

# From Pilot to Program:

How **Los Angeles County** applied program-management best practices to grow and sustain a pre-plea mental health diversion program

Presented September 30, 2022



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# Agenda

- 10 mins | **Introductions** and **Context**
- 30 mins | **Program Evolution**: How RDP scaled from a pilot to a full-scale program, and what we learned along the way
- 20 mins | **Interactive Activity**: Applying these lessons and insights in your own context
- 15 mins | **Q&A**

# Introductions



**Emily Bell, LCSW**  
Director, SSG Project 180



**Lauren Buller**  
Independent Consultant



**Caroline Goodson**  
Deputy Public Defender, LA County Public Defender



**Andre Quintero**  
Deputy City Attorney, LA City Attorney

# Context: Los Angeles County

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Los Angeles County is the largest county in America

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LA County is home to **10 million** residents across **4,000 square miles**

Racial Demographics of Population:

15% Asian | 8% Black | 26% Hispanic | 26% White | 25% Other



LA County jails house an average of **14,500 inmates** each day



LA County has **25 criminal courthouses** that hear more than **XX cases** annually

# Context: The Rapid Diversion Program (RDP)

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PC1001.36 was passed in 2018, enabling mental health diversion in California

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PENAL CODE - PEN

PART 2. OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE [681 - 1620] (*Part 2 enacted 1872.*)

TITLE 6. PLEADINGS AND PROCEEDINGS BEFORE TRIAL [976 - 1054.10] (*Heading of*

CHAPTER 2.8A. Diversion of Individuals with Mental Disorders [1001.35 - 1001.36] (*Chapter 2*

1001.36. (a) On an accusatory pleading alleging the commission of a misdemeanor or felony by a defendant pursuant to this section if the defendant meets all of the requirements specified in this section,

(b) (1) Pretrial diversion may be granted pursuant to this section if all of the following conditions are met:

(A) The court is satisfied that the defendant suffers from a mental disorder as identified in subdivision (a), bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder, and the defendant's mental disorder shall be provided by the defense and shall include a report from a qualified mental health expert who may rely on an examination of the defendant, the defendant's statements, statements by the defendant's mental health treatment provider, medical records, and other relevant information.

(B) The court is satisfied that the defendant's mental disorder was a significant factor in the commission of the charged offense if, after reviewing any relevant information, including the defendant's statements, statements by the defendant's mental health treatment provider, medical records, and other relevant information, the court is satisfied that the defendant's mental disorder was a significant factor in the commission of the offense.

# Context: The Rapid Diversion Program (RDP)

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RDP is a pre-plea Mental Health Diversion program in Los Angeles County

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- RDP is a type of pre-plea **Mental Health Diversion** that links clients to services, supports them during their treatment, and facilitates case dismissal after 1-2 years
- RDP is open to **indigent defendants** with **lower-level** felony and misdemeanor charges and **low- to moderate-acuity** mental health needs
- RDP has **dedicated in-court teams** of clinical social workers, resource navigators, and case managers to screen, link, and support clients

# Context: The Rapid Diversion Program (RDP)

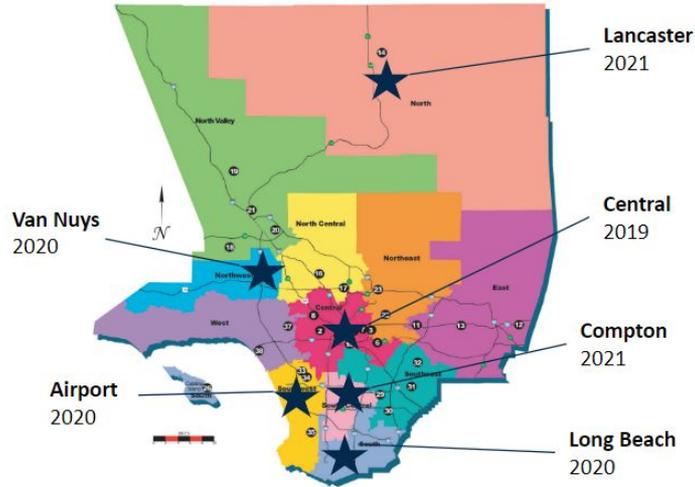
RDP is a collaborative program with oversight from the County CEO's Office

- ❖ In 2019, RDP was launched in by a team of agencies led by **LA County Public Defender** using SJC funding
- ❖ In 2021, oversight and funding of RDP transitioned to the **Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI)** Office of the County CEO
- ❖ The program remains **highly collaborative** across multiple agencies throughout the county justice system



