

The Deflection Conversation Framework: A Community Engagement Tool for First Responders

Catching Up With COSSUP, June 2024

Deflection¹ is a preventative approach to addressing issues related to addiction, including drug-related crime, without the need to wait for an overdose, a crisis, or an arrest. Over the last decade, deflection initiatives have been increasingly implemented nationwide to connect people with substance use disorders (SUDs) to community-based treatment and services. One of the five critical elements of deflection² is the standardization of deflection practices within the first responder agency (Critical Element 3). This element emphasizes the necessity of training to both educate first responders and other deflection personnel on substance use and garner buy-in and support for deflection initiatives.

To respond to this need, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities' (TASC) Center for Health & Justice (CHJ), alongside the University of Missouri-Kansas City Addiction Transfer Technology Center (UMKC-ATTC), developed *The Deflection Conversation Framework: A Community Engagement Tool for First Responders*.³ The three-module training is designed to provide first responders and other deflection personnel with the empathetic communication skills they need to effectively engage people who use drugs during deflection interactions and make a positive impact on someone's journey to recovery. This self-directed e-course was developed for the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP).

The training includes pre- and post-training knowledge checks to evaluate participant comprehension of the topics presented in the course and includes an assessment to measure any shifts in attitudes and beliefs. Participants also receive a certificate at the end to acknowledge their successful completion of the training.

Module One: The Science of Addiction provides an overview of addiction science and explains how SUDs and drug use affect the brain and lead to changes in behavior and decision making. The module presents data that show the likelihood of multiple relapses before achieving long-term recovery⁴ and aims to reduce stigma toward people who use drugs through both research and assuming the perspective of a person in recovery from drug use.

Module Two: The Deflection Conversation Framework focuses on how to engage and support individuals with SUDs throughout their transformations from addiction to recovery. Strategies and information intended to empower individuals and foster enduring recovery, like motivational interviewing, stages of change, and self-perception theory, are reviewed. Two new concepts are introduced, the Deflection Conversation Core Principles and the Deflection Conversation Framework, and the rationale behind implementing deflection initiatives is explained.

Module Three: Application of the Deflection Conversation Framework builds upon the knowledge that participants acquired during previous modules and provides examples on how to put that knowledge into practice. This module presents the Deflection Conversation Toolbox, guides participants through example deflection scenarios, and provides sample scripts. An example of a deflection interaction scenario is presented, illustrating the step-by-step process and the appropriate tools for each stage of change portrayed.

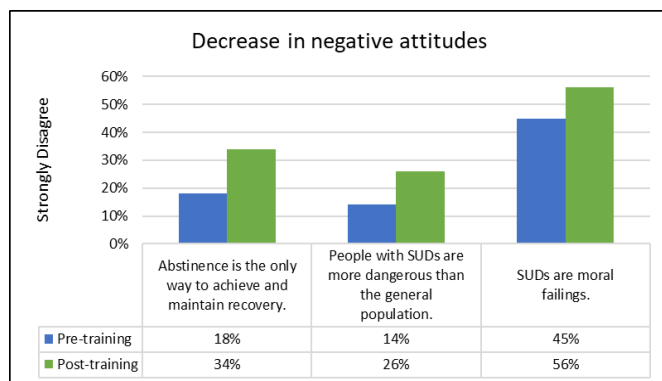
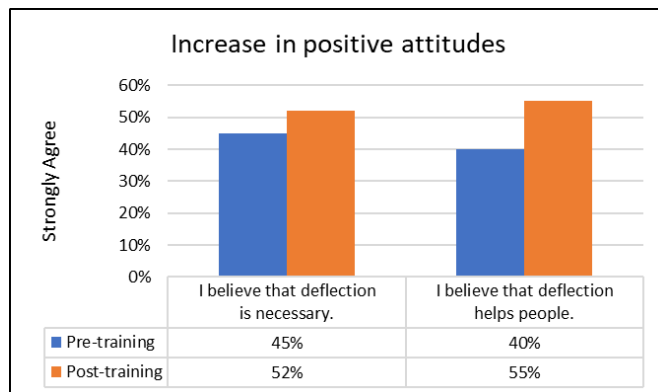
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Results

CHJ has continued to partner with UMKC to analyze the results of the pre- and post-evaluations. Since the launch of the Deflection Conversation Framework in 2023, analysis indicates that the training both increases participants' knowledge of deflection programming and SUDs and results in positive changes in attitudes toward deflection and people with SUDs. See the charts below for highlighted results. *Note: Statements were condensed for formatting purposes.*

Deflection Conversation Network: Participants' Attitudes Toward Deflection and SUDs



Access to Training

To access "The Deflection Conversation Framework: A Community Engagement Tool for First Responders" training, visit <https://www.cossup.org/Learn/SelfDirected/Deflection>.

Endnotes

1. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance's (BJA) Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP); Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities' (TASC) Center for Health & Justice (CHJ); International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2023, "The Six Pathways: Frameworks for Implementing Deflection to Treatment, Services, and Recovery," <https://www.cossup.org/Content/Documents/Articles/CHJ-TASC Six Pathways Framework for Implementing Deflection June 2023.pdf>.
2. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, BJA's COSSUP; TASC's CHJ, 2020, "Critical Elements of Successful First Responder Diversion Programs," *Catching Up With COSSUP*, <https://www.cossup.org/Content/Documents/Articles/CHJ TASC Critical Elements.pdf>.
3. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, BJA's COSSUP; TASC's CHJ, 2022, "The Deflection Conversation Framework: A Community Engagement Tool for First Responders" E-course, <https://www.cossup.org/Learn/SelfDirected/Deflection>.
4. Kelly, J. F., Greene, M. C., Bergman, B. G., White, W. L., and Hoepfner, B. B., 2019, "How Many Recovery Attempts Does It Take to Successfully Resolve an Alcohol or Drug Problem? Estimates and Correlates From a National Study of Recovering U.S. Adults," *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 43(7): 1533–1544, <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14067>.