

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Community Member,

I am honored to share with you our first-ever annual report on Ithaca LEAD, highlighting the purpose, values, and progress we've made since launching this initiative in March 2021. As Project Director for this collaborative effort, I am humbled by the wisdom, expertise, and dedication offered by dozens of partners who are working together to foster safety, health, and equity for everyone in our community.

Based on a proven model that's being replicated across the nation and internationally, Ithaca LEAD is not just a program; instead, it is a coordinated, multi-sector strategy to enhance safety and equity by better recognizing and remedying the problems experienced by one specific population: people living with unmanaged mental illness or substance use.

Whether it's the distressing evidence of human suffering on our streets, the disruptions and fear caused by public disorder, or the harm caused by our criminal legal system: Ithaca LEAD recognizes that these harms must not be ignored or minimized, and that they require a robust, collective strategy of response and care. With Ithaca LEAD, that's what we're building – together.

Ithaca LEAD is stewarded by a diverse group of stakeholders — including nonprofit service providers, law enforcement agencies, elected officials, and community advocates — who are committed to developing effective alternatives to arrest and prosecution. By building an integrated system that diverts people into street-based, intensive case management and ongoing care, Ithaca LEAD equips our community with a new way to address problems for which arrest and detention just don't work.

We're proud to share this report on our progress. We welcome your ideas, your questions, and your participation as we together build a strong, safe, healthy, and equitable community rooted in compassion and dignity for all.



With gratitude,

TRAVIS BROOKS

Ithaca LEAD Annual Report 2022

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The LEAD Support Bureau's Proof of Concept project contributed to the development of this report, with the support of the Studio @ Blue Meridian



OVERVIEW



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THE PROBLEM

We can't enforce or arrest our way out of the problems related to drug use and mental illness. Still, two-thirds of the people held in jail in the United States have a mental illness or drug dependency (1), and more than 60% of people in custody are being held for offenses that pose little risk to public safety: low-level misdemeanors or infractions, such as drug possession, trespass, or disorderly conduct (2).

Jail isn't an effective response to these problems; in fact, jail is harmful: Studies show that being jailed even for a short

TWO-THIRDS

OF THE PEOPLE HELD IN JAIL IN THE U.S. HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS OR DRUG DEPENDENCY (1)

600% OF PEOPLE IN CUSTODY ARE BEING HELD FOR OFFENSES THAT POSE LITTLE RISK TO PUBLIC SAFETY (2)

time increases a person's risk of engaging in crime (3) decreases employment and government benefits (4,5) increases homelessness (6) and exacerbates the racial disparities embedded into our society. For people with mental illness or problematic substance use, jail's effects are even more detrimental: They may be taken off public benefits, receive inadequate care in custody, are more likely to be sanctioned for rule infractions, are subjected to harsher sentences, and are disproportionately returned to jail. And the devastating intergenerational impact on children when their parents are jailed, even for short periods, is well-documented.



THE PROBLEM

In recent years, it's become clear that the criminal legal system isn't an effective response to the complex challenges of the most vulnerable people in our communities — those whose unlawful behavior stems from unmet needs related to substance use, mental illness, or extreme poverty.

But public disorder, crime, and human suffering associated with behavioral illness cannot simply be ignored, and the people suffering from these challenges must not be abandoned.

This is why, here in Ithaca, we have implemented Ithaca LEAD. Based on a proven model that's being replicated across the nation and internationally, Ithaca LEAD will help our community build a better solution to address the needs of people who commit, or are at high risk of committing, law violations related to mental illness, substance use, or chronic poverty.



Participant and Case Manager - Ithaca LEAD



THE SOLUTION — LEAD

First developed in Seattle, WA in 2011, the LEAD model seeks to increase equity and reduce harm by reorienting the systems that shape health and safety. With LEAD, local stakeholders come together to develop a coordinated system of longterm, nonjudgmental community care based on harm reduction principles. Rather than relying on punitive approaches that stigmatize and criminalize complex mental health challenges, substance use, and chronic poverty, LEAD cultivates a transformation of attitudes, behaviors, and systems – made possible by local stakeholders committed to collaboration and collective response.

LEAD's impact on individuals and systems stems from doing both more and less than the status quo: more partnership, more coordination, more access to care, more collective commitment; less coercion, less punishment, and less pointing blame.