# Context: RDP Today

RDP currently operates in 6 courts and has diverted more than 1,100 cases to date



## Program outcomes (Sept. 2022):

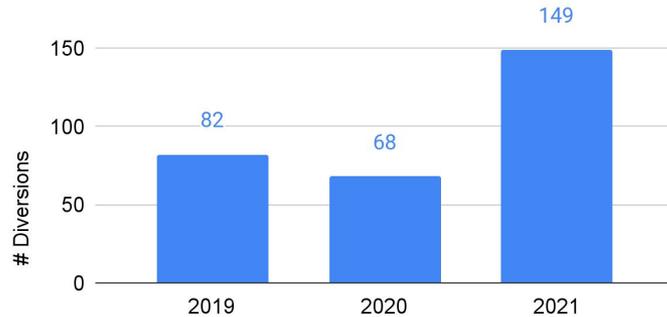
- **1,100** cases diverted
  - 230 graduated and dismissed
  - 550 on-track to graduate
- **95%** of graduates avoid further contact with the system

# RDP Program Evolution

# Program Evolution: Launching RDP

RDP launched as a pilot in mid-2019 and diverted 150 cases in the first 18 months

Annual Diversions at Pilot Site



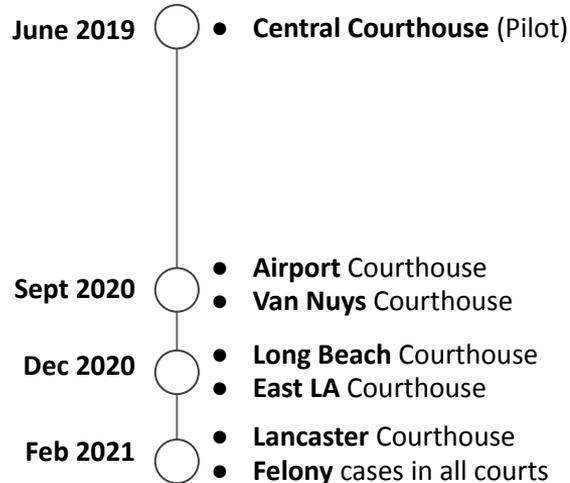
## Factors that contributed to the pilot's success:

- Local stakeholder **collaboration** and **support**
- Clear **vision** and **goals** for pilot outcomes
- **Front-line staff** investment
- **Service availability** due to central location
- Support from **SJC**, which enabled flexibility

# Program Evolution: Growing RDP

Efforts to grow the pilot into a larger-scale program initially fell short of expectations

## Program Expansion Timeline



RDP launched at **5 new sites** in **6 months**, while simultaneously beginning to accept felony cases.

These growth efforts **failed to meet expectations** over the following year:

- Each new site diverted an average of **3 cases per month**
- By comparison, the pilot site was diverting an average of **10–15 cases per month**

# Program Evolution: Lessons Learned

The RDP team learned that growing a program requires new ways of operating

Program Success Factor	Tools and Practices Implemented: “From Pilot to Program”
Management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ Role clarity</li><li>★ Meeting and communications norms</li><li>★ Decision-making protocols</li></ul>
Stakeholder investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ Stakeholder mapping and management<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External communication strategy</li></ul></li></ul>
Program infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ Goals, measurement, and reporting<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analytical capacity</li><li>• Program documentation and collateral</li></ul></li></ul>
Program strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ Paradigm to prioritize program strategies<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project management of high-stakes work</li></ul></li></ul>

# Management Practices: Role Clarity

A growing program with stakeholders across many agencies needs very explicit role definitions

## Common program challenges

- Nobody is “officially” responsible for X, so it’s not getting done
- Colleagues are frustrated because certain peers aren’t meeting their expectations
- A couple people are always “pitching in” to plug gaps, and it’s starting to cause burnout

## The Solution: Role Definition

LA County mapped every program need against the current owner, pushing the group to acknowledge and address gaps and mismatches. While these conversations can be uncomfortable, they are necessary for a program to sustain.

