



CHOOSE 180 2022 Annual Report

Mainstream Pre-Filing Diversion Program for Young Adults

SEATTLE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

ANN DAVISON



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Program Overview

Starting in September 2017, the Seattle City Attorney's Office (CAO), in partnership with the community non-profit organization CHOOSE 180, began offering a Pre-Filing Diversion opportunity for 18-24-year-olds. Pre-Filing Diversion offers young people the opportunity to participate in a four hour CHOOSE 180 Young Adult Workshop instead of being processed through the traditional criminal legal system. Criminal charges are not filed against those who successfully complete the Workshop.

This restorative practice approach aims to steer young people down a path of personal responsibility and redemption rather than facing criminal charges that carry lifelong collateral consequences. The Workshop:

- * creates space for participants to hear from people with shared backgrounds and experiences;
- * encourages participants to identify behaviors that led to their current circumstances;
- * helps participants identify what has kept them from making positive change;
- * urges participants to envision a path toward change.

Throughout the Workshop, participants are encouraged to identify what support they need to forge a new path. During and after the Workshop, participants receive continued support from CHOOSE 180 and a Resource Specialist from the Community Resource Center in Seattle Municipal Court.

CHOOSE 180 pivoted in March of 2020 to a virtual Workshop and has continued with that format for three years. The Young Adult Workshop is still four hours in length, but now a CHOOSE 180 staff member works one-on-one virtually with each participant over a single day or the course of a week. CHOOSE 180 provides laptops, hotspot internet access, and other technical assistance as needed.

CHOOSE 180 continues to honor the value of employing staff reflective of the population served. Currently, 67% of CHOOSE 180's leadership staff, 85% of staff, and 71% of the board are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). The majority of the team, or their family members, have been personally impacted by the criminal legal system.

Beginning with program inception in late 2017 through December 2022, CHOOSE 180 hosted nineteen in-person Young Adult Diversion Workshops and 33 months of virtual one-on-one Workshops. The CAO has referred 1,461 young adults on 1,721 police reports to diversion. Of the 1,461 young people invited to participate in diversion, 595 (41%) completed the program, and 639 (37%) cases were diverted.

2022 Program Highlights

In 2022, the CAO diverted 74 fileable cases involving 69 participants to virtual one-on-one Workshops. Four of the participants were diverted on more than one criminal case. Although 69 participants completed diversion, CAO referred 236 young people on 263 reports, or 29% of individuals and 26% of all reports. We are continually strategizing with CHOOSE 180 on program participation rates. As you can

see below (pg. 8), about 41% of the people who completed the program reported having unstable housing, such as staying with family and friends or at a shelter. We anticipate that percentage to be much higher for those who never attend the Workshop.

With the March 2020 cessation of in-person gatherings, young adults were able to immediately participate in workshops and connect with resources, rather than cases being delayed due to court closures. This practice continued through 2022 with great success.

In May of 2019, in coordination with Seattle Municipal Court and King County Department of Public Defense, CAO began offering a post-file diversion opportunity. The purpose is to address equity concerns given the overwhelming number of young people using shelters as their addresses. Often, a lack of response to a pre-filing diversion letter was solely due to lack of letter receipt. A total of 14 individuals on 16 cases utilizing this post-file option in 2022 had their case dismissed.

CAO prioritizes the safety of all parties involved and will continue to utilize prosecutorial discretion to pilot this program.

Young adults accused of some person-crimes will continue to be referred for a one-on-one Workshop even after CHOOSE 180's operations return to the in-person workshop format. They also are required to attend a meeting with CHOOSE 180's behavioral health specialist. This individualized attention allows CHOOSE 180 navigators ample opportunity to work with young adults in a heightened way to address barriers to participants' success. In 2022, eight referrals completed the CHOOSE 180 Plus requirements.

