



# CHOOSE 180 Annual Report

2024

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 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, and
- 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 at Seattle Municipal Court.

In March of 2020, CHOOSE 180 pivoted 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, 90% of staff, and 80% of the board are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color). More than 75% of the team have been personally impacted by the criminal legal system, either themselves or through their family.

In 2024, CHOOSE 180 hosted 3 in-person and 69 virtual one-on-one young adult diversion workshops.

Since 2017, the CAO has referred 1,764 young adults on 2,028 police reports to diversion. Of the 1,764 young people invited to participate in diversion, 779 (44%) completed the program, and 837 (41%) cases were diverted.

## 2024 Program Highlights

In 2024, the CAO diverted 80 fileable cases involving 74 participants to CHOOSE 180. Five of the participants were diverted on more than one criminal case. Although 74 participants completed diversion, CAO referred 121 young people on 122 reports, or 61% of individuals and 60% of all reports.

We are continually strategizing with CHOOSE 180 on program participation rates. As illustrated below (pg. 10), about 45% 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 twenty-seven individuals utilized this post-file option in 2024 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 if and when 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 2024, twelve referrals completed the CHOOSE 180 Plus requirements.

Young adults accused of some firearm crimes are referred post-filing 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 fourteen weeks to discuss topics such as goal setting, alternatives to retaliation, accountability, identifying personal strengths, and trauma recovery. In 2024, seven 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

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***“Allie was very easy to talk to, very understanding and non-judgmental.”***

***“The workshop isn’t just a court program but a learning and helpful program to understand we all make mistakes.”***

*-Workshop Participants on their experiences with CHOOSE 180*

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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 third 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.

Upon completing a Workshop with Allie, participants are invited to continue receiving care with CHOOSE 180’s Aftercare Success Coaches. 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 86% of participants expressed that the Workshop’s Compass Curriculum was helpful. More than 95% of participants expressed CHOOSE 180 staff had a positive impact on them.

***“To take this opportunity and continue moving towards not back tracking, this makes me grateful for having an opportunity, second chance.”***

***“To better myself and achieve my dreams and feel good about what I’m doing in life.”***

***“To help bring out the positive in me and kickstart a better future through a second chance.”***

*-Participant responses to the question of why they chose to participate in CHOOSE 180*

## CHOOSE FREEDOM

The majority of young people diverted to CHOOSE 180 engage with the traditional CHOOSE 180 program. However, individuals with firearm related cases engage with the CHOOSE Freedom program which is much more intensive. CHOOSE 180 highlights the success of that program below:

*While we celebrate the accomplishments of successful court diversion program, we often know that workshops alone cannot meet the comprehensive needs of our young people. After completing our workshop, participants are provided the opportunity to engage with our Aftercare and CHOOSE Freedom programs as a part of our continuum of care to reduce recidivism.*

*After graduating from our court diversion program, Jackson (fictitious name changed to protect anonymity of our young person) engaged with our Aftercare and CHOOSE Freedom programs. Jackson engaged with our CHOOSE Freedom program which supports youth impacted by the criminal legal system and gun violence through a cohort model. Jackson was able to build relationships with other young people experiencing similar circumstances through this 14-week program. Alongside the CHOOSE Freedom program, Jackson also received one-on-one support through Aftercare. Jackson met weekly with our Aftercare Success Coach, who provided ongoing one-on-one mentorship and support towards achieving Jackson's self-identified goals.*

*Throughout consistent engagement for six months, we were able to celebrate with Jackson building a robust resume, submitting job applications, finetuning his interview skills, and securing a new job. Oftentimes, the support Jackson needed was a constant person to check-in on his goals, reminding Jackson of his own commitments in choosing 180 "to better myself and look to be a better person".*

