



CHOOSE 180 2023 Annual Report

Mainstream Pre-Filing Diversion Program for Young Adults

SEATTLE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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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 to 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 since. 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, 75% of CHOOSE 180's leadership staff, 89% of staff, and 83% of the board are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). More than 80% of the team has been personally impacted by the criminal legal system, either themselves or in their family.

In 2023, CHOOSE 180 hosted 110 virtual workshops. Since 2017, the CAO has referred 1,643 young adults on 1,906 police reports to diversion. Of the 1,643 young people invited to participate in diversion, 705 (43%) completed the program, and 757 (40%) cases were diverted.

2023 Program Highlights

In 2023, the CAO diverted 118 fileable cases involving 110 participants to virtual one-on-one Workshops. Four of the participants were diverted on more than one criminal case. Although 110 participants completed diversion, CAO referred 182 young people on 185 reports, or 60% of individuals and 64% of all reports.

We are continually strategizing with CHOOSE 180 on program participation rates. As illustrated below (pg. 10), about 69% 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. Often, a lack of response to a pre-filing diversion letter was solely due to lack of letter receipt.

While the Seattle City Attorney's Office sends program invitation letters by mail, CHOOSE 180 staff conducts outreach to diversion referrals through various contact methods such as phone calls, text messages, e-mails and occasionally, social media. This outreach plays a crucial role in program participation. However, as with mailing addresses, phone numbers and access to technology can also be unreliable for some referrals.

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. A total of 22 individuals utilized this post-file option in 2023 and had their cases dismissed.

CAO prioritizes the safety of all parties involved and will continue to utilize prosecutorial discretion with 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 2023, eleven referrals completed the CHOOSE 180 Plus requirements.

Young adults accused of some firearm crimes are referred to CHOOSE FREEDOM, a multi-week cohort violence prevention and healing program. The CHOOSE FREEDOM team is led by people with lived experience and meets for 14 weeks to discuss topics such as goal setting, alternatives to retaliation, accountability, identifying personal strengths, and trauma recovery. In 2023, eight referrals completed the CHOOSE FREEDOM program.

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

“Allie is amazing and resembles the values of Choose 180! She really took time to listen and understand and we held a meaningful conversation!! I also appreciate the Choose 180 program for giving me the opportunity to pivot and not have to worry about the future. It is really appreciated!”

“I appreciate the opportunity to do this instead of having to go through the legal system.”

-Workshop Participants on their experiences with CHOOSE 180

As an alternative to traditional prosecution, diversion programs like CHOOSE 180 provide an opportunity for young people to be heard and receive wraparound support. Allie Steinberg celebrates her second year as the Workshop Coordinator at CHOOSE 180. Often as the first point of contact between the young person and CHOOSE 180, Allie exhibits warmth and genuine care, which are noted by all who connect with Allie. One of the participants noted, "Allie is amazing and resembles the values of Choose 180! She really took time to listen and understand and we held a meaningful conversation!! I also appreciate the CHOOSE 180 program for giving me the opportunity to pivot and not have to worry about the future. It really is appreciated!!"

Upon completing a Workshop with Allie, participants are invited to continue receiving care with CHOOSE 180's Aftercare Success Coaches. One pivotal member of this program is Olivia Crawford. Having joined the CHOOSE 180 team in January 2023, Olivia has supported young people through individualized care as the Aftercare Success Coach. Olivia often meets with young people weekly to check in about their self-identified goals. These relationships could be sustained for a year, as young people work towards goals such as seeking employment, obtaining stable housing, and navigating mental health challenges.

Participants are also asked to provide feedback through a post-workshop survey. Approximately 88% of participants expressed that the Workshop's Compass Curriculum was helpful, and 90% of participants expressed being able to benefit from the Workshop itself. More than 95% of participants expressed CHOOSE 180 staff had a positive impact on them.

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.