As is true with every incident, the CAO retains eligibility discretion and will consider the facts of a given incident, including any listed injury and any known history of violence. CAO may deem an incident ineligible based on extraordinary circumstances.

Success Stories

"I believe young people are the experts in their own lives and already possess the tools they need to find their success. They just need to be connected with the proper support."

-Allie Steinberg, Workshop Coordinator

Allie Steinberg, the Workshop Coordinator at CHOOSE 180, shared her motivation for working with this program: "I am continually inspired by the strength and resilience of the young people I have the opportunity to work with in these workshops. Their motivation to make changes in their life to find their successful path and take care of themselves in the process is something very powerful. I believe young people are the experts in their own lives and already possess the tools they need to find their success, they just need to be connected with the proper support and resources to help them bring out those tools and practice using them. While traditional prosecution leaves young people with less support and

more harm, it's important to, instead, wrap around young people with care and support, allowing them the space and time to make changes in their own lives.”

CHOOSE 180 has an Aftercare Team that focuses on connecting individuals to services upon Workshop completion. Aftercare Success Coach Travys Ross shared the following story about someone he worked with: “One of my participants, “L”, was referred to me by a colleague who felt I could have a strong connection with him. L and I had similar life experiences, such as being in the streets and having a baby young. I understood the difficulties of these circumstances and the tough choices that we are often faced with as a result. L told me about his goals of wanting to do right by his future daughter, getting a job, not going to jail, and seeing his child be born. He knows how important it is to both himself and his daughter to be in her life. L and I have worked together to create a strategy to stay on track and meet these goals. Since meeting with me, L successfully secured a new job, avoided getting in trouble, and is present in his daughter’s life every day. L has never had consistent, positive support before, and he talks about the new feeling of being a young man who can manage responsibilities. I am thrilled for L and working with him has been a major success.”

Community Resource Center Partner

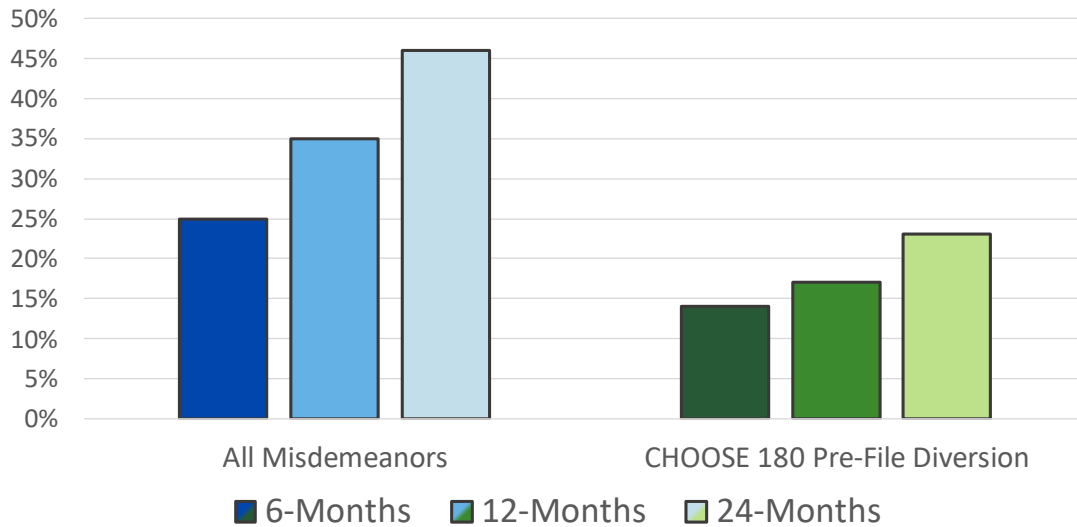
The City Attorney’s Office also partners with Seattle Municipal Court’s Community Resource Center (CRC) to provide additional services and support to participants. Generally, before and after the Workshops, CRC engages with participants and conducts social service screenings to determine areas of need and referrals to appropriate resources. During the pandemic, CRC did not engage in the same way as they had when the Workshop was in person. Thus, the number of people served since COVID began is significantly down from previous years.