## Community Resource Center Partner

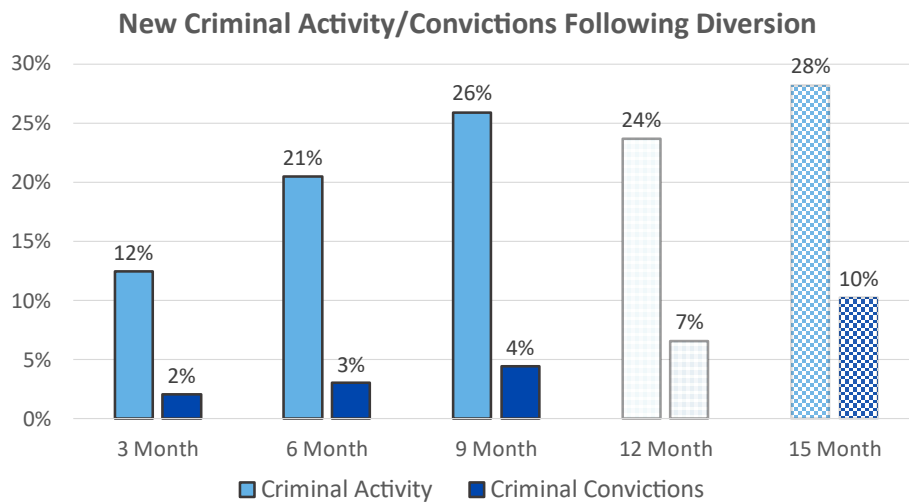
The City Attorney's Office also partners with Seattle Municipal Court's Community Resource Center (CRC) to provide additional services and support to participants. Generally, before and after the Workshops, CRC engages with participants and conducts social service screenings to determine areas of need 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 2024, 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.