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 post-file opportunity for diversion. In 2023, our CRC partner expanded to include providing support to post-file expansion diversion participants who are eligible for one of five programs. Our CRC partner is available at intake hearings to guide post-file diversion participants in contacting expansion partners and get them started with the various programs.

Positive Impact of CRC

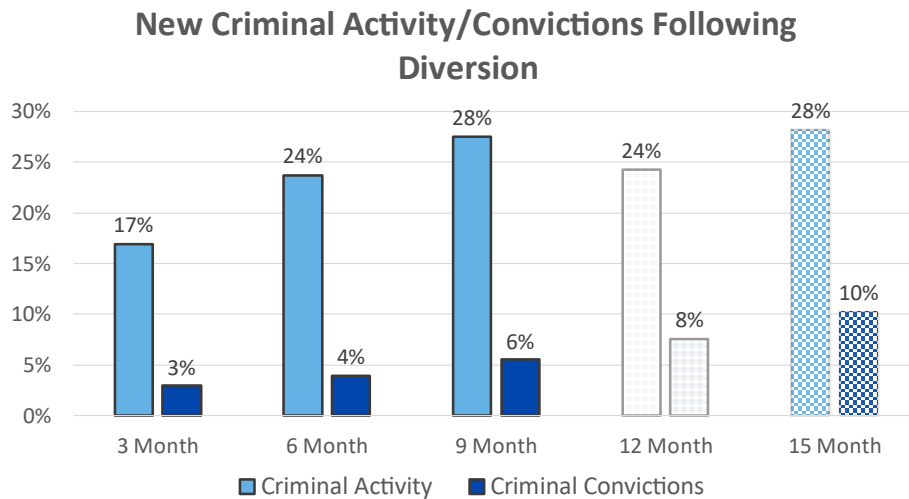
Leah Pastrana, the Pre-File Diversion Coordinator at CRC, shared some examples of the positive impact CRC is having on participants:

- One of the participants, "E", was referred to CRC after completing the CHOOSE 180 workshop. E was studying architecture and needed assistance with several basic services such as housing, employment, and chemical dependency. E had also been dealing with mental health challenges and was struggling to find stable work. Leah helped E get in touch with services, which helped E become stable. E told Leah they were grateful for these programs and assistance which were helping E achieve their goal of routine and consistency.
- Another participant, "A", was referred to CRC after completing the CHOOSE 180 workshop and needed assistance finding housing and employment. Leah assisted A in finding employment and resources to secure housing. A expressed their gratitude by telling Leah *"Thank you so much for helping me, this means a lot. I finally feel like the world is on my side again."*

