to substance use treatment

4,753 Connections to legal services

740 Steps taken toward financial self-sufficiency

Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4

A CLOSER LOOK

For some LEAD clients, any substantive engagement with a case manager is a huge win. For all LEAD clients, every substantive meeting with a case manager is one step closer to stability.

LEAD clients often face additional barriers to housing, shelter, and other resources. For many LEAD clients, a LEAD case manager is the first form of interpersonal support in years. As a result, LEAD case managers are often required to engage in the slow task of building rapport and trust with LEAD clients before the arduous work of resource acquisition begins.

2026: A FRESH START

In Q2 2025, Seattle's LEAD program responded to a budget deficit by significantly downsizing its workforce. LEAD needed to maintain intensive case management standards while serving both its existing client roster and the high volume of new referrals, all with fewer resources. This put the program in a dire position.

Through the rest of 2025, the Seattle LEAD program employed a variety of strategies to sustain its work, including:

- Decreasing the number of community referrals accepted. This resulted in the lowest number of community referrals since 2020, which is the year that Seattle LEAD opened up to community referrals.
- Increasing the average number of clients per LEAD case manager, beyond LEAD's normal intensive case management standards.
- Implementing more stringent discharge policies that give case management teams less time to regain contact with lost clients. This led to the highest number of client discharges since the LEAD program's inception.

Fortunately, LEAD's budget was stabilized in Seattle's 2026 budget cycle, which backfilled the 2025 shortfall and created room for new hires. This backfill was critical. Without it, LEAD would have needed to discharge additional clients in order to proportion its caseload to its funded capacity. LEAD saw average caseload sizes increase in 2025. The program's primary focus in the beginning of 2026 will be to work with its subcontracted case management entities to rapidly hire new staff and bring caseload sizes within LEAD's normal case management standards. This will allow case managers to apply more attention to each individual client, which is critical for quality case management practices.

Even after right-sizing caseloads, LEAD's 2026 budget will allow the program to increase the rate of referrals and the volume of work it can do. As Seattle's LEAD program moves into 2026, it remains committed to the following priorities: complementing law enforcement operations, providing more robust support for the City's CARE responders, and strengthening partnerships with civic and elected leadership throughout the City.

CONNECTING TO CARE

We Deliver Care (WDC) Ambassadors used to see James everyday in the Chinatown International District (CID).James' demeanor and appearance were generally the same. He was isolated, struggling, and overwhelmed by unmet behavioral health needs. WDC would frequently see James, whether on their regular neighborhood walks or when a community member called them for deescalation support. James had a variety of behaviors that put him at odds with the neighborhood, one of which included publicly visible substance use near Summit Sierra School. Over time, James began to share more of his life with the WDC team, until one day he finally told them that he wanted help. WDC then referred James to LEAD.

Outreach continued over the next several months. Since the City directed CoLEAD to have a special focus in the CID, James was considered for one of CoLEAD's very limited caseload spots. CoLEAD includes both intensive case management and a non-congregate transitional lodging unit. In September 2025, James officially entered the CoLEAD program, met his new case management team, and got keys to his transitional lodging room.

From the moment he stepped into CoLEAD lodging, something shifted. With stability came space to think, plan, and envision the life he wanted to build. As his case managers worked closely with him to identify meaningful goals and confront long-standing barriers, he engaged with resilience and determination. On his own volition, he began attending daily appointments with a Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) provider and steadily working toward a therapeutic dose. He also re-established care with a primary care physician and began to work on reinstating his benefits.

When his nomination to a permanent supportive housing building was accepted, James was initially nervous. He had worked hard to build stability in his CoLEAD lodgings, and moving into yet another new space felt scary. After talking to his CoLEAD case managers and making a plan, he accepted the new challenge and is excited for the opportunity! As he moves on from CoLEAD lodging into his permanent housing, CoLEAD's Aftercare team will follow him to ensure that his transition is smooth.

Today, the change is evident in his reduced law enforcement contacts and in the way LEAD partners now regard him. We Deliver Care Ambassadors rarely see him in the CID anymore, but when they do, the encounters are positive, grounded, and hopeful. They attribute this transformation to what became possible once he was connected to case management and stable lodging.



ABOUT LEAD & COLEAD

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) is a widely replicated community-based, pre-booking diversion model that was designed and first implemented in Seattle/King County. CoLEAD utilizes the model and lessons learned from LEAD to provide temporary lodging and intensive case management.

PARTNERS

LEAD is governed under an interjurisdictional memorandum of understanding by a Policy Coordinating Group (PCG), to which the project management team reports. The PCG sets policy and approves all operational protocols for LEAD work.

PDA provides project management for Seattle LEAD and subcontracts with REACH, a program of Evergreen Treatment Services, to provide LEAD's outreach and case management services.

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