Case manager with participant - LEAD Seattle · King County, WA



OUR RESPONSE

MISSION

By reducing our dependence on punitive systems, Ithaca LEAD increases public safety, health, and equity through community-driven systems change.

Ithaca LEAD builds a collective, non-punitive pathway to long-term, community-based care for people who commit, or are at high risk of committing, law violations related to mental illness, substance use, or chronic poverty.

VISION

Ithaca LEAD will forge a new path to a stronger, safer community by developing robust systems that focus on harm reduction, health, equity, and safety for all.

VALUE STATEMENT

Ithaca LEAD reduces harm and transforms our community by shifting fundamental attitudes, policies, and practices that shape everyday life.



LEAD IN ITHACA

Ithaca LEAD launched in March 2021 with the support of a \$900,000 federal grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP).

Ithaca LEAD is governed by a group of stakeholders from across sectors, with project management by Project Director Travis Brooks, the deputy director of the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC).

WHY IMPLEMENT LEAD?

Ithaca LEAD strives to change systemic responses to problematic conduct associated with complex behavioral health challenges.

The LEAD model recognizes that the most powerful mechanism to change the cycle of arrest and incarceration lies in changing the systems that criminalize such conduct or that require individuals to navigate and conform to the structures and expectations of officebased services.



Project Director, Case Managers, Public Defender, and District Attorney - Ithaca LEAD

To define and support these systemic changes, LEAD establishes a framework of collective development and oversight, shared values and policies, multi-sector operational integration, intentional inclusion of diverse expertise and authorities, and high quality project management and evaluation.



CASE MANAGEMENT, LEAD-STYLE

Ithaca LEAD's approach is grounded in the evidence of what works best to support people with complex needs. Social science tells us that people's readiness to change their problematic behaviors follows no steady course – it can come slowly, may suffer setbacks, and is sparked by internal motivators. With behavioral change, it's often two steps forward, one step back.

The criminal legal system isn't built for that. But Ithaca LEAD is. Our case managers offer trauma-informed, strength-based unconditional support, evidence-based strategies, and harm reduction practices to spark and nurture incremental progress.



Participant being greeted by case manager - Ithaca LEAD



HOW LEAD WORKS





Law enforcement officers can divert people to Ithaca LEAD rather than arrest them on diversion-eligible charges even if there's probable cause to do so.

Police and others in the legal system can refer presumptively eligible people to Ithaca LEAD without the occurrence of an alleged crime.



Community members that are part of Ithaca LEAD's Operational Work Group can directly refer presumptively eligible people to LEAD without involving law enforcement officers or systems.



Case manager and law enforcement officer facilitate a warm hand-off - Ithaca LEAD



THE FACTS

1. LEAD is collectively stewarded.

Ithaca LEAD isn't "owned" by any single entity; it is stewarded and operated by a collection of systems stakeholders – from case managers to police officers to health agencies – who agree that investing in LEAD is preferable to the status quo.

It takes coordinated work by multiple systems to address systemic problems and effect systemic change, so Ithaca LEAD is guided and shaped by our local partners, including health providers, nonprofit organizations, law enforcement, prosecutors, case managers, and community stakeholders.



2. LEAD is built upon harm reduction principles and practices.

Harm reduction is a set of principles and practices intended to reduce the individual and collective harms that can come from unmanaged behavioral health challenges, including drug use. Harm reduction recognizes that not all people who use drugs are willing and/or able to stop their use, that they should have full access to the same health and safety interventions as other people, and that behavior change takes time for all of us.

Thus, rather than demanding abstinence, Ithaca LEAD emphasizes the importance of working with participants to identify opportunities to reduce behaviors that harm themselves or others. This is a core tenet of the LEAD model.

At the same time, whether it's the distressing evidence of human suffering on our streets, the disruptions and fear caused by public disorder, or the harm caused by our criminal legal systems: the harms must not be ignored or minimized, and they require meaningful response.

Program Director, case managers, and law enforcement officer discuss operations in downtown - Ithaca LEAD



THE FACTS

3. LEAD is voluntary.

Ithaca LEAD does not operate as a branch of the court system, and people cannot be ordered into the program. As a core principle, LEAD stakeholders must affirmatively agree that referral to or participation in Ithaca LEAD may not be used in any way to harm, intimidate, or coerce participants, and that accepting a referral is an entirely voluntary decision. People cannot be worse off because they participate in LEAD.