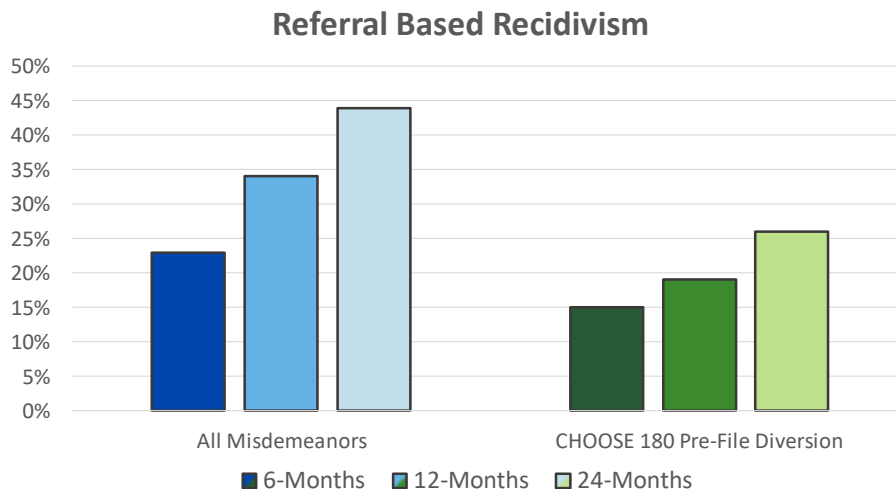
Program Statistics

Recidivism

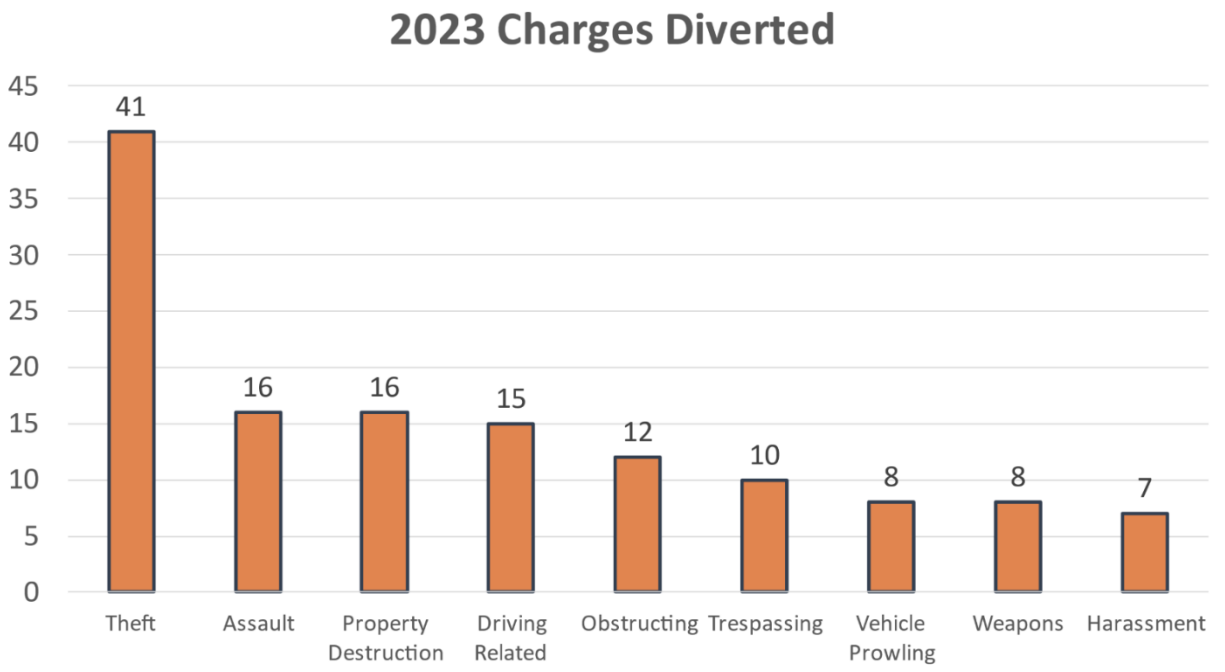
The Pre-File Diversion Unit tracks recidivism for program participants at three month intervals up to 15 months from program completion. The chart below shows the percent of program participants that have criminal activity and convictions. The amount of people with 12 and 15 month checks are small enough that the accuracy is reduced.



The City Attorney’s Office does not have the resources to do the same level of detailed check on mainstream cases, so it is necessary to change methodology to compare Pre-File Diversion with Mainstream recidivism. Looking at the likelihood of a new police referral can be done for both groups with the available data.



The recidivism rate for people who successfully complete CHOOSE 180 workshops is about half the rate of those who go through mainstream prosecution.

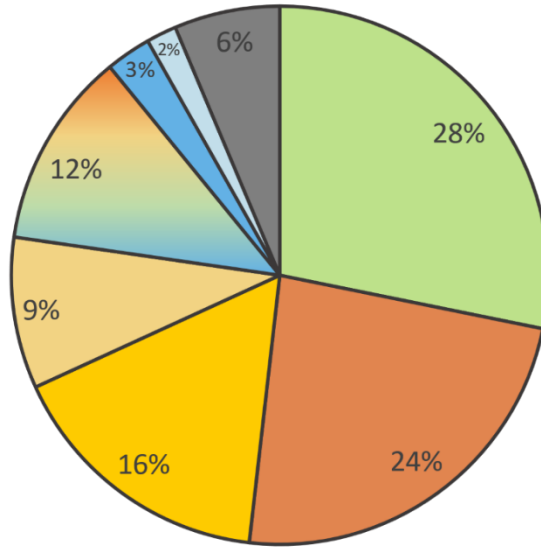


Assault charges are diverted after considering input from the victim. These types of person-crime charges are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by PFD prosecutors. If there are significant injuries resulting from the incident, the case will not be diverted. Assault charges are also referred to the behavioral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