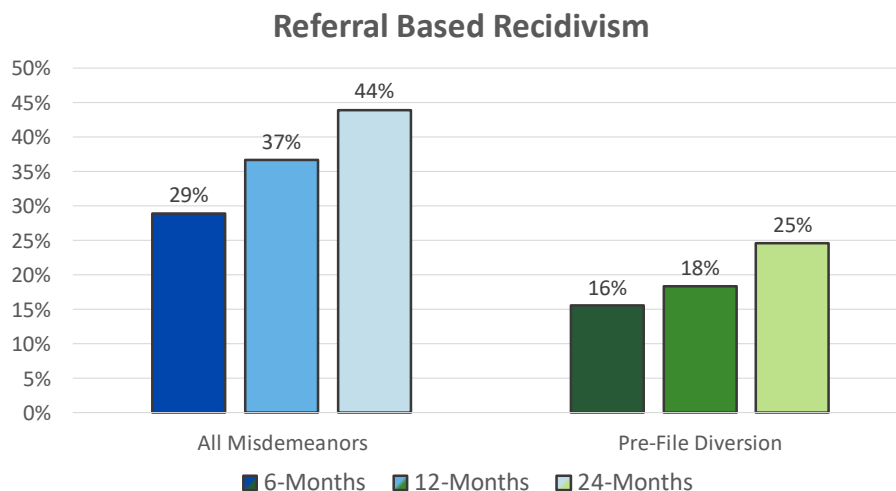
## Program Statistics

### Recidivism

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

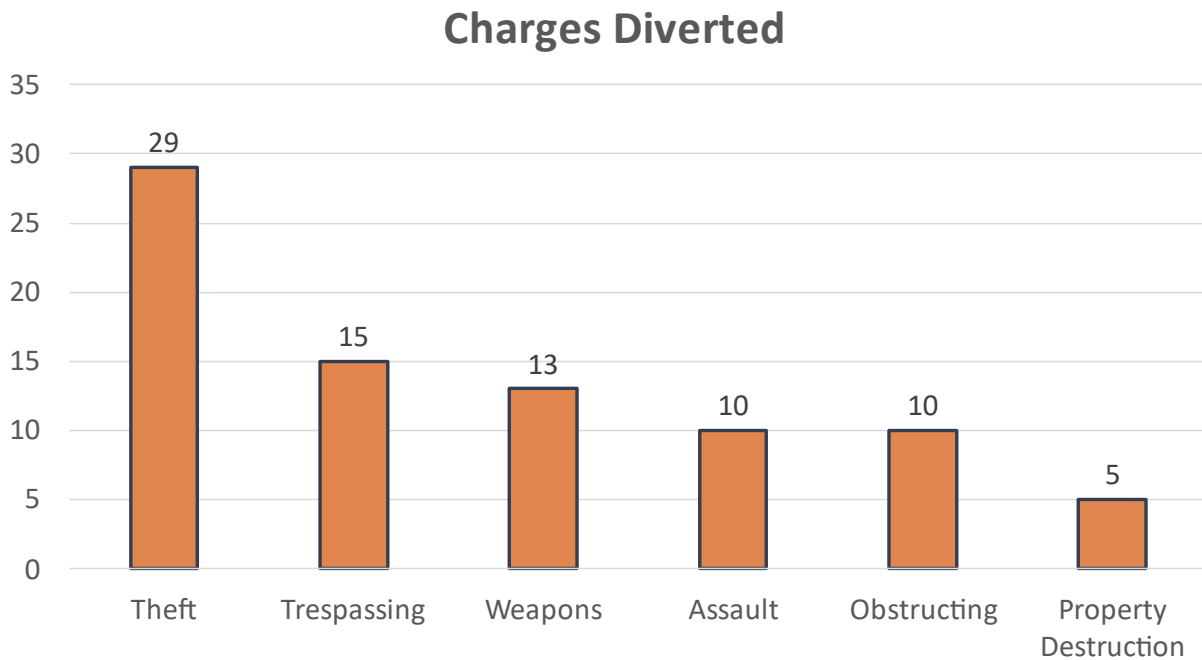


The City Attorney's Office does not have the resources to do the same level of detailed check on mainstream cases, so it is necessary to change methodology to compare Pre-File Diversion with Mainstream recidivism. Looking at the likelihood of a new police referral can be done for both groups with the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



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

## Charges Diverted

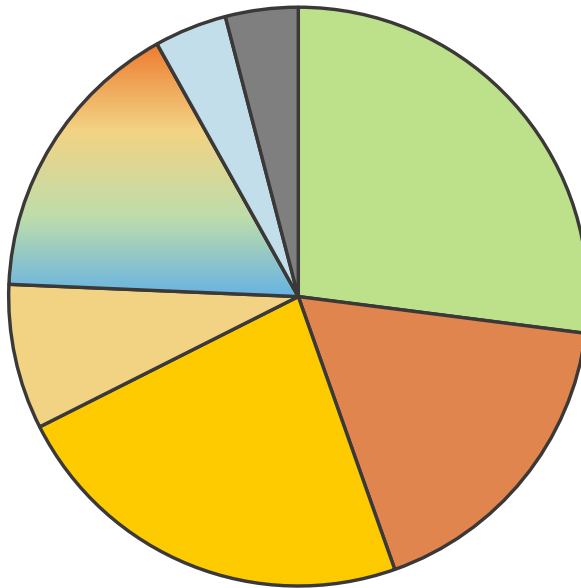
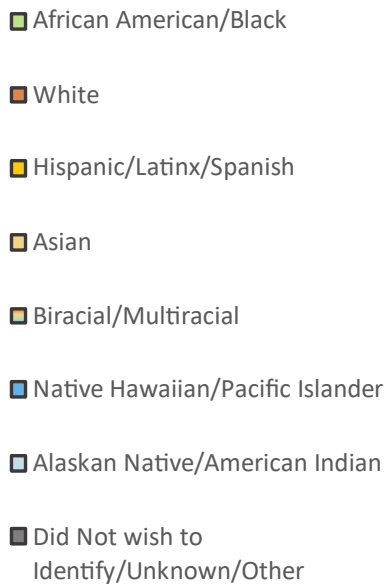


Assault charges are diverted after considering input from the victim. These types of person-crime charges are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by PFD prosecutors. If there are significant injuries resulting from the incident, the case will not be diverted. Assault charges are also referred to the behavioral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

Weapons charges involving firearms are diverted post-filing 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.