4. LEAD disrupts the punishment paradigm.

LEAD is a robust and coordinated system of response that supports public safety by diverting people away from the criminal legal system and into community-based care coordination and intensive case management.

Unlike other forms of diversion, such as divert-to-treatment or drug courts, LEAD isn't operated within the criminal legal system and doesn't impose sanctions, establish deadlines, mandate behavior, or require abstinence.



Participant - Ithaca LEAD



REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY

Systems Change Through Collective Impact

Most of society's problems are more complex than any one entity or sector can address on its own. Collective impact is a structured form of collaboration in which diverse stakeholders commit to a common agenda to solve a complex problem that cannot be solved by any single entity or sector.

With its shared governance and intention, LEAD is built on a collective impact framework. To share and shift power and practices through collective governance, Ithaca LEAD is stewarded by both a Policy Coordinating Group (governing body) and an Operational Work Group (line staff and supervisors) to develop and manage shared policies, procedures, implementation, and oversight.



Operational Work Group members -Ithaca LEAD



OUR VALUES



ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY

LEAD acknowledges that many of our current systems, including our criminal legal, social service and child welfare, and health systems, are deeply fraught with racial injustice.



CREATED SHARED INTENTION

No single organization or person owns LEAD. Instead, it is collectively stewarded and operated by collaborative stakeholders. Only the collective effort of distributed leadership among unlikely partners who agree to do things differently can sustain and embody the LEAD model.



CULTIVATE SYSTEMS CHANGE

LEAD profoundly shifts existing systems at their roots, creating a more just and equitable future by reorienting systems to a new, shared purpose.



DO WHAT WORKS

LEAD guides communities to do what will successfully reduce harm and increase well-being and safety for all.



FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

LEAD recognizes relationships – in and of themselves – as the core resource and a primary method for change; this is as true for systems leaders as for LEAD participants.



INCREASE DIVERSION

LEAD is committed to diverting people with complex behavioral health issues away from the criminal legal system as early as possible – ideally, avoiding arrest altogether.



OUR VALUES



RESPECT AUTONOMY

LEAD rejects compulsory or compliance-based expectations and systems. This evidence-based approach is both ethical and pragmatic. Coercion, further criminal legal action, harm, and intimidation are part of the fabric of current punitive paradigms of criminal legal systems that LEAD exists to transform.



TAKE HARM SERIOUSLY

LEAD recognizes that harm is experienced by both individuals and communities, stemming from systemic, environmental, and individual behavior. These harms must be acknowledged, and they require meaningful response.



OUR IMPACT



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OUR GOALS

TOMPKINS COUNTY EXPANSION

With funding to support the work of two staff to provide intensive case management, Ithaca LEAD is serving its maximum caseload of 20 participants. But we know that the need is far greater and that the issues that affect Ithaca are felt throughout the whole county. That's why Tompkins County leaders and the stakeholders of Ithaca LEAD are committed to expanding LEAD's capacity to meet the needs of the broader community — both in the city of Ithaca and throughout the county.

In 2023, we are searching for funding opportunities to grow Ithaca LEAD while maintaining its high quality. This funding would allow us to hire additional case managers, increasing capacity to provide street-based services and coordinated care.

LEAD has been the missing piece of the criminal legal system that both officers and community members need. It is the first program that puts law enforcement, outreach workers, case managers, and attorneys in the same room. When all these entities work together, the positive results are limitless.

- SGT. MARY ORSAIO, ITHACA POLICE DEPARTMENT





MASTER LEASES FOR MEANINGFUL HOUSING

In many programs across the country, people experiencing homelessness may not be eligible for housing unless they first achieve sobriety, get and keep a job, or comply with other conditions. While such requirements may be effective for some people, for the people served by Ithaca LEAD, these are insurmountable barriers.

To meet the needs of this population, Ithaca LEAD uses a "housing first" approach, an evidence-based strategy that supports safety and equity by connecting people to housing as quickly as possible. Rather than requiring people to achieve certain behaviors to "earn" their eligibility for housing, housing first recognizes that a safe and consistent place to live is a valid human need and that being safely housed is a powerful foundation to support positive change.