Weapons charges involving firearms are diverted to CHOOSE FREEDOM, a multi-week cohort violence prevention and healing program offered to youth with firearm-related charges. Depending on the type of charge, individuals must also forfeit the involved weapon.

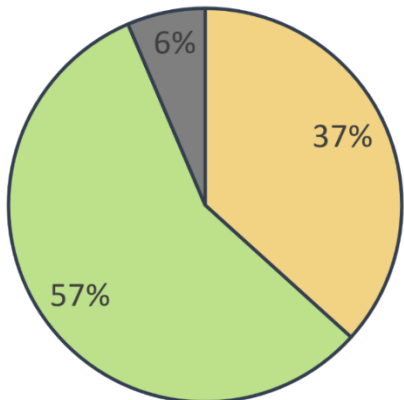
Participant Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity

- African American/Black
- White
- Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish
- Asian
- Biracial/Multiracial
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Alaskan Native/American Indian



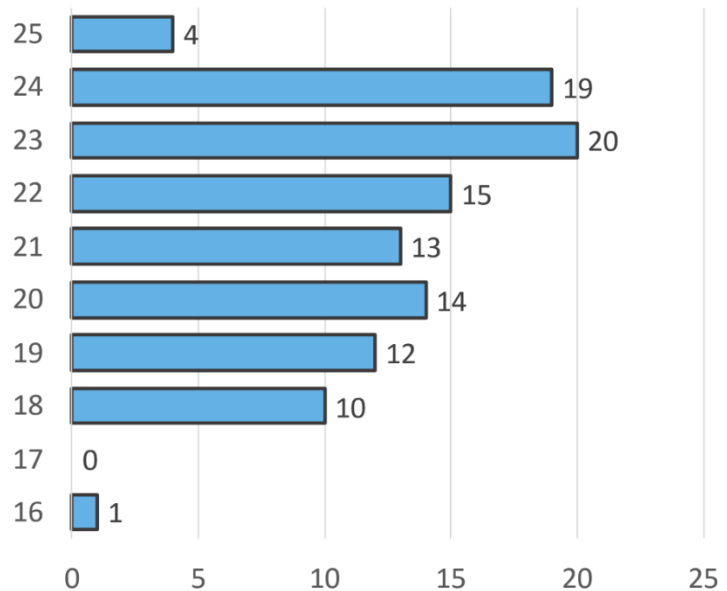
Participant Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity does not compare well to the general criminal justice statistical races used on the following page as there is no category for being bi/multiracial and Hispanic is considered an ethnicity that can be comprised of different races.

