



Atlanta Police Department – Standard Operating Procedure			
	APD.SOP.3200 – Diversion and Social Service Programs Effective Date: November 4th, 2025		
Chief Darin Schierbaum	Signature by: DS	Date Signed: 11/4/2025	Expires:2029

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

APD Staff,

The Policy and Standards Section is dedicated to providing the department, and its employees, with accurate, understandable and transparent policies. In order to publish policies that reflect the most up-to-date standards, the Policy and Standard Section regularly reviews all policies to ensure that they are reflective of the current mission and objectives of the Atlanta Police Department.

During the review and renewal of APD.SOP.3200 – Criminal Justice and Social Services Diversion Programs, we updated the policy to reflect the programs we currently offer in Atlanta, and renamed the policy “Diversion and Social Service Programs”

We ask that you please take the time to review this policy as it outlines the available social service groups and shelter options through United Way as well as diversion options through the Pre-Arrest Diversion Initiative (PAD) and the Center for Diversion Services (CDS). While both diversion programs serve to redirect individuals away from arrest and toward supportive services, they operate with distinct approaches. PAD focuses on community-based care and support connections, while the Center for Diversion Services provides immediate round-the-clock short-term stabilization and access to treatment.

Officers are encouraged to consider the specific needs and preferences of the individual when determining the most appropriate diversion pathway. Diversion programs provide officers with alternatives that prioritize treatment, support, and long-term solutions while reducing the cycle of repeated arrests and incarceration. These programs not only ease the burden on the courts and detention facilities but also reinforce the Department’s commitment to fairness, equity, and the well-being of the Atlanta community.

Thank you and stay informed!

Policy and Standards Section
 Planning, Research, and Accreditation Unit



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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the use of pre-arrest diversion service programs, offering eligible individuals access to treatment and support services in lieu of arrest. This approach reduces repeat offenses, improves community outcomes, and strengthens public trust in the Department.

2. POLICY

It is the policy of the Atlanta Police Department to provide alternatives to arrest to individuals who meet the criteria outlined by the programs.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 Division, section, and unit commanders will be responsible for the implementation of this directive within their command.
- 3.2 Supervisors will ensure employees under their immediate supervision are aware of and utilize the service of the Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP).
- 3.3 Law Enforcement are mandated reporters in the State of Georgia and are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) within 24 hours of suspicion.
- 3.4 All employees will promote cooperative working relationships with diversion programs, public safety, social service, and human service agencies.
- 3.5 The CDS will contact Atlanta Dispatch to notify officers once they have reached capacity at the Center.

4. ACTION

4.1 SOCIAL SERVICE INFORMATION

- 4.1.1 Employees who encounter citizens requiring assistance from social service agencies are encouraged to make the appropriate referrals. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 1.1.3)
- 4.1.2 When encountering juveniles in need of assistance, every effort to contact the juvenile’s parents or guardian must be made, unless they are a victim of said person. The Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) should be contacted for all juveniles in need of assistance.
- 4.1.3 The United Way’s database is accessible 24 hours a day and provides a list of current social service and outreach programs and groups. <http://211online.unitedwayatlanta.org/>. (CALEA 6th ed. Standard 55.2.1):
- 4.1.4 Victims or witnesses of crime who require services of the Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) will be contacted by respective VWAP advocates. The VWAP advocates may provide services at crime scenes or during subsequent investigations as outlined in APD.SOP.3100 “Victim Witness Assistance.”



4.2 DIVERSION SERVICES ELIGIBILITY

- 4.2.1 Individuals are eligible for diversion to Police Alternatives and Diversion Initiative (PAD) and Center for Diversion and Services (CDS) when there is probable cause that a crime has been committed and the offender could be arrested, but the responding officer believes that the criminal activity of the individual is related to mental health issues, problematic substance use, and/or extreme poverty.
- 4.2.2 To be eligible for the Diversion program Individuals must meet the following criteria:
1. Individuals must be 18 years of age or older.
 2. Violated a non-violent crime.
 3. The individual voluntarily agrees to enter Diversion in lieu of arrest.
 4. The individual does not have an active warrant.
 5. The arresting officer observed circumstances indicating the offense was committed due to:
 - a. A Mental Health Crisis
 - b. Substance Use
 - c. Homelessness
 - d. Extreme poverty
- 4.2.3 If the individual meets the eligibility criteria, then the individual should be offered the option of being diverted to a diversion program rather than being arrested.
- 4.2.4 Officers will conduct a warrant check for all individuals prior to initiating diversion services. If there are no active warrants, the officer will notify their supervisor that they are diverting the individual to the preferred, or available, diversion program.
- 4.2.5 After notifying their supervisor, the responding officer will request verbal consent from the individual that they would like to participate in the diversion program. The consent must be captured clearly and audibly on the officer's body camera.

