



The Lantern Project

Diversion, Deflection & Reentry Program

Summary of Program: With grant funding from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse, the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department is launching The Lantern Project. The Lantern Project has the support of Orange County law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, court stakeholders and the behavioral health community.

The purpose of The Lantern Project is to provide access to care for individuals with Substance Use Disorders and Opioid Use Disorders and who are at high risk for Covid-19 and intersecting with the criminal legal system. This project will work with OC-PAD and COORE to enhance the outreach and harm reduction services that are offered to individuals who might come into contact with the criminal justice system. Similar to how OC-PAD operates with diverting certain low-level, misdemeanor crimes away from the legal system, The Lantern Project will work in conjunction with various community members and Law Enforcement Officials to deflect and divert individuals who are substance users and opioid users from the criminal legal system.

The Lantern Project will receive referrals from law enforcement officials, jail personnel, court personnel, district attorneys, and magistrates for individuals who are eligible for the program. The goal of The Lantern Project is to provide increased access to care and support in order to enhance the well-being of substance users currently in the criminal legal system, and for those who are at risk of justice system involvement in Orange County.

The Recovery Diversion Coordinator (Macon Hollister) will receive referrals from community partners for individuals who have a history of a behavioral health diagnosis and have intersected with the criminal legal system and will connect them to specialized treatment, recovery, and harm reduction services that the individual is interested in pursuing. This will allow individuals to prioritize their physical and mental health in the community, as opposed to in a court or detention. The specialized Diversion or Deflection Plan will incorporate holistic services based on the individuals' needs but may include: substance use treatment, housing assistance, mental health counseling, harm reduction materials, restorative justice measures, peer support and vocational opportunities.

Diversion Program Eligibility:

- Individual must be 18 years old
- Individuals can have prior and/or pending justice involvement
- Individuals can be referred pre-charge or post-charge
- Individual has a behavioral health concern (substance use or mental health)
- Charge restrictions
 - No domestic violence charges
 - No charge that involves the use of a weapon

- Final discretion on diversion referral remains with law enforcement officers and the District Attorney's Office
- Restitution, if required, must be resolved outside the process

Diversion Program Referral Process:

- Law Enforcement Official determines that there is probable cause to issue a citation or criminal charge against the individual
- District Attorney determines that a pending court case can be diverted from the criminal justice system to The Lantern Project
- Law Enforcement Official or District Attorney believe there to be an underlying behavioral health diagnosis that led to the citation or charge
- For pre-charge referrals: Law Enforcement Official provides the individual with information related to The Lantern Project and tells them to contact the Recovery Diversion Coordinator within 72 hours
- For pre-charge referral: Law Enforcement Official/Law Enforcement Diversion Liaison completes The Diversion Program referral form and sends completed referral and a copy of the Incident Report (IR) to the Recovery Diversion Coordinator within 48 working hours
- For post-charge cases: District Attorney determines eligibility for the individual and contacts the Recovery Diversion Coordinator regarding the open court case and their willingness to divert the case upon successful completion of a Diversion Plan
- A referral can also come from an EMS or hospital worker after someone might have been hospitalized due to an overdose or misuse of substances

Diversion Project Process:

- Recovery Diversion Coordinator receives referral and IR
- Recovery Diversion Coordinator schedules initial appointment with the individual within 7 days of receiving the referral
- At the initial meeting, the intake form and interview is completed, the Release to Opt-in is signed, a general release is signed, the Diversion/Deflection Service Plan is created
- The Diversion/Deflection Service Plan may include, treatment or mental health services, vocational opportunities, housing, harm reduction materials, up-to-date COVID-19 education, and various other programming based on individual needs
- No admission of guilt is requested or required
- The Recovery Diversion Coordinator will work with the individual to create a specialized, person-focused Diversion Plan that will be tailored to each individual's needs
- The Diversion Plan will vary depending on duration of time, but will not go past 90 days
- If the Diversion Plan has been completed successfully the Diversion Coordinator will provide court updates and a completion letter to the Law Enforcement Official and/or District Attorney in order to resolve and/or close the current matter
- Upon completion of court case, if applicable, the Recovery Diversion Coordinator will connect the individual to services for driver license restoration and/or expungement needs

- If the individual does not make contact with the Diversion Coordinator after 72 hours of being arrested or deflected by the police, the Diversion Coordinator will reach out to community partners and community networks to try and make contact with the individual; if after two weeks and no contact has been made with the individual the Recovery Diversion Coordinator will provide an update back to the Law Enforcement Official and let them know the case will be closed until further notice
- If the individuals does not complete the Diversion Plan in the allotted time the Recovery Diversion Coordinator will notify the Law Enforcement Official and/or the District Attorney and notify them of an “Unsuccessful Completion” and designated parties will move forward accordingly how they see fit
- The Diversion Coordinator will provide COVID-19 information to individuals in the community with a Substance Use Disorder and/or an Opioid Use Disorder in Orange County and provide PPE if needed as well as access to care, testing, and vaccinations if interested
- The Diversion Coordinator will work with SOHRAD and community outreach members to meet and provide harm reduction education and materials to those in the Orange County community who have a Substance Use Disorder and/or an Opioid Use Disorder

Contact Information for The Lantern Project – Diversion Coordinator:

Recovery Diversion Coordinator: Macon Hollister; email: mhollister@orangecountync.gov; mobile: 336-264-9084