CRC strives to support participants and refer them to services that can help them transform their lives. Highly sought-after services include, but are not limited to, job readiness, job opportunities, mental health services, and access to benefit programs. Historically, CRC attended the in-person Workshop and offered support for participants that met them where they were in their lives. During the pandemic, that support mainly occurred before and after the virtual Workshop. Additionally, CRC provides in-person support at intake hearings for individuals eligible for a last chance opportunity for diversion.

Program Statistics

Recidivism

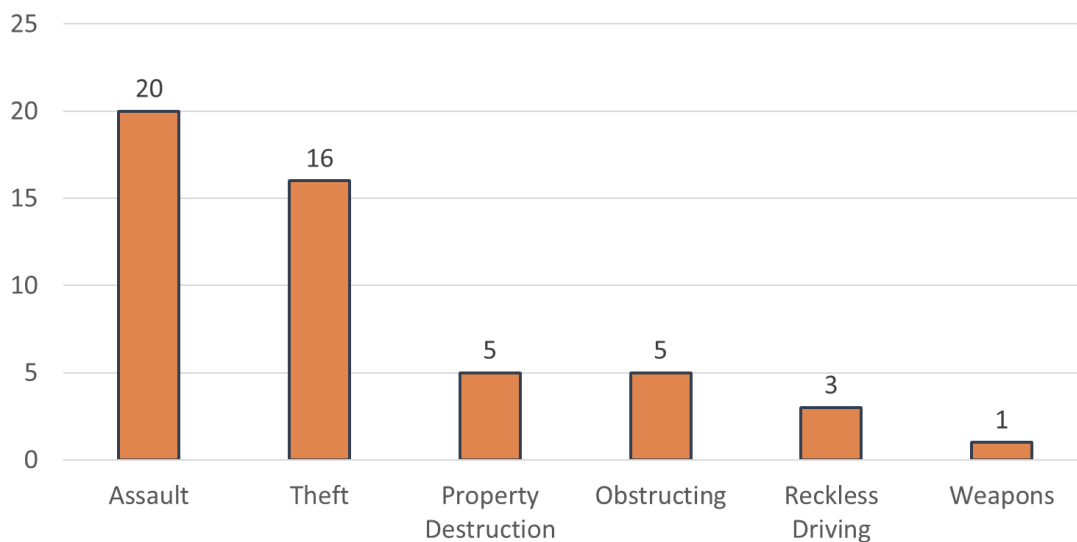
Referral Based Recidivism



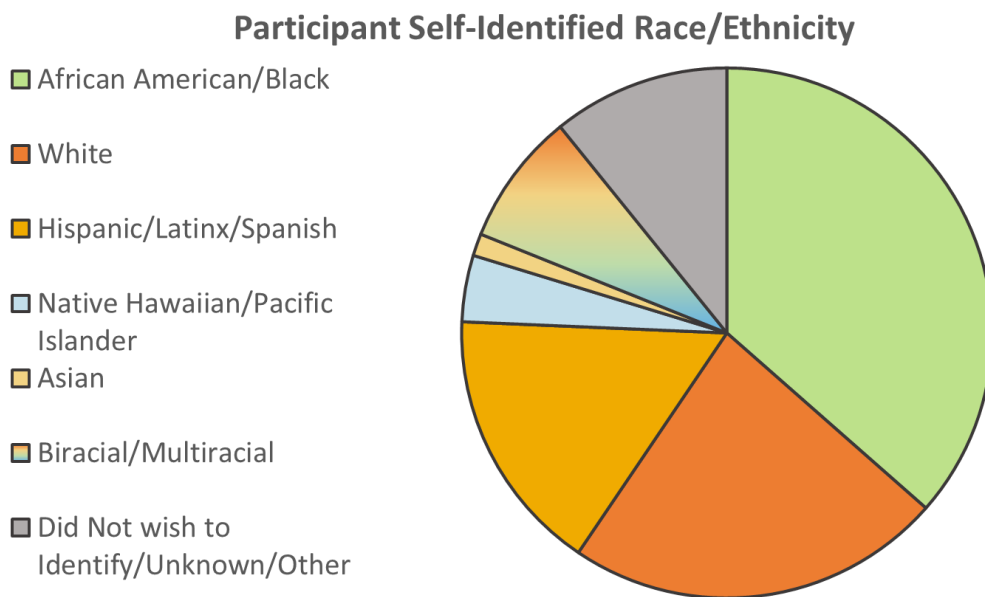
The recidivism rate for people who successfully complete CHOOSE 180 workshops is about 50 percent lower than the rate of those who go through mainstream prosecution or Community Court.