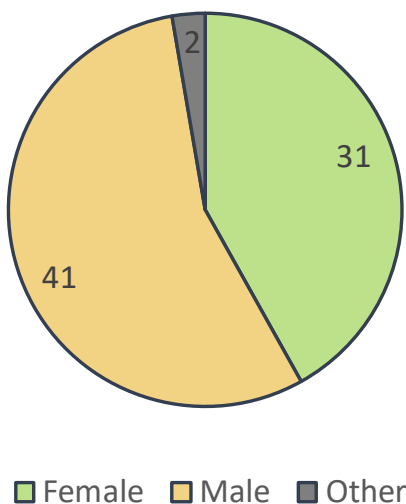


## Participant Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity

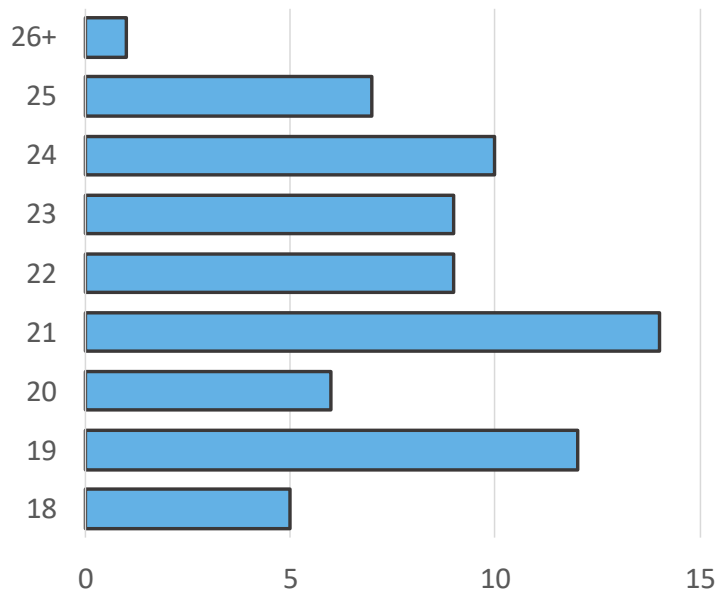


Participant Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity does not compare well to the general criminal justice statistical races used on the following page as there is no category for being bi/multiracial and Hispanic is considered an ethnicity that can be comprised of different races.

## Participant Self-Identified Gender

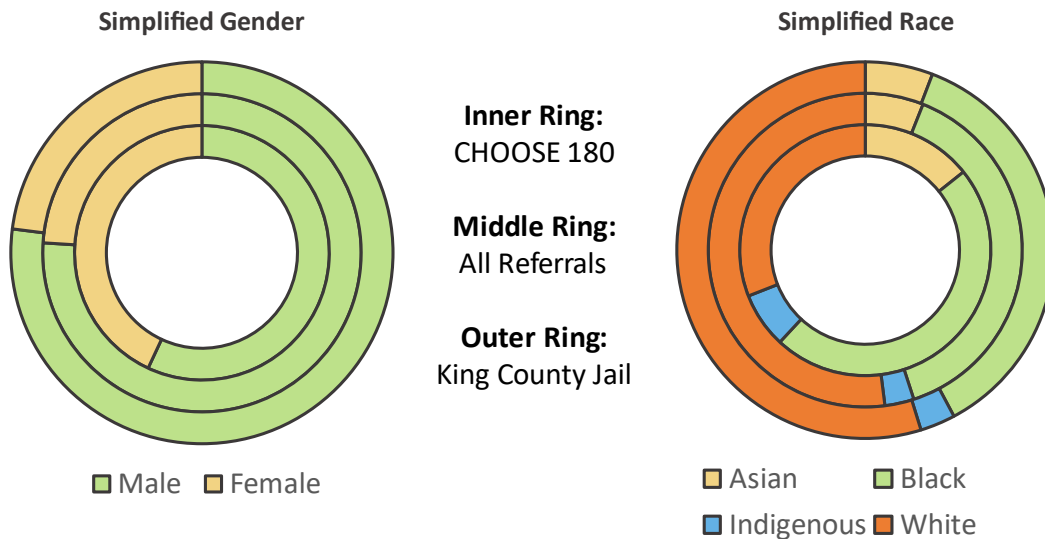


## Participant Age at Workshop



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.