4.3 POLICING ALTERNATIVES AND DIVERSION INITIATIVE (PAD)

- 4.3.1 If the individual advises that they would like to participate in PAD's diversion program, the responding officer will contact the PAD Referral Line at 470-819-4855, speak with a PAD Referral Coordinator and provide the information that they request.
- 4.3.2 The PAD Referral Coordinator will promptly dispatch a Community Response Team to the scene for eligible participants. The Community Response Team will arrive at the scene within 30 minutes after being dispatched.
- 4.3.3 Officers will remain on scene with the individual until the Community Response Team arrives.
- 4.3.4 Officers will complete an incident report for the incident. The incident report will be completed in the records managements system (RMS). When completing the report, officers will select from the RECORD TYPE menu "Pre-Arrest Diversion (PAD)" for a successful referral. Regardless of whether the PAD referral was successful, officers will email the incident report to referral@atlantapad.org before the end of their shift.



- 4.3.5 If the PAD Referral Coordinator determines that the individual is not eligible for the PAD program, the responding officer will contact their supervisor to determine the most appropriate course of action.
- 4.3.6 Community Response teams are available Monday- Friday 7AM-12AM. If a Community Response Team is not available, the responding officer will transport the individual to the Center for Diversion and Services.

4.4 CENTER FOR DIVERSION SERVICES (CDS)

- 4.4.1 When diverting to the CDS (254 Peachtree St), officers will conduct a pat-down to ensure no weapons or contraband are present before transport. Bags and property are to be separated from the individual during transport but returned to the individual during transfer of custody to CDS staff.
- 4.4.2 Upon arrival, officers will electronically submit and/or provide the following, then transfer responsibility to designated CDS staff:
 - 1. The Officers' Name and Unique ID.
 - 2. The Zone the individual is coming from.
 - 3. The Individuals Name and Date of Birth.
 - 4. The Charges the individual is being diverted from.

The Center of Diversion and Services will be responsible for the wellbeing and safety of the individual once the Officer has completed the transfer process.

- 4.4.3 Officers utilizing the CDS will be required to write a Miscellaneous non- crime incident report for each person who participates in the CDS in lieu of a physical arrest. Once the call is complete, the officer will keep the signal the same and pull the call in "17D – Diversion" when completed.
- 4.4.4 Originating Zone Officers will respond to the CDS in the event drugs or paraphernalia are discovered on an individual after transfer of responsibility has been completed. Individuals caught with illegal substances will be taken into custody and the officer will proceed in accordance with the arrest policy, APD.SOP.3030. **Diversion will not be an option for these individuals.**
- 4.4.5 If the CDS requires police assistance for an individual in the pre-arrest diversion, the Zone where the individual originated from, will be contacted to respond. Unless circumstance require immediate response of a law enforcement officer, APD will not be responsible for individuals who have entered diversion from an out-side jurisdiction.

4.5 DISQUALIFICATIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY

- 4.5.1 If the individual is ineligible, does not want to use the diversion program in lieu of physical arrest, or is exhibiting increased signs of aggression, the officer will make the physical arrest and proceed under normal arrest protocol (APD.SOP.3030 Arrest).
- 4.5.2 If an officer is unable to offer pre-arrest diversion because the CDS is at capacity, or PAD is unavailable, the officer will transport the individual to jail following the standard arrest procedures, and notate on the arrest citation, "Diversion Eligible – Unable due to max capacity" in the remark section.
- 4.5.3 Individuals are **not** eligible for diversion to CDS or PAD when any of the following apply:
 - 1. The individual is under the age of 18.



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2. The individual is unable to consent to the program or refuses to identify.
3. The individual presents a substantial risk of harm to themselves or others.
4. There is probable cause that the individual committed a violent crime or property crime against a complainant and the complainant objects to diversion.
5. The individual has pending charges for violent offenses (i.e. murder, voluntary manslaughter, kidnapping, rape, aggravated sodomy, child molestation, incest, armed robbery, hijacking, home invasion, etc.).
6. The individual has an active warrant issued by a court other than the Atlanta Municipal Court or the Fulton County State and Superior Courts.
7. The individual has a felony/exclusionary warrant, regardless of jurisdiction.

5. DEFINITIONS

Community Response Team: PAD staff trained in social work, peer counseling, harm reduction techniques, and/or mental health support with the goal of addressing immediate basic needs, and providing referrals to needed social services and/or other community supports.

Exclusionary Charges: Pending charges for murder, voluntary manslaughter, kidnapping, rape, aggravated sodomy, child molestation, incest, armed robbery, hijacking, and home invasion.

PAD Participant: Individuals who have been approved by PAD to participate in PAD's diversion program, which may include case management and linkage to services.

Referral Coordinator: PAD staff who ask preliminary screening questions to determine an eligible diversion and who dispatch a Community Response Team.

6. CANCELLATIONS

- APD.SO.24.07 – Center for Diversion and Services effective October 2024 (archived)
- APD.SO.21.01 – Policing Alternatives and Diversion Initiative (PAD) effective April 2021 (archived)
- APD.SOP.3200 – Criminal Justice and Social Services Diversion Programs effective December 2022

7. REFERENCES

- ❖ [United Way Social Services providers](#)
- ❖ [Atlanta PAD](#)