Charges Diverted

Charges Diverted

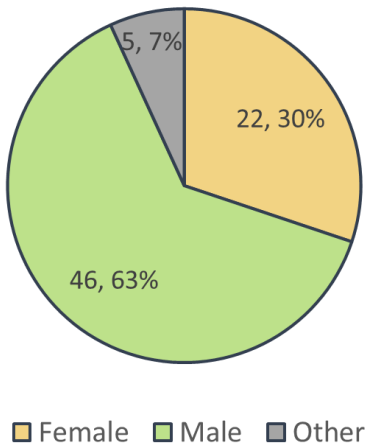


Assault charges are diverted after considering input from the victim. These types of person-crime charges are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by PFD prosecutors. If there are significant injuries resulting from the incident, the case will not be diverted. Assault charges are also referred to the behavioral health specialist at CHOOSE 180 for an hour-long consultation session to discern if there is further assistance the defendant can be provided.

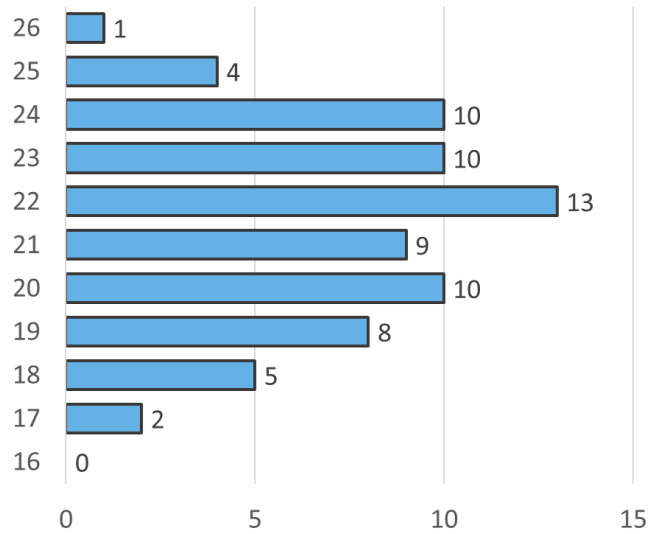


Participant Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity does not compare well to the general criminal justice statistical races used on the following page as there is no category for being bi/multiracial and Hispanic is considered an ethnicity that can be comprised of different races.

