

Arrest and Jail Alternatives program

Overview

The Arrest and Jail Alternatives (AJA) grant program was established through [House Bill 1767](#) during the 2019 legislative session. 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 Washington State Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (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](#).

Arrest and Jail Alternatives programming are currently established in Airway Heights (Cheney), Clallam County, Jefferson County, Olympia, Poulsbo, and Walla Walla County.

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

jail and prosecution in the pre-booking phase. These individuals are supported by collaborative, community-based systems of care. While AJA has historically been a pre-booking diversion program, 2E2SSB 5536 enacted RCW [69.50.4017](#) (Alternatives to Prosecution- Pretrial diversion), which included AJA as a referral source for pretrial diversion.

Individuals may be referred to AJA if they are exposed to the criminal legal system due to illegal activity related to behavioral health issues and/or poverty 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

2024/2025 Biennial Operating Budget total is \$7,000,000

- \$3,600,000- Opioid Abatement Settlement Account- State
- \$2,400,000 - State General Funds
- \$1,000,000 - Substance Use Prevention Treatment Recovery Services (SUPTRS) Block Grant

People served

WASPC submits an annual report on AJA milestones, including key partnerships, timeline, and qualitative outcomes data.

The most recent report for 2023 is available online:

[2023 Arrest and Jail Alternatives Annual Report](#)

The 2024 report will be [here](#) on December 1, 2024. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/reports-to-the-legislature/Highlights> in the upcoming 2024 report include that AJA programs:

- Served **569 unique individuals** from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024
- **13,338 contacts** with AJA program participants were reported from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

Key partners

- [Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs \(WASPC\)](#)

- [Criminal Justice Training Commission \(CJTC\)](#)
- [Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion \(LEAD\) 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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