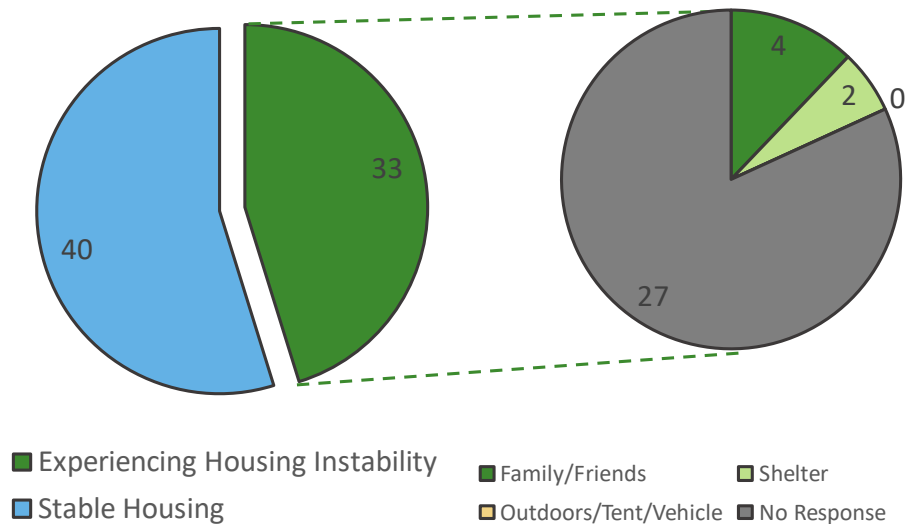
## Demographic Proportion Comparison



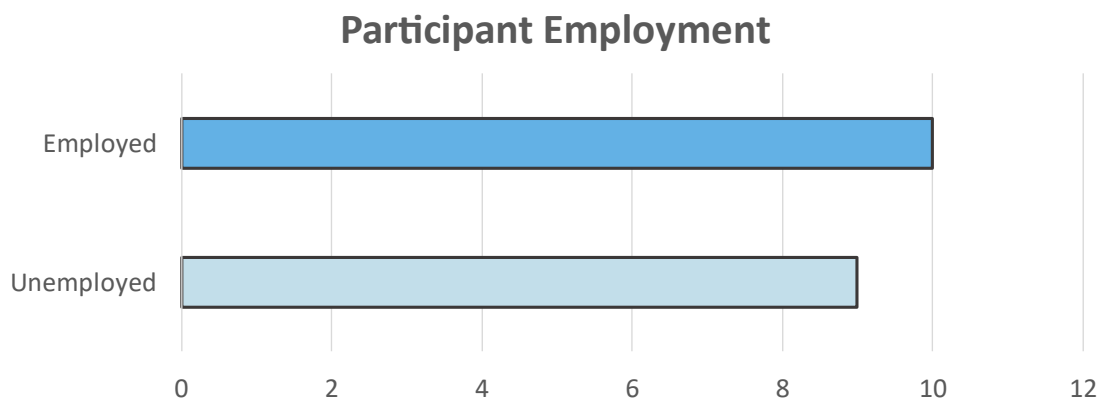
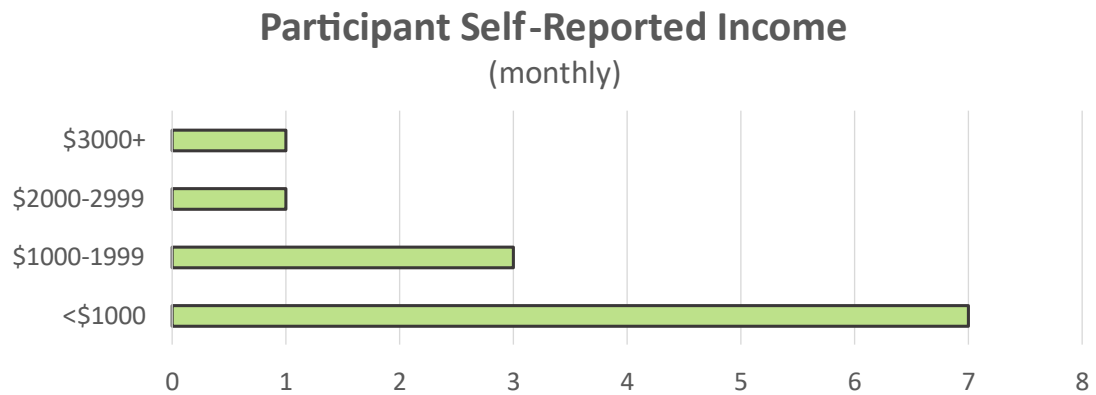
CHOOSE 180 has a diverse participant population that has similar demographics to the entire set of people referred for prosecution by the Seattle Police Department.

## Participant Housing Status

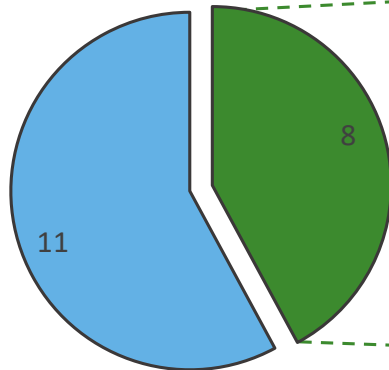
## Unstable Housing



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.