Participant Self-Identified Gender



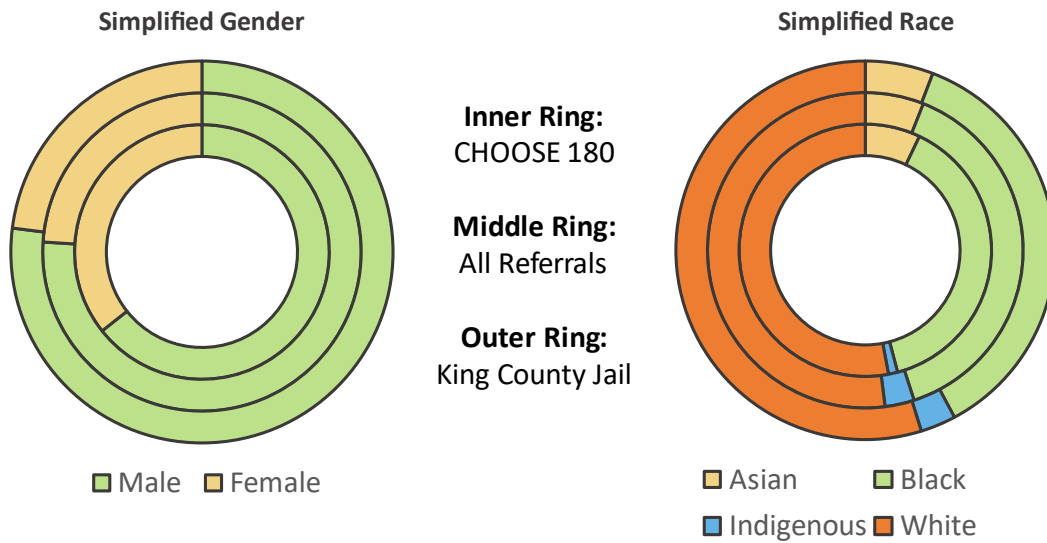
- Female
- Male
- Other

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.

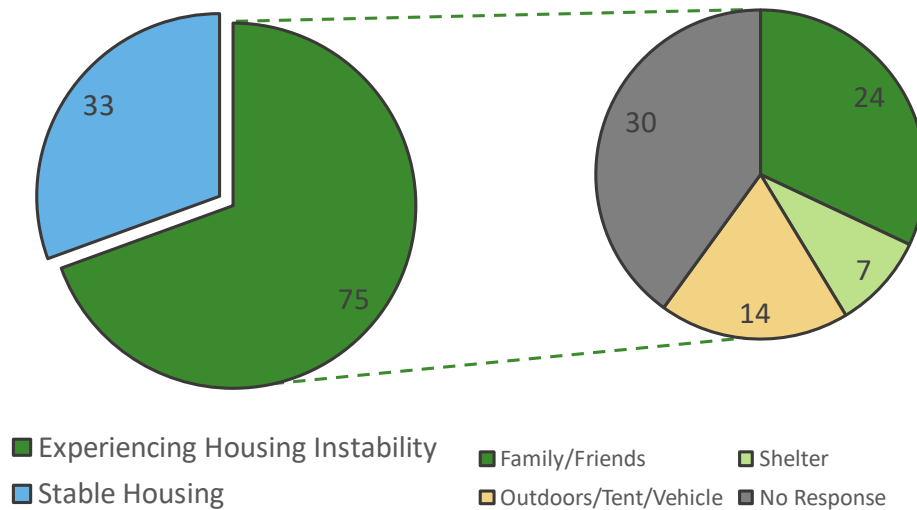
Demographic Proportion Comparison



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.

