

Arrest and Jail Alternatives program

Overview

The Arrest and Jail Alternatives (AJA) grant program was established through House Bill 1767 (2019), sponsored by the Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs (WASPC).

AJA supports local initiatives to properly identify persons involved with the criminal legal system who have substance use disorders and other behavioral health needs, and then engage those persons through therapeutic interventions and other services. This engagement is demonstrated by experience, peer-reviewed research, and credible or promising practices prior to or at the time of jail booking, or while in custody.

In 2019, the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WASPC and the Criminal Justice Training Center (CJTC) to develop, fund, and coordinate implementation of the AJA program beside expansion of Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) under [RCW 71.24.589](#).

Pilot sites were established following a public procurement process in three cities: Olympia, Port Angeles, and Walla Walla. In 2023, additional funding was provided to expand the grant program to additional areas.

Program goals

The initial expected outcomes of the grant program include:

- Reduce arrests, time spent in custody, and/or recidivism for clients served by the program
- Increase access to and utilization of nonemergency community behavioral health services
- Reduce utilization of emergency services.
- Increase resilience, stability, and well-being for clients served
- Reduce costs for the legal system compared to processing cases as usual

Eligibility requirements

AJA first diverts people with behavioral health needs who have had law enforcement contact away

from jail and prosecution in the pre-booking phase. These people are supported into collaborative, community-based systems of response and care.

Individuals may be referred to AJA if they are exposed to the criminal legal system due to illegal activity related to behavioral health issues or poverty or even if the referred individual doesn't have a criminal history.

Authority

Authority is enacted through Second Substitute House Bill 1767 (2019) and codified as [RCW 36.28A.450](#).

Budget

The 2023-25 Biennial Operating Budget includes funding for continued operation of existing AJA programs in the total of

- \$1,000,000 - State General Funds
- \$1,000,000 - Substance Abuse Block Grant (SABG)

Second Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5536 included additional biennial appropriations for expansion in the amount of

- \$1,400,000 State General Funds
- \$3,600,000 Opioid abatement settlement account

People served

WASPC submits yearly reports on AJA milestones, including key partnerships, timeline, and qualitative outcomes data.

The most recent report for 2022 is available online:

[2022 Arrest and Jail Alternatives Annual Report](#)

Highlights in the report include that AJA staff:

- Served 166 unique individuals from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022
- Contacted more than 600 additional individuals on a lighter touch basis via street and camp outreach services and community events
- Triaged more than 200 individuals

Key partners

- Washington Association of Sherrifs and Police Chiefs (WASPC)
- Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC)

- LEAD Support Bureau/Purpose.Dignity.Action (PDA)

Oversight

WASPC oversees program level implementation, including monitoring of contract deliverables, performance, and evaluation.

HCA's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) ensures program expenditures are in alignment with federal and state requirements.

More information

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