



"The National Voice of the Field of Deflection"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**PTACC Moves National Headquarters to Pennsylvania,
Partners with PA AG to Grow LETI Deflection Initiative**

The Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative (PTACC), the national voice of the field of deflection and pre-arrest diversion, has moved its national headquarters to Pennsylvania, and with it, is pleased to announce a partnership with Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro supporting the expansion of the state's Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative (LETI) deflection program.

Deflection, a rapidly growing practice in the United States, provides law enforcement with an alternative to arrest for people with substance use and mental health disorders, as well as an alternative to taking no action when it is clear that underlying drug or mental health issues are present. Deflection, provided without fear of arrest, is widely used in situations where an individual would benefit from the opportunity to engage in treatment.

Starting in winter 2021, PTACC will work alongside LETI in three ways. First, PTACC will help to **expand the conversations regarding the purpose and value of deflection**. Deflection works at the intersection of public safety and public health, to limit the involvement of individuals with behavioral health needs in the justice system. For example, deflection helps to keep families intact by avoiding the arrest and incarceration of a parent. In the state of Pennsylvania, there are an estimated 80,000 grandparents raising children who have been removed from the home due to parental drug use.

Second, PTACC will be **providing technical expertise to communities** on how to start deflection initiatives. Additional technical assistance will be offered to support the efforts of rural communities to create peer networks that will allow deflection sites to share knowledge and discuss similar experiences.

Third, PTACC and Pennsylvania's Attorney General's Office will help with **changing the narrative about addiction in order to reduce stigma** in a way that provides opportunities to connect people to treatment, especially those who come from underserved areas, including under resourced communities, communities of color, and those in rural areas.

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Reframing the Relationships Between Police and Community

“As a result of this collaboration, the growth of LETI deflection will be accelerated across all of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties from its current ten locations. PTACC will contribute to this shared effort by bringing to the table its national leadership role in deflection; a network of practitioners from across the country; and extensive experience in starting and expanding deflection, pre-arrest diversion, and co-responder deflection.” Said Jac Charlier, PTACC Executive Director.

“Substance use disorder is a disease – not a crime, and steals the lives of 12 Pennsylvanians every day. Connecting individuals to the treatment they need will save lives and make our communities safer,” said Attorney General Josh Shapiro. “My office looks forward to partnering with the Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative (PTACC), which will help educate the public about deflection, reduce the stigma around drug addiction, and expand LETI’s reach across the Commonwealth.”

“Recovery is real and deflection and diversion are a catalyst into the recovery process. As a person with lived experience in terms of mental health, substance use, and justice-involvement, the engagement of justice and community-based practitioners who serve with compassion, care, and empathy has been instrumental in my journey.” Said Brandee Izquierdo, PTACC Board Member, Executive Director, SAFE Project.

Under LETI policy, law enforcement agencies will open their doors to people struggling if they express a desire to receive treatment. Additionally, officers will receive additional training in how to better help individuals seeking help. The initiative's role includes rethinking the relationship between officers and people who have substance use disorder, rather than solely resorting to arrests and incarceration. The hope is also this initiative would help curb the stigma attached to substance abuse disorders.

PTACC, which operates the National Deflection Resource Center, is comprised of over 45 national organizations, consisting of practitioners in law enforcement, EMS/Fire, behavioral health, community, advocacy, research, and public policy, with a collective mission to strategically enhance the quantity and quality of community behavioral health and social service options available at the point of encounter with first responders. PTACC provides national vision, leadership, advocacy, and education to facilitate the development and growth of the entire field of deflection across the United States.

Contacts:

Agent **Janene Holter**, PhD, is the Office of Attorney General’s dedicated full-time agent who coordinates PA LETI. Her work includes training, writing policies for each participating county, providing sample policies and documents, and convening key community stakeholders. District Attorneys in Pennsylvania interested in starting a PA LETI program should contact Agent Janene Holter at 570-826-2483.

Jac Charlier, Executive Director
Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative
jcharlier@tasc.org
773-266-1420

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