

Quick Start Guide: Building or Strengthening a Deflection Team



**CRIMINAL JUSTICE
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GETTING STARTED

Are you launching a new deflection initiative or strengthening an existing one? This quick-start guide will help you orient your team, assess your readiness, and identify actionable next steps.

***Note:** You don't need to have everything in place to begin. This checklist is a roadmap, not a requirement. Once your team has a basic foundation and community support, you can get started and continue building over time. Good luck on your first steps!

CHAMPION BUILDING AND COMMUNITY BUY-IN

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assess your local landscape | Map out current community efforts and gaps; identify data sources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engage diverse community voices | Include people with lived/living experience, responders, behavioral/public health, emergency departments (ED), and harm reduction (HR) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify community champions | Find leaders that support the work, e.g., elected officials, law enforcement (LE), peer leaders, board members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build relationships and trust | Participate in coalitions, host listening sessions, or share common messaging to reduce stigma |

CLARIFY YOUR PATH

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Align your model with community needs | Use what you have learned to shape your model |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose one or more deflection pathways | Be deliberate and intentional with your planned activities and responses: PTACC Six Pathways of Deflection and Pre-Arrest Diversion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Define your goals | Set clear measurable goals that reflect team impact |

SECURE INITIAL FUNDING

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explore available funding sources | Look for funding with the Office of Criminal Justice Services, Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services, Office of the Attorney General, local levies, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build a startup budget | Include staffing, transportation, supplies, training, technology, and indirect costs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate across systems | Pool resources or braid funding across partners |

ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify a lead agency | LE, behavioral health (BH) agencies, Fire/EMS, or public health (PH)- choose based on capacity and alignment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit essential roles | LE, peer supporters (PRS), BH providers, EMS, navigators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assign a program coordinator | Manages day-to-day operations and has protected time to do so |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Define roles and supervision | Clarify who does what and how each role is supported |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Address team gaps | Identify missing roles or cultural representation and bring in partners to help fill those needs |

BUILD OPERATIONS

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draft operational materials | Policies, job descriptions, referral protocols, internal tools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set outreach schedule and times | Decide when and how often your team will engage individuals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose your visibility strategy | Use vehicles and attire that build community trust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate regularly | Establish team huddles, case reviews, and secure ways to share updates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Define engagement duration | Tailor the number of contacts or length of duration for clients to your team's model and capacity (e.g., single contact, 30–90 days, indefinite) |

BUILD CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engage partners and build a strong support network. | Prioritize referral sources (ED, first responders) and critical client supports (housing, treatment, social services) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draft MOUs or BAAs | Clarify expectations and responsibilities of parties through memorandums of understanding, business associate agreements, or other formal mechanisms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create secure referral pathways | Use Releases of Information to support care coordination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hold regular partner check ins | Strengthen collaboration and solve problems or barriers as they arise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Train team members in core topics | Substance use disorder, trauma informed care, Motivational Interviewing, mental health, team safety, crisis intervention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plan for continued learning | Protect time for ongoing professional development |

TRACK KEY DATA

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose data tracking system | Options include Cordata, Excel, RedCap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Track key metrics | Consider demographics, referrals, connections to treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share your impact | Highlight outcomes for funders, stakeholders, community |

PLAN FOR LONG TERM SUCCESS

| ACTION | GUIDANCE |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain champions | Ensure ongoing communication and engagement with community champions, advocates, and diverse voices who can support, promote, and sustain efforts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a process manual | Document key procedures to support sustainability, onboarding, and succession planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strengthen funding/evaluation | Diversify support and consider collaborating with external evaluators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Review and refine annually | Do annual quality improvement assessments and update accordingly |