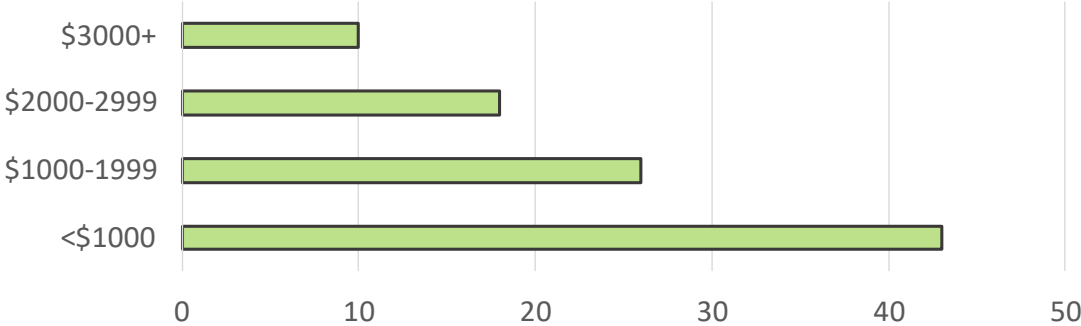
Participant Housing Status

Unstable Housing

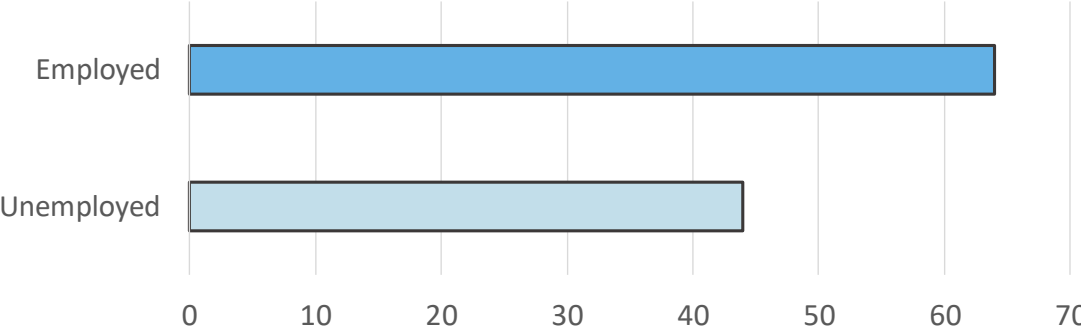


Many participants were experiencing some form of housing instability. Though most with unstable housing were living with family or friends, a third were outdoors or living in a tent or vehicle.