Participant Self-Identified Gender

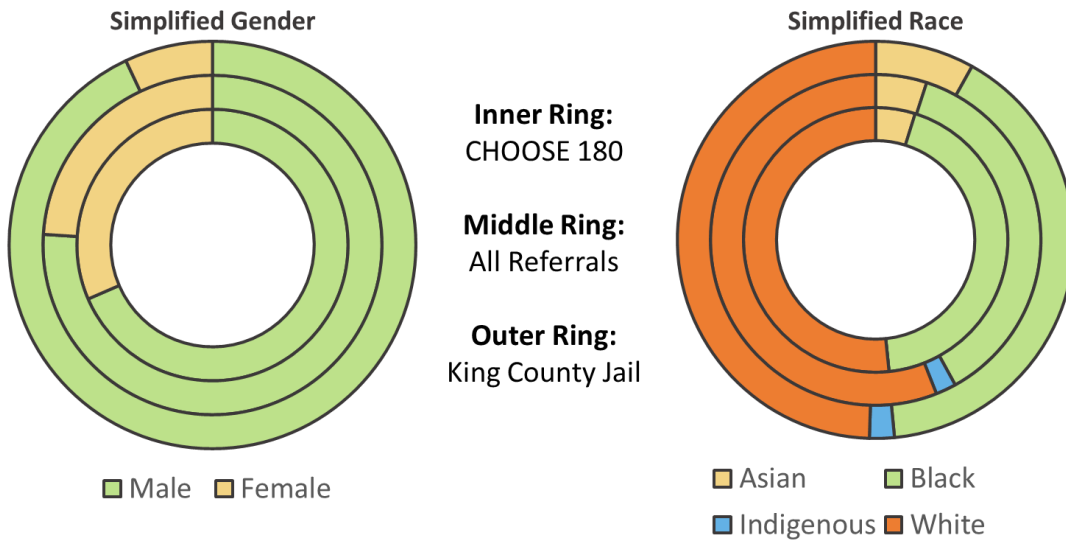


Participant Age at Workshop

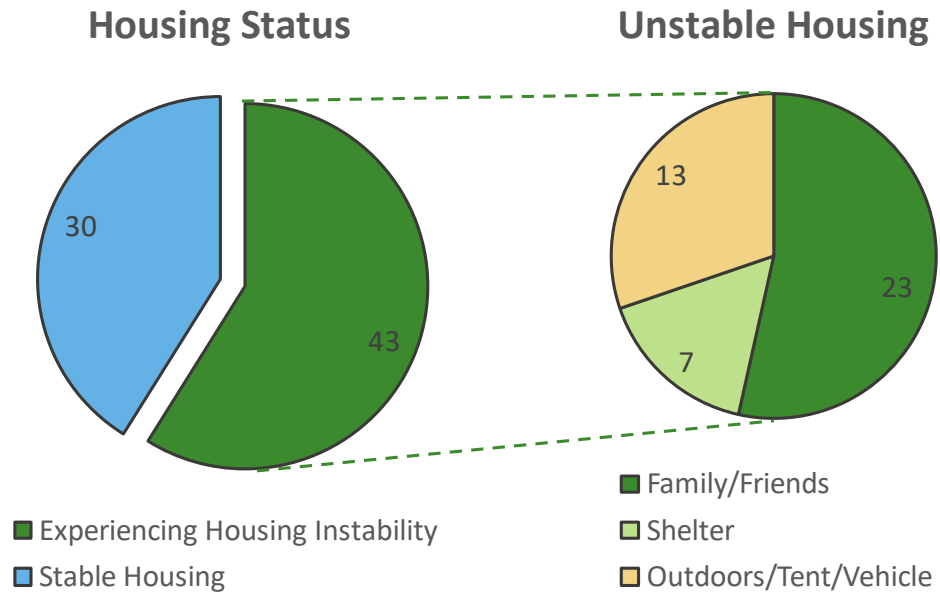


Cases are referred when the individual is 18-24 years old at the time of the incident; however, CAO files some traffic-related incidents for individuals under 18.

