

Community-Law Enforcement Aligning in Response to Substance Use (CLEARS) Project

The **Community-Law Enforcement Aligning in Response to Substance Use (CLEARS)** Project is led by the University of Washington Addictions, Drug & Alcohol Institute (ADAI) and funded by a Washington State legislative proviso in contract with the Health Care Authority. Since 2022, ADAI has collaborated with nine counties across Washington State using a codesign process that brings together local partners to develop solutions that improve interactions between law enforcement and people who use drugs.

Project Goals

- Convene and coordinate fragmented parts of our crisis system.
- Co-develop regional solutions to improve crisis response to drug use
- Use a codesign process to create solutions with local partners.
- Develop materials that support other communities developing local solutions.

CLEARS works at the intersection of **health and public safety** to coordinate multi-sector partners at a time when the **need is high** and resources are limited.

What is Codesign?

Across WA State since 2022, CLEARS has brought together **250** law enforcement and other first responders, people with lived experience of drug use and behavioral health crises, service providers, and other community partners to:

- Build relationships among participants
- Discuss challenges and opportunities in the community from different perspectives
- Develop pilot projects to improve crisis response
- Evaluate pilot projects, when possible

Communities Participating in CLEARS

2022-2023

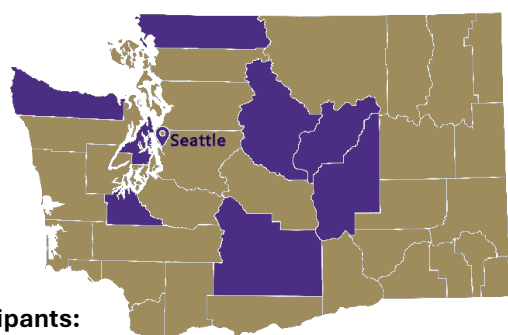
- Clallam County
- Thurston County
- Yakima County

2023-2025

- Grant County
- Chelan/Douglas Co.
- Kitsap County
- Whatcom County

2025-2027

- Seattle
-to improve 911 and 988 triage; post-crisis care



From interviews with 54 CLEARS participants:

- “The experience strengthened relationships between system partners and facilitated open and honest dialogue.”
- “I believe being together and listening to different experiences only enhances and brings forward possible solutions.”
- “I think it surprised me to see how quickly that people came outside of their silos, and they connected not just in a business way, but on a personal way.”

120 first responders attended the Sept '26 Event

In post-summit surveys, respondents said:

- All walked away with actionable strategies to address burnout and compassion fatigue
- “I really needed the opportunity to be with likeminded individuals.”
- “The final panel enlisted with people with true “lived experience [of SUD recovery]” provided a giant validation for the first responders.”

First Responder Wellness Summit: *Caring for Ourselves during the Overdose Crisis*

Informed by CLEARS Project solutions from all across WA State, we partnered with the WA State Health Care Authority and Criminal Justice Training Commission to host a Summit featuring panels of first responders from all professions naming burnout, compassion fatigue, and moral injury from the overdose crisis, and tangible skills and strategies to improve wellness.

Project Team

Mandy Owens, PhD (Principal Investigator), Jenna van Draanen, PhD (Co-Investigator), Dana Pearlman, MA (Facilitator), Chief Jeff Myers (Law Enforcement Consultant), Robert Pitcher & Adonica Warth (Drug Use Health Consultants), Nicole Branche (Coordinator). For more information: mandyo@uw.edu.



Community-Driven Solutions to Improve Crisis Response to Drug Use

Through the codesign process, each site developed a local solution based upon community learning conversations and diverse stakeholders from across the community to help improve interactions between law enforcement and people who use drugs that fit their communities and needs.

Clallam County

Officer Wellness Program

A six-session program focused on helping officers recognize and respond to the effects of trauma in their personal and professional lives.

Education & Success Stories Video

A video highlighting recovery success stories and positive interactions between law enforcement and community members.



Thurston County

Jail Letter-Writing Project

A peer-led initiative providing individuals entering jail with supportive letters, referrals, and connections to peer services and treatment resources.



Yakima County

Community Coalition Meetings

A continuing coalition of community stakeholders focused on improving collaboration and strengthening wraparound services in local jails and the broader community.

Chelan & Douglas Counties

Jail Re-Entry & Community Education Videos

With Thriving Together NCW's sponsorship the Chelan/Douglas team decided to create Jail Re-Entry and Community Education Videos to: Highlight local recovery stories; promote peer-led recovery services Visit Thriving Together NCW's website to watch three stories of recovery videos as part of the Recovery Initiative: <https://www.thrivingtogether.org/our-work-recovery-initiatives#stories>



Grant County

Public Forum Series

Community discussions featuring a panel of people with lived experience, law enforcement, EMS, service providers, family members, and other stakeholders.

Kitsap County

Water Bottle Project

Resource-branded water bottles and care packages distributed through law enforcement and community partners to increase awareness of local services.



Whatcom County

Community Health Education Initiative

Free training to service providers and people at encampments on topics of first aid, wound care, CPR, and Narcan. collaborating with Emergency Medical Services and Whatcom County Health and Community Services.

Seattle

Align Health & Public Safety via 911-988 Integration

Partner with the Seattle CARE Department (911) and Crisis Connections (988) and other City and County agencies to streamline behavioral health response as a model for County- and state-wide implementation.

Improve Post-Crisis Follow-Up

Work with King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) to a) establish standards of care and b) consistent patient matching process for post-crisis follow-up teams, c) increase communication among service providers, and d) promote patient self-advocacy in crisis care settings.

