

Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program First Responder Deflection Mentor Site Application Information Sheet



The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is pleased to announce the expansion of the First Responder Deflection Mentor Program. This program is part of the training and technical assistance (TTA) resources available to local jurisdictions through BJA's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) and in coordination with Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities' (TASC) Center for Health and Justice (CHJ). The First Responder Deflection Mentor Program is looking to add new mentors to the program, including, but not limited to, law enforcement-led initiatives, those led by fire and emergency medical services (EMS) departments, or those that utilize co-responder, community paramedicine, or community responder models. There will be a priority focus on deflection initiatives that are in rural areas, respond to stimulant use disorders, and serve racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Mentor sites will be recognized by BJA as exemplary models of multidisciplinary deflection programs. Selected sites will be asked to serve as mentors beginning in July 2024 and through September 2025. Mentor applications must be submitted online by June 28, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time (ET). Apply at <http://s.iir.com/f4DPNeEf>. If you would like to review the questions prior to filling out this application, a Word version can be downloaded at <http://s.iir.com/QaRHQ2Au>.

What is first responder deflection?

First responders (law enforcement, fire services, or EMS) frequently respond to calls for service involving individuals with or affected by substance use, mental health, and co-occurring disorders. In response, a variety of initiatives, collectively called deflection, have emerged across the country. Implemented in partnership with first responders, multidisciplinary deflection initiatives serve as an early, upstream warm handoff from first responders to community-based treatment, housing, services, and recovery.

What is the purpose of COSSUP's First Responder Deflection Mentor Program?

The First Responder Deflection Mentor Program will provide communities (mentees) interested in starting or enhancing their own deflection efforts with the opportunity to learn from established and innovative deflection initiatives (mentors) that have shown success in supporting individuals with substance use disorders in their community.

Who is eligible to apply to be a mentor?

The mentoring initiative is focused on first responder-led or community responder deflection initiatives that serve individuals with opioid, stimulant, and other substance use disorders; mental health disorders; and co-occurring disorders and that do not include justice involvement. *Pretrial diversion programs, specialty diversion programs, or specialty courts operated by prosecutors or the courts are not within the scope of this effort.* Applicants do not need to be COSSUP grantees to apply.

What does being a deflection mentor entail?

Selected sites will be expected to serve as mentor sites beginning in July 2024 and through September 2025. It is anticipated that each mentor site will be asked to host approximately three to five peer communities (typically teams of three persons) during this time period. Mentors will work in close partnership with CHJ staff.

Prospective mentees will submit an online application via the COSSUP Resource Center website. Once the application is approved by BJA, CHJ will work with potential mentors to finalize the match. COSSUP, in coordination with CHJ, will support the travel of up to three individuals from approved mentee communities to participate in an onsite visit to one of the mentor sites.

What does being a deflection mentor entail? (*continued*)

Mentorship will be provided in a hybrid capacity, with virtual and in-person engagement with mentees. After an initial introductory call, mentors will host the mentee community for a dynamic and engaging two-day visit. During that time, mentors will provide opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges among mentees, mentor program personnel, and their community partners (e.g., treatment providers and peer recovery organizations). Importantly, mentors will include mentees in deflection outreach efforts.

Following the in-person visit, a follow-up call will be scheduled 4 to 6 weeks after the visit to review questions that may have arisen and to discuss how mentees may want to enhance their own programs after learning from their mentors. Mentors also agree to remain available, on a limited and as-needed basis, after the conclusion of the mentorship to help guide mentees through other challenges that might have arisen.

Examples of activities for hybrid mentorship include:

- Observing program activities in the field (e.g., ride-alongs with deflection teams, outreach to individuals or in the community)
- Visiting relevant sites, agencies, and organizations
- Meeting key personnel and partner representatives
- Attending administrative, program, and/or community meetings
- Reviewing data, data collection, and evaluation
- Understanding funding mechanisms and plans for sustainability

How will mentor sites be selected?

Mentor applications must be submitted online by June 28, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., ET. Applications will be reviewed by BJA staff members and CHJ. BJA and CHJ may conduct phone interviews with finalists and/or site visits to finalize selections.

Applicant programs will be evaluated in a variety of areas, including, but not limited to:

- The Five Critical Elements of [Deflection](#)
- Current program operations
- Program development and sustainability
- Consideration of geographical location and community demographics

If selected, a small stipend will be provided to cover some costs associated with hosting visitors, such as the cost of photocopying and transportation.

[The timeline for selection is as follows:](#)

Applications due:

June 28, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., ET

Review of applications:

Week of July 1, 2024

Notification of selected mentor sites:

Week of July 8, 2024

Orientation webinars for new mentor sites:

Week of July 15, 2024

Begin hosting peer visits:

August 2024