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 cannot due to ineligibility.
3. Create plan for program to follow-up with people who decline law enforcement referrals.
4. One staff person to keep all referral forms for long-term tracking and review.
5. Generate reports regularly for people who are not referred to LEAD but had LEAD-eligible drug charges.
6. Add crime incident code for LEAD to RMS to be used in incident reports.
7. Document amount of time taken to make each referral.

Data Practices for Program Engagement:
1. Take comprehensive, consistent, and de-identified LEAD program notes for each person referred to program.
2. Establish status categories for people referred to LEAD and update status regularly.
3. Ensure key dates are accurate and tracked consistently.
4. Track outcomes of interest regularly.

1) Use a custom LEAD data tracking app

Proposed Process:
- Work with a software developer to create a LEAD data tracking app that all program partners can access and use according to data privacy rules. App can be accessed by phone and computer and can be used to complete all LEAD forms (e.g., referral forms, intake assessments, consent forms), case notes, and other tracking sheets. App can include alerts that notify particular LEAD program partners of tasks that need to be completed. ***If app is developed, many of the other recommendations below are not needed since data will be tracked in a centralized location across all agencies.***

Why is this important?
- Data can be tracked consistently across all program partners and accessible to all program partners, eliminating the need to send forms across agencies.
- Data loss is less likely to occur.
- Mobile app can be accessed when law enforcement and LEAD staff are in the field.

2) Use electronic forms whenever possible

Why is this important?
- Use of electronic forms avoids possibility of handwriting errors.
- Electronic forms make it easier to share files quickly among program staff.
- Programming can be added to electronic forms so that required fields cannot be skipped, decreasing the likelihood of missing data.

3) Add instructions to all forms

Why is this important?
- Instructions ensure accurate completion of forms.
- Instructions can include when to write 'N/A' so it is clear if information is missing or if it is not applicable.

4) Incorporate regular data collection training

Proposed Process:
- Provide training for how to accurately complete forms and collect other data of interest. Include training in law enforcement LEAD training and during on-boarding for all new LEAD staff. Conduct periodic refresher training. Explain importance of data tracking and accuracy for evaluation purposes to promote adherence to accurate form completion.

Why is this important?
- Training helps ensure data is collected consistently and accurately across law enforcement and LEAD staff.

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Data Practices for Referral Process

1) Track people who decline LEAD referral and reason

Proposed process:
- Include fields on referral form for officers to document if someone declined the referral to LEAD and their reason for declining. Send referral forms for people who decline LEAD to the same staff who receive the forms for people who accept.

Why is this important?
- Program can identify trends of referral circumstances (location, charges, events leading up to referral, etc.) and demographics (race, ethnicity, gender, age) of people who are not accepting LEAD referrals.
- Program can build a more complete picture of the circumstances in which officers are offering LEAD to individuals and their demographics.

2) Track people officers would like to refer but cannot due to ineligibility

Proposed process:
- Include fields on referral form for officers to document characteristics of people who they wanted to refer to LEAD but were determined to be ineligible after running criminal history. Create a field for the specific eligibility requirement the person did not meet. Send referral forms for people who were not eligible to the same staff who receive the forms for people who accept the LEAD referral.

Why is this important?
- Program can identify if there are particular demographic groups that are more likely to be ineligible than others.
- Program can determine if there are specific eligibility requirements that are excluding large numbers of people who would otherwise be interested and benefit from the program.

3) Create plan to follow up with people who decline referrals

Proposed process:
- Program identifies LEAD staff who can follow up with people who decline LEAD referrals offered by law enforcement to learn their reasons for declining.

Why is this important?
- Program can learn why people decline LEAD and make adjustments to program operations and referral practices accordingly.

4) One staff person keeps all referral forms for long-term tracking

Proposed process:
- For some LEAD programs, referral forms get scanned and sent to multiple agencies and multiple staff in each agency. In order to use referral forms for evaluation purposes, a single staff person at one agency should be responsible for keeping all forms in a dedicated location.

Why is this important?
- If it is not one staff person's responsibility to store the referral forms, forms may be distributed across multiple agencies or be misplaced when needed for program evaluation purposes.

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5) Run regular reports for people who are not referred to LEAD but were charged with LEAD-eligible drug charges

Proposed process:

- Crime Analyst or other staff at police departments can review incident reports or systematically collect data of interest with law enforcement data software (e.g., Crystal program) to identify people who were not referred to LEAD but were charged with LEAD-eligible drug charges, or other LEAD-eligible charges if it is also known that the person uses substances. Demographics of people charged, location of charge, and other notable circumstances about the law enforcement encounter should be reviewed.