Program Need	Current Owner	Ideal Owner	Transition Plan
Setting goals	None	Agency A	
Reporting results	Public Defender	Agency A	
Maintaining “playbook”	None	Agency B	
Securing funding	CEO Office	CEO Office	
Contracting with providers	CEO Office	CEO Office	

# Management Practices: Measurement

As programs grow and gain more attention, leaders need to take a stand on how success is defined and ensure they can report on outcomes

## Common program challenges

- People disagree about whether the program is “working”
- Team members feel that managing program data is a huge pain and takes too much time
- Leaders are routinely asked questions that they don't have good data on

## The Solution: Goal-Setting and Reporting Practices

LA County decided to focus on three measures: clinical evaluations, diversions, and graduations. Their data systems were designed around these measures, the team set goals for them, and the program now reports on them monthly.

MONTHLY OUTCOMES					
		2022 Average (Jan-Aug)		2022 Goal	
	Eligible Cases	Assessments	Diversions	Assessments	Diversions
Court A	185	37	10	40	20
Court B	350	45	14	75	35
Court C	140	11	2	20	10
Court D	125	14	9	30	15
Court E	190	15	5	50	20
Court F	145	19	8	40	20
Total/Month	1,135	141	48	255	120
Total/Year	13,000	1,300	450	3,400	1,600

# Management Practices: Decision Protocols

Program growth relies on strategic decision-making, which can be achieved by implementing decision protocols

## Common program challenges

- People don't understand how a decision was made and/or feel left out of the process
- A decision needs to get made, but nothing seems to be moving forward
- Program leaders often wish they'd made a different decision in hindsight

## The Solution: A protocol for every major decision that includes...

- Roles, timeline, and process, communicated to all parties in advance
- Concrete set of options, factors to be considered, and assessment of options against those factors

		Court A	Court B	Court C
Very Important	Judge support	Yellow	Yellow	Red
	DA support	Green	Red	Green
	Case volume	Green	Green	Red
Nice to Have	Geographic span	Green	Red	Yellow

# Management Practices: Stakeholder Management

As programs grow, they require more intentional stakeholder-management strategies to build and sustain support

## Common program challenges

- Program leaders are caught off guard by pushback from someone who wasn't on their radar
- A stakeholder sees our program as "competition" for their own project, and won't support it
- Someone with media ties is misinformed about the program, and won't take our calls or emails

## The Solution: Stakeholder Map and Strategy

The RDP team mapped out key stakeholders at each expansion site, and launched an intensive 3-month "1-1 listening tour" effort to repair damaged relationships and build trust.

Site	Stakeholder	Influence	Support	Strategy & Next steps
Courthouse A	Judge G...	HIGH	LOW - Slow linkage time, doesn't trust clinician	CG get info on clinician BT meet 1-1 on 1/14 at BT see if SA wants to jo
	Deputy CA R...	MEDIUM	MEDIUM - Not getting progress letters on time	CG re-train staff on prog BT meet 1-1 on 1/14 at
Courthouse B	Deputy DA F..	HIGH	MEDIUM - Only ok'ing lowest-level charges	LB run charge analysis CG meet 1-1 no 1/21 at

# Program Strategy: Prioritization

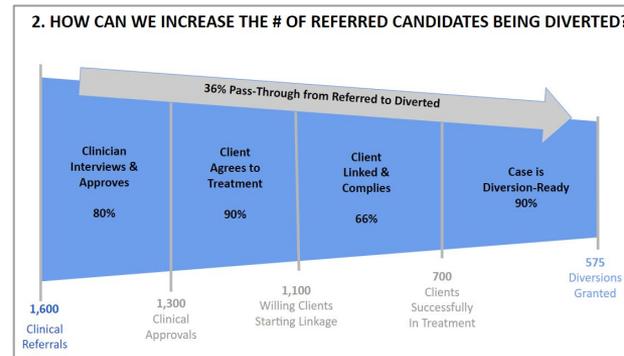
To successfully grow a program, team members need a data-driven point of view on which strategies will have the most impact

## Common program challenges

- People disagree about what's most important for the program to fix or focus on next
- Everyone wants to grow the program, but doesn't know what volume is realistic to aim for
- Team members are always focused on solving the latest "fire drill" and can't get anything else done

## The Solution: Data-Driven Program Heuristic

LA County created a "funnel" model to map how participants flow through the program, and used data to determine where and why attrition was happening. The team could then identify the highest-potential strategies to improve numbers.



# Interactive Activity:

# Applying These Tools to Your Program

# Strategic Decision-Making

*Activity Protocol described on slide*

# Q&A



[SafetyAndJusticeChallenge.org](https://SafetyAndJusticeChallenge.org)