But in every community, access to affordable and appropriate housing is a constant challenge. To meet this challenge, Ithaca LEAD plans to expand access to transitional housing by piloting a master-lease agreement for several two- to threebedroom apartments in downtown Ithaca.

Using this transitional housing as a stabilizing resource, Ithaca LEAD's case managers will help participants prepare for permanent housing by developing legal income, public benefits, health care, and positive social supports.

We believe that this master lease program represents an important opportunity to support safety, health, and equity in our community.

"

LEAD is helping me to become financially stable. I've accomplished many goals with LEAD that I've been trying to accomplish on my own for four years. Through LEAD, I got out of an encampment and into an apartment for the first time in eight years.

- D.W., ITHACA LEAD PARTICIPANT



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SUCCESS IN ITHACA

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This program is a game changer for Ithaca City Court – and the entire community. Travis Brooks not only got the funding to make LEAD a reality, but also saw the program through to operation. The team they have assembled is dedicated and compassionate.

- JUDGE RICHARD M. WALLACE, ITHACA CITY COURT

"

The people involved with all the heads and hearts of this program are genuinely hopeful and sincere in their endeavors to help their clients succeed. There is no jaded attitude from years and years of bureaucratic red tape.

- L.L., ITHACA LEAD PARTICIPANT

"

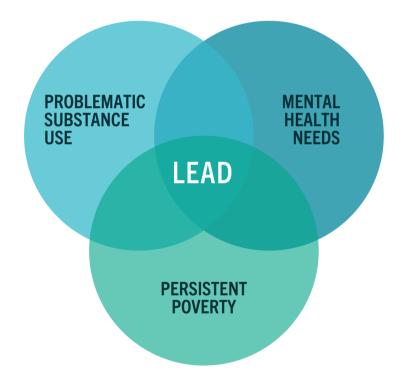
LEAD is different from other programs I've been in because the workers are more dependable and seem to care so much more. What sticks out is that it shows that the workers go out of their way whenever I need help.

- A.J., ITHACA LEAD PARTICIPANT

WHO IS LEAD FOR?

By reducing our dependence on punitive systems, Ithaca LEAD increases public safety, health, and equity by fostering community-driven systems change.

Ithaca LEAD builds a collective, non-punitive pathway to long-term, community-based care for people who commit, or are at high risk of committing, law violations related to mental illness, substance use, or chronic poverty.





A TOOL FOR BETTER PUBLIC SAFETY & POLICING

Ithaca LEAD provides law enforcement officers with an important new tool to help people who struggle with chronic mental health issues, substance abuse, or poverty. As officers know from first-hand experience, arresting people for unlawful or problematic conduct stemming from unmanaged behavioral issues or chronic poverty only makes things worse: it's expensive, it requires officers' time and attention, and it doesn't do anything to solve the underlying problems.

That's why so many officers involved with Ithaca LEAD recognize its value – to both them and the community. Once people are diverted into Ithaca LEAD, case managers work with participants day in and day out to identify and meet their most urgent needs, gradually connect them to the system of care, and provide practical and emotional support, thus reducing burden on officers and enhancing public safety and order.

Staff from Ithaca LEAD regularly train officers in its strategies and methods, illustrating the ways in which Ithaca LEAD can advance public safety while reducing burdens on law enforcement.

26 OFFICERS TRAINED IN LEAD, TO DATE

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As law enforcement officers, we have limited options when it comes to diverting people who may be struggling with addiction and mental health issues. The LEAD program is a game changer when it comes to options instead of arrest and release. We now have a team dedicated to trying to help those individuals. I look forward to seeing this program succeed.

- OFF. RYAN CARD, ITHACA POLICE DEPARTMENT

ITHACA BY THE NUMBERS

Offering an effective, evidence-based response to unmanaged behavioral issues and chronic poverty, Ithaca LEAD is rooted in dignity, harm-reduction, and collaborative stewardship.

ARREST DIVERSION

Law enforcement officers can divert people to Ithaca LEAD rather than arrest them on diversion-eligible charges even if there's probable cause to do so.



SOCIAL CONTACT

Police and others in the legal system can refer presumptively eligible people to Ithaca LEAD without the occurrence of an alleged crime.