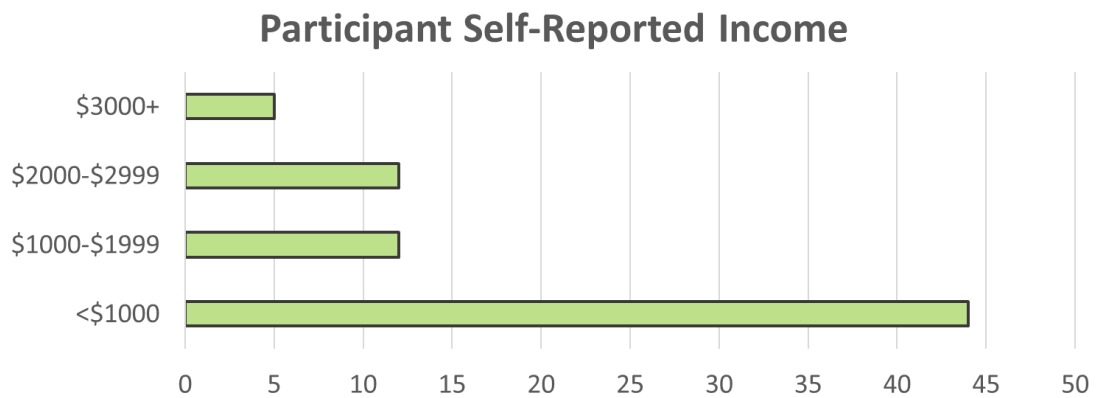
Demographic Proportion Comparison

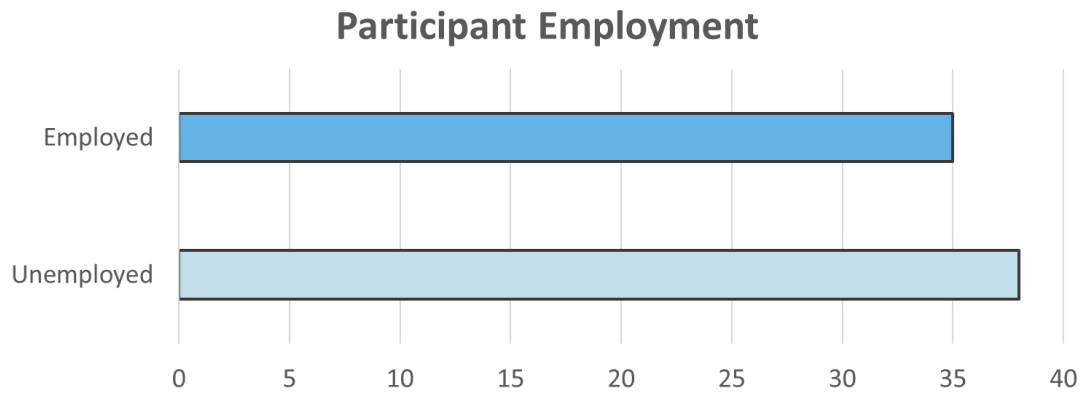


CHOOSE 180 has a diverse participant population that has similar demographics to the entire set of people referred for prosecution by the Seattle Police Department.