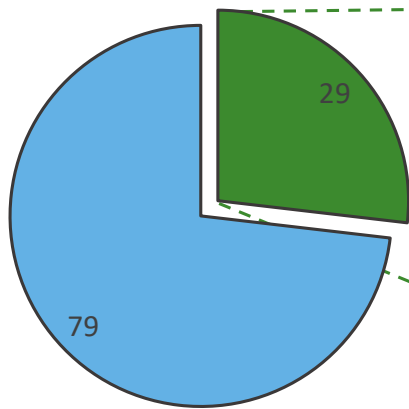
Participant Self-Reported Income



Participant Employment

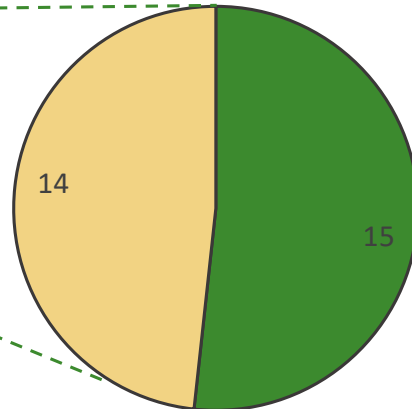


School Enrollment



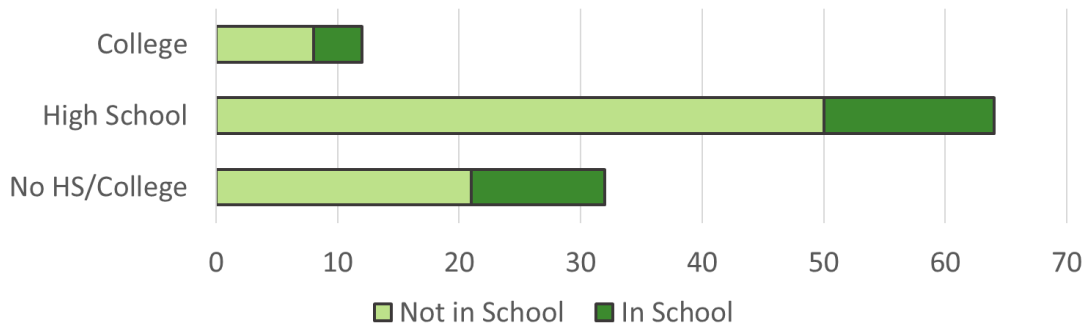
■ Yes ■ No

Employed Students

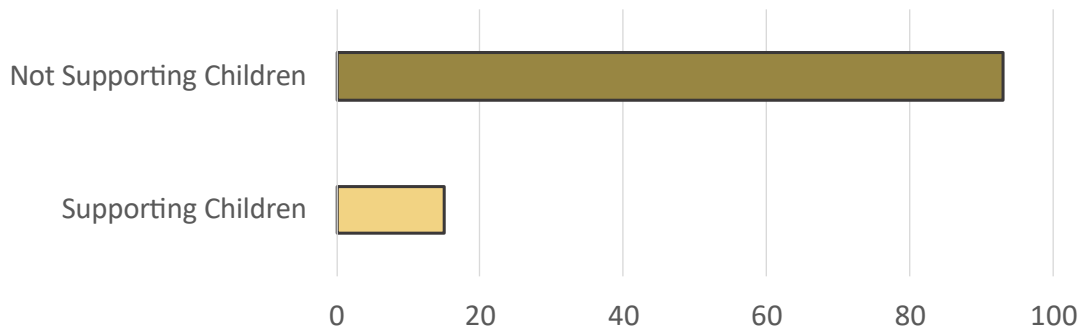


■ Employed ■ Not Employed

Educational Attainment



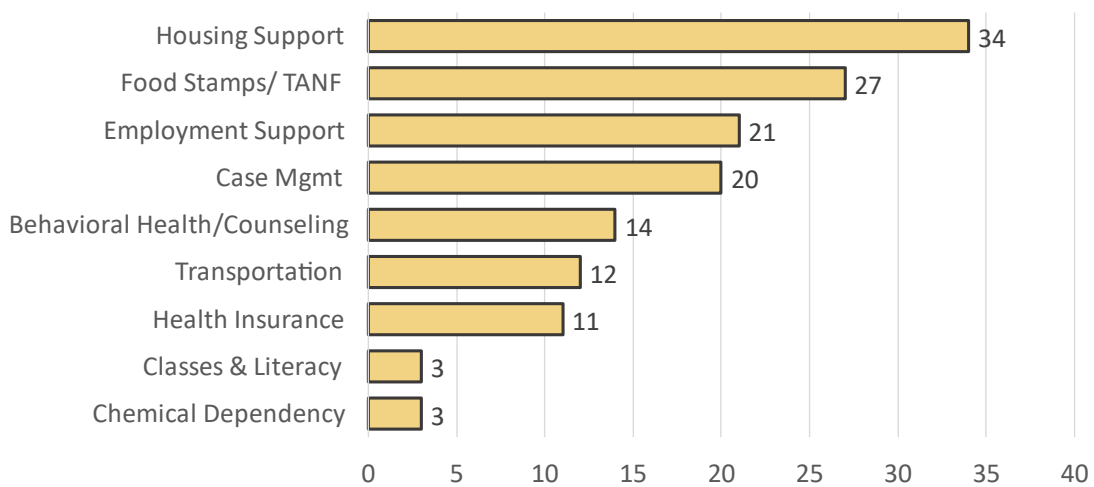
Participants Supporting Children



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 below, 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 to successfully maintain positive behaviors that lead to long-term change.

The CHOOSE 180 Aftercare Specialist helps build relationships with outside organizations 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 2023. To ensure they were able to meet the needs of all participants, CHOOSE 180 received Chromebook donations and purchased Wi-Fi 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.

2024 Program Goals

Preventative Care for Youth

For 2024, CHOOSE 180 is focusing on the expansion of alternative models to improve upstream preventative care for youth at risk of legal system engagement. Early intervention for youth at risk of becoming involved with the legal system is a key factor in improving their chances of long-term success. CHOOSE 180 plans to engage with their school partners and counseling services to better meet this need.

CHOOSE 180 also aims to provide more structured support for participants opting in for ongoing individualized care post-diversion to provide access to basic needs. Securing basic needs is crucial to an individual's long-term success. CHOOSE 180 is building more structured support systems to ensure participants have access to housing services, mental health and substance dependency resources, education, and employment services.

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.