COMMUNITY REFERRAL

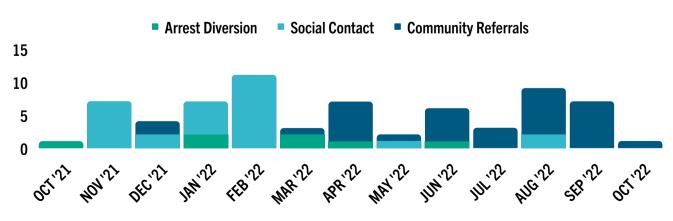
Community members who are part of Ithaca LEAD's Operational Work Group can directly refer presumptively eligible people to Ithaca LEAD without involving law enforcement officers or systems.







FIGURE 1 INDIVIDUALS REFERRED & TYPE OF DIVERSION/REFERRAL



CARE & DIRECT SERVICE

After receiving diversions and referrals from partners and consent from participants, case managers for Ithaca LEAD support participants in identifying their needs and goals. By offering a supportive connection, safe shelter, and barriermitigation and stabilization services, our team provides participants with a pathway to broader community resources. Our focus is to address quality of life concerns while honoring the dignity and self-determination of each participant.

Case managers offer many types of support, including assistance securing documentation and identification, applying for benefits and employment, identifying and securing housing, accessing medical, dental and mental healthcare, navigating the court system for previous cases or civil legal issues, and reconnecting with family members or community supports.





*Evaluations of flagship LEAD site in Seattle, WA



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Since getting involved with LEAD, my life has changed altogether. Completely. I'm not doing drugs every day, all day long. I'm not on the streets hustling, and I'm actually making and keeping important appointments.

- J. H., LEAD PARTICIPANT

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS



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IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

As a collective impact initiative, Ithaca LEAD's system of shared governance relies on the active input, expertise, and perspectives of a wide array of community representatives, organizations, and agencies. Together, we are building new pathways to health, safety, and equity in our community.





Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) is on a mission to improve the quality of life for people of all ages in the Ithaca area through educational programming, job training, and advocacy for underrepresented and disenfranchised communities – in particular, teens and children. With the support of federal funding, GIAC also serves as the project management agency for Ithaca LEAD.

REACH MEDICAL

A nonprofit clinic, REACH Medical is Ithaca LEAD's case management partner. REACH Medical is Ithaca's first low-threshold, harm-reduction medical practice, offering high-quality, lowbarrier medical care to people who aren't well served through the traditional healthcare system.



Criminal Legal Agencies

Ithaca Police Department

Members of the criminal legal system are essential partners in the LEAD model. Training law enforcement officers from the Ithaca Police Department is an essential step in shifting policies, practices, and investments to better address the problems of unmet behavioral health needs. In addition to participating in Ithaca LEAD, officers can also undergo voluntary Crisis Response Training or Crisis Intervention Training. This training equips officers to respond effectively to people whose unlawful behavior stems from unmet needs related to substance use, mental illness, or extreme poverty.

Tompkins County District Attorney and Public Defender

The Office of the District Attorney and the Office of the Public Defender have been involved in Ithaca LEAD since the earliest stages of development. These stakeholders are integral to the success of Ithaca LEAD, providing a shared opportunity to develop aligned policies and practices while advocating for systems change.



Coordinated Resources

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICE OF ITHACA: COMMUNITY OUTREACH TEAM

Is integral to creating a welcoming and inclusive downtown area through community engagement based on empathy and conflict de-escalation. This team fosters close relationships with community members and, most critically, can refer people with unmet behavioral health needs to appropriate social services.



ST. JOHNS COMMUNITY SERVICES OF ITHACA (SJCS)

Was founded in 1868 and is one of the country's oldest nonprofits. SJCS supports and advocates for people who are disabled, unhoused, and generally disenfranchised. Since 2018, SJCS has overseen the Ithaca Homeless Shelter, providing emergency housing and maintaining a food pantry designated for emergency use, free of charge.

Tompkins Community Action (TCA)

Operates 14 programs designated to serve over 5,000 low-income individuals through a network of coordinated care, offering housing, family, and community services.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Close collaboration among many partners who work with Ithaca LEAD participants every day is fundamental to understanding both challenges and opportunities. Their insight and collaboration help inform and orient the goals of Ithaca LEAD.

