



City Launches LEAD Putting Santa Fe in Proactive Spotlight

City of Santa Fe

May 5, 2014

The Santa Fe Police Department receives national attention, as the department along with multiple community stakeholders, launch Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion or LEAD. The program officially kicked off Monday, April 21, 2014, and is likely to serve up to 30 candidates during the current fiscal year.

LEAD is a collaboration of area services and organizations designed to provide wrap around services, including life skills, employment opportunities, drug and emotional counseling, and multiple forms of education for low-level drug offenders who show serious intentions of turning their lives around.

The program is based on pre-booking diversion in which low level, non-violent drug offenders are diverted into treatment instead of jail. They are selected by trained property crimes detectives only and must fit a specific set of criteria prior to being selected for the program. If the offender deviates from the case worker's plan or program, the initial criminal charges can be refiled and the offender would be subject to the normal judicial process.

Santa Fe Police Captain Jerome Sanchez attended the National Summit on Illegal Drugs held in Washington, D.C. April 16, 2014. There, the Captain presented LEAD to the U.S. Drug Czar, national leaders, and more than 200 law enforcement executives from around the country. The goal of the summit was to discuss fundamental shifts in the way our nation's law enforcement agencies handle drug offenses and offenders. Leaders from cities across the U.S. agree heroin addiction is at epidemic levels, and current law enforcement and judicial practices aren't helping to curb crime, illegal trafficking, or addictions.

"It's exciting to be at the fore front of innovative ways in combating drug addiction in our community," Santa Fe Police Captain Jerome Sanchez said. "We are utilizing alternative crime control strategies and including social services from within our community to implement new and revolutionary methods of policing."

An overwhelming majority of those in attendance agree LEAD is one of the most innovative tools that could be used to combat the nation's war on drugs. Many departments are now eagerly watching as Santa Fe implements this program and awaiting the city's results.

Santa Fe is the second city in the nation to implement L.E.A.D. Seattle, WA, implemented the program in 2011.

Santa Fe City Councilors committed \$300,000 in initial funding, (\$100,000 for fiscal year 2013, and \$200,000 for FY 14/15). The city's LEAD task force is also looking for other governmental and private sources to help pay for continued costs.