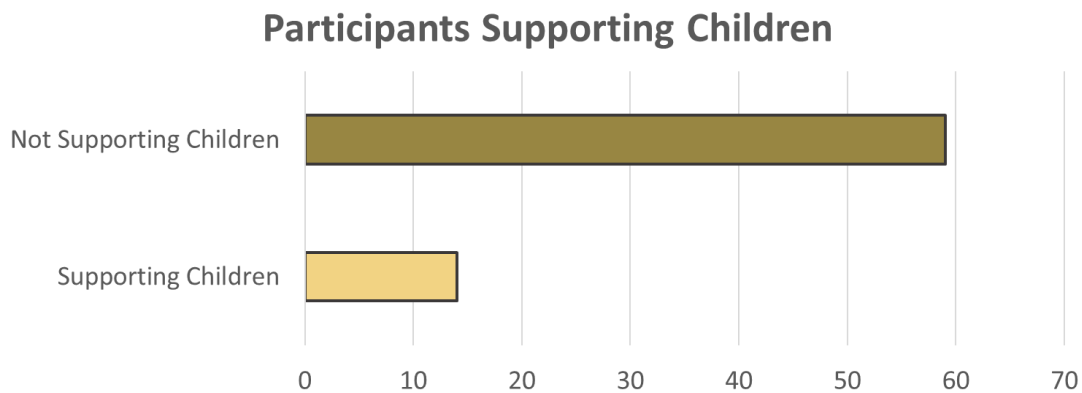
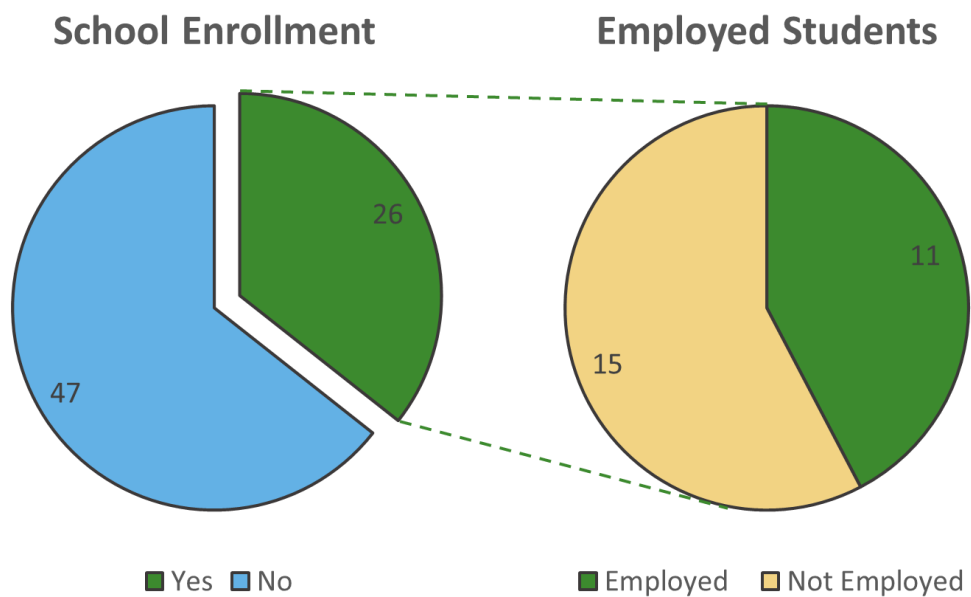


Many participants were experiencing some form of housing instability. Though most with unstable housing were living with family or friends, a third were outdoors or living in a tent or vehicle.





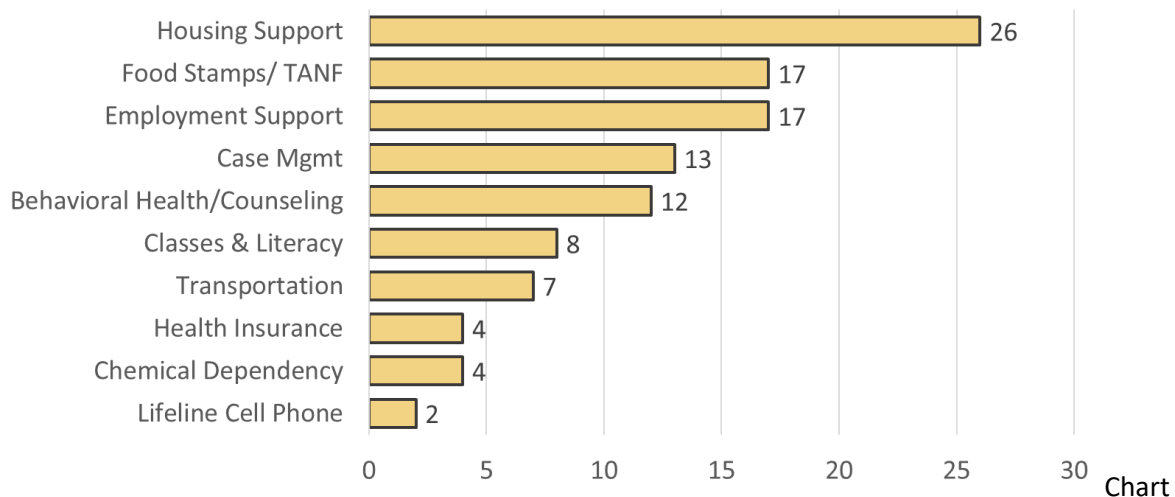
This is a slight change from 2021, when two-thirds of participants were employed.