ALCOHOL & DRUG COUNCIL OF TOMPKINS County, INC.	HUMAN SERVICES COALITION OF TOMPKINS County
CAYUGA MEDICAL CENTER	MARY DURHAM BOUTIQUE: A PROGRAM OF THE WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITY CENTER
CITY OF ITHACA	WOMEN S OFFORTONITY CENTER
	MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN TOMPKINS
COLLEGE INITIATIVE UPSTATE: A PROGRAM OF OPPORTUNITIES, ALTERNATIVES, AND	COUNTY
RESOURCES (OAR)	THE REACH PROJECT, INC.
COMMUNITY LEADERS OF COLOR ITHACA	TOMPKINS CHAMBER
COMMONITY LEADERS OF COLOR TITACA	
CORNELL UNIVERSITY	TOMPKINS COUNTY LEGISLATURE
DOWNTOWN ITHACA ALLIANCE	TOMPKINS COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
FINGER LAKES INDEPENDENCE CENTER	WORK PRESERVE: A PROGRAM OF SIGNIFICANT Elements



GET INVOLVED



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MEET THE TEAM

PROJECT MANAGEMENT



TRAVIS BROOKS LEAD PROJECT DIRECTOR



VAIL EUBANKS COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

CASE MANAGEMENT



RITA-ANN BISCELLO LEAD CASE MANAGER



SAMANTHA STEVENSON CASE MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR



ANNA VERGARI CASE MANAGEMENT SUPERVISOR



OPERATIONAL WORK GROUP



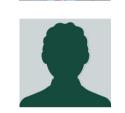
RITA-ANN BISCELLO CASE MANAGER REACH PROJECT, INC.



RYAN CARD OFFICER ITHACA POLICE DEPARTMENT



NATALYA COWILICH OUTREACH COORDINATOR FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF ITHACA



AMY FURMAN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING DIRECTOR TOMPKINS COMMUNITY ACTION

CHRISTOPHER COLOSI

TRAVIS BROOKS

PUBLIC DEFENDER

TOMPKINS COUNTY

CENTER

LEAD PROJECT DIRECTOR

GREATER ITHACA ACTIVITIES



KATE LAUX CASE MANAGER ST. JOHN'S COMMUNITY SERVICES



ARIANA MARMORA ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY TOMPKINS COUNTY



MARY ORSAIO SERGEANT ITHACA POLICE DEPARTMENT



WILL TAYLOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH WORKER FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF ITHACA



SAMANTHA STEVENSON CASE MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR REACH PROJECT, INC.

ANNA VERGARI CASE MANAGEMENT SUPERVISOR REACH PROJECT, INC.



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GET IN TOUCH

If you want to refer someone to Ithaca LEAD, please contact Travis Brooks at ithacalead@cityofithaca.org.

Interested in learning more about Ithaca LEAD? We look forward to hearing from you!

EMAIL

PHONE

ITHACALEAD@CITYOFITHACA.ORG

<u>607-272-3622</u>



APPENDIX



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ITHACA LEAD IN THE MEDIA

- 1. Ithaca launches LEAD program to fight racial disparities: https://ithacavoice.com/2022/03/ithaca-launches-lead-program-to-fight-racialdisparities/
- 2. Early successes as LEAD program gets officially underway in Ithaca: https://www.ithaca.com/news/ithaca/early-successes-as-lead-program-getsofficially-underway-in-ithaca/article_466850dc-a66c-11ec-9d93fb4a7d602433.html
- 3. City of Ithaca's LEAD Program: https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2020-ar-bx-0141
- 4. LEAD has officially launched in Ithaca to undo racial disparities at the front-end of the criminal justice system: https://www.fingerlakes1.com/2022/03/04/lead-has-officially-launced-in-ithaca-to-undo-racial-disparities-at-the-front-end-of-the-criminal-justice-system/
- 5. Ithaca's LEAD program hoping to bring equity to criminal justice: https://whcuradio.com/news/025520-ithacas-lead-program-hoping-to-bringequity-to-criminal-justice/
- 6. CLT Video Recording on Zoom: https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1teAdWaN9q3OjfKsMSGDIWtQ_hUb 5jHRo

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