Why is this important?

- People who were eligible for LEAD but not referred are good candidates for the programs to create their own control/comparison groups. Outcomes of interest for the control/comparison group can be compared to the LEAD participants' outcomes over time.
- Program can get a complete picture of the people that law enforcement is not referring but who could possibly benefit from the program.
- Program can use the information to do more targeted outreach to all eligible people.

6) Add crime incident code for LEAD to RMS to be used in incident reports

Proposed process:

- Law enforcement agency creates crime incident code in Record Management System (RMS) that can be used for any interaction that includes a LEAD referral (decline or accept). Officers are regularly encouraged to add a code for all LEAD referral incidents.

Why is this important?

- Depending on how the internal RMS system works for a given law enforcement agency, all LEAD-related incident. reports can be pulled at one time if the code is regularly used, which could be useful for evaluation purposes.

7) Document time it takes to make a referral

Proposed process:

- Add field for the time that interaction between law enforcement and individual being referred began and time that interaction ended (i.e., time that law enforcement left scene or completed warm hand-off) to referral form.

Why is this important?

- Program can assess what type of referrals take more or less time.
- Program can assess how the amount of time spent making a diversion referral compares to the time spent making an arrest.

Data Practices for Program Engagement

1) Take comprehensive, consistent, and de-identified LEAD program notes for everyone referred to program

Proposed process:

- If available, LEAD staff take notes in a secure note-taking system/program that is centralized for all program partners to view. If Excel is the only software available for note taking, create a tab for each participant's notes and each update will be in its own cell with the full date in the next cell over. Notes are written for any interaction that LEAD staff has with anyone referred to LEAD, even if they don't become LEAD participants. If notes can only be gathered during case staffings, then a similar process can be followed, but a note would include any updates from the previous staffing. If possible, all LEAD staff who write notes should be trained to write them in a similar way and include the same information. If the LEAD program ever plans to work with an external evaluator, it is advisable to exclude LEAD participant names in notes and use pronouns and "LEAD participant" in lieu of name. An ID number can be assigned for each participant and a list of names and IDs maintained separately.

Why is this important?

- Tracking participant updates over time can be beneficial for maintaining continuity when there is staff turnover.
- Notes can be used to assess progress towards goals for LEAD participants.
- Dates of LEAD staff and participant contact can be used to assess the extent of participants' engagement with LEAD staff, which can be useful for re-engagement efforts, for moving people to an inactive category, as appropriate, and for evaluation purposes.

2) Establish status categories for people referred to LEAD and update status regularly

Proposed process:

- Create defined categories for different types of participant engagement with program (i.e., active, inactive, out of county, ineligible). Definitions for categories are written on a centralized document that is accessible to all program partners. Each person referred to LEAD will be placed in a category that can be tracked in a master sheet. For example, there should be defined categories for (1) people who were referred and never completed an assessment, and (2) people who were referred, completed the assessment, engaged with the program, and then later ceased engagement.

Why is this important?

- Any LEAD partner can know the status of a case easily.
- Evaluation analyses can be done on each of the different status groups.

3) Ensure key dates are accurate and tracked consistently

Proposed process:
- Create a master sheet that assigns a row for each LEAD participant and includes columns of key dates and information (i.e., referral date, assessment date, date program lost contact, date of re-instating charges, status change, date of move, date of death). One staff person or several staff on the LEAD team can update sheet when key events take place. Complete dates of relevant events should be documented consistently across LEAD participants.

Why is this important?
- Program can get a better understanding of participants and their progress over time.
- Dates and completion status of key assessments can be used for evaluation purposes.

4) Track outcomes of interest regularly

Proposed process:
- Create a master sheet (could be combined with sheet in Recommendation 3) of key outcomes (variables) of interest that can be updated at every case staffing or on a quarterly basis. Outcomes of interest could include housing status, employment status, drug use, service utilization, arrests, etc. Crime analyst or police representative can find criminal justice updates in statewide criminal justice database (e.g., North Carolina CJLEADS). Managed Care Organization representatives can use their organization's database to track service utilization dates. Case managers and/or peers can provide life-circumstance updates.

Why is this important?
- Tracking key outcomes of interest over time can help LEAD staff and LEAD participants identify barriers and facilitators to achieving goals and identify areas of progress and setbacks overtime. If goal-setting is part of the program, collecting this information can help identify when goals are reached for LEAD participants.
- Tracking key outcomes of interest can be helpful when there is staff turnover, allowing new staff to easily learn about LEAD participants' experience in the program over time.

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