Support Beyond the Workshop

In keeping with the commitment to offer Workshop participants the opportunity to forge a new path, CHOOSE 180 is funded to provide participant support beyond the Workshop. As shown in the figure below, *CHOOSE 180 Service Connections*ⁱ, CHOOSE 180 assists participants most frequently with housing support, food stamps, and employment assistance.

Assistance Programs that Participants Would Like to be Connected to



During the four hour virtual diversion Workshops, young adults are encouraged to envision what positive change looks like for them. They are asked to think through and identify the types of supports they will need in order to successfully maintain positive behaviors that lead to long-term change.

The CHOOSE 180 Aftercare Specialist helps build relationships with outside organizations in order to connect program participants with employment opportunities, housing, pro-social activities, education, health services, and more. These aftercare supports are offered to program participants who have successfully completed the Workshop. Upon successfully completing the Workshop, every participant is contacted at one week, three month, six month, and 12 month increments. CHOOSE 180 will offer additional support during participants' check-ins, or provide it upon request. The participant may decline services or contact CHOOSE 180 whenever they wish.

In response to the pandemic in 2020, CHOOSE 180 digitized information forms and surveys, and adapted workshops from a four-hour session to four 1-hour sessions to better match participants' work schedules and availability. This method continued through 2022. To ensure they were able to meet the needs of all participants, CHOOSE 180 received Chromebook donations and purchased WiFi hotspots to

loan to participants. Aftercare support was also modified, with staff focusing on text and video chats, and providing masked/social distanced home visits as needed.

CHOOSE 180 has built its aftercare curriculum in a way that better facilitates participants' ability to dream big and reach their goals. The staff encourage a deep dive into the "Compass" curriculum used in the diversion workshops. The deep dive expands Compass south's "where am I now" prompt utilizing modalities from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and SMART goals. This activity is three sessions long and asks participants to think about their belief system, the emotions behind their beliefs, and how to move from an "I have no choice" mindset to the ability and commitment to slow down and consider making different choices. Once this shift is made, participants are better positioned to truly heal from trauma and reach their goals.

2023 Program Goals

CHOOSE Freedom

The City Attorney's Office has seen an uptick in firearm related cases and is continuing to discuss with CHOOSE 180 the best way to ensure community safety while also offering options for young adults to make different choices. The CHOOSE Freedom curriculum is an intensive 8-10 week cohort model that addresses issues for those dealing with gang affiliation and firearm-related issues. We will continue to partner with CHOOSE 180 on this work on 2023.

Connection to Shelters

As the work continues, a major focus for both the City Attorney's Office and CHOOSE 180 for 2023 is increasing the number of participants invited who then actually follow through and participate in the Workshop. CHOOSE 180 is actively building relationships with local shelters to see if they can set up information tables there, and the City Attorney's Office will continue to prioritize searching all available databases for contact information.

Continued Access to Diversion

CHOOSE 180 has had no lapse in service since the beginning of the pandemic. The City Attorney's Office and CHOOSE 180 are continuing discussion on when, if at all, is the appropriate time to return to in-person workshops. The staff at CHOOSE 180 has mentioned they have been able to reach more people by offering the Workshop virtually and may consider offering an occasional in-person Workshop option, but prefer maintaining the virtual model at this point in order to reach the most diverse group of participants possible. The City Attorney's Office and CHOOSE 180 will continue to listen to participants to understand what works best for their current life situations and try to accommodate accordingly to help them succeed.