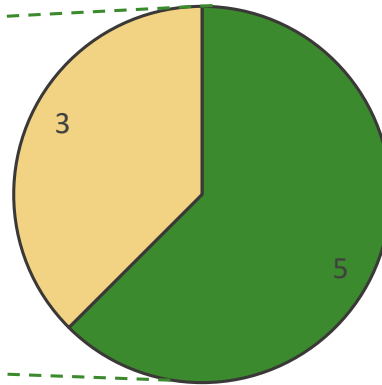


**School Enrollment**



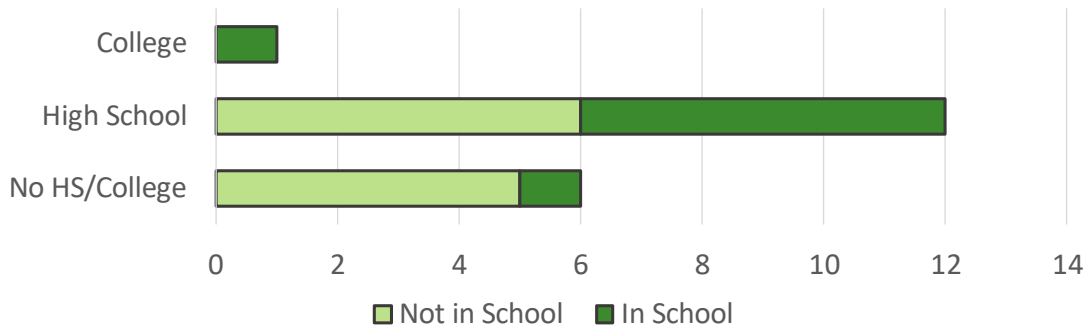
■ Yes ■ No

**Employed Students**



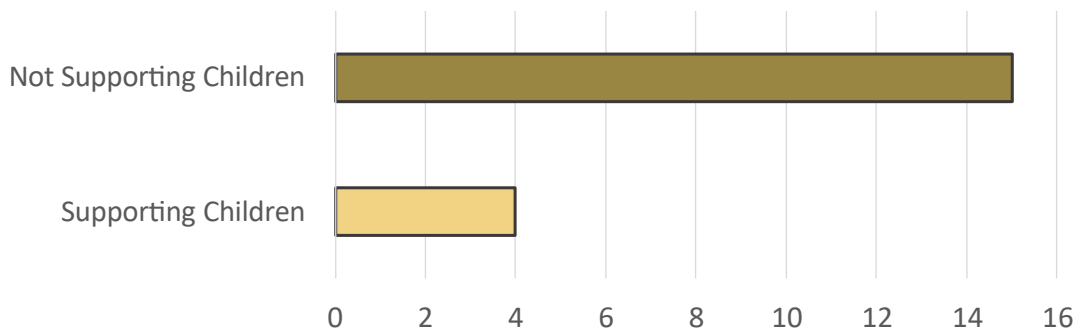
■ Employed ■ Not Employed

**Educational Attainment**



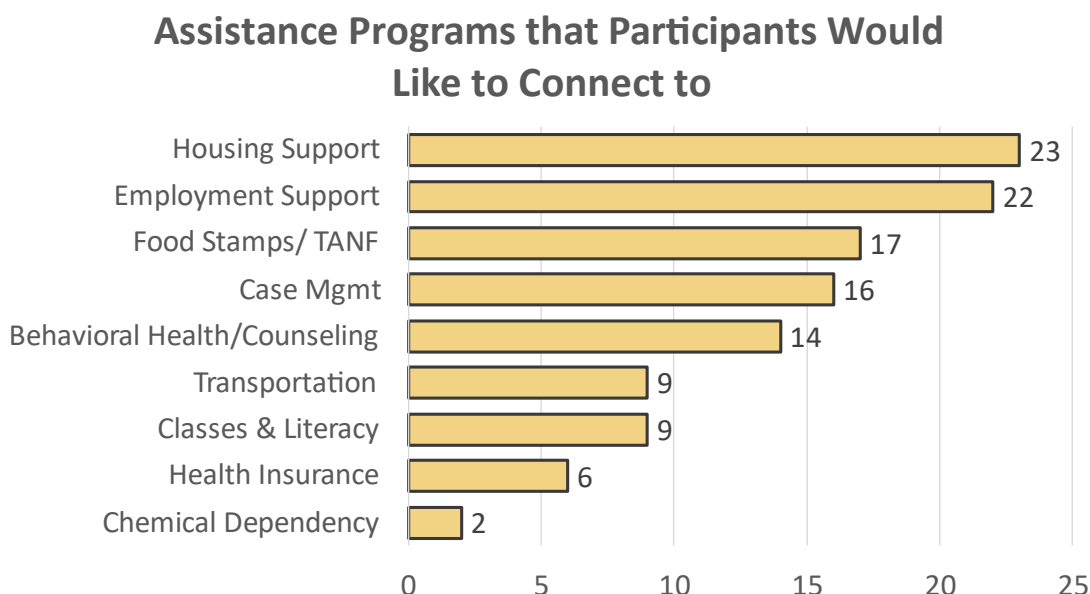
■ Not in School ■ In School

**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.



During the four-hour 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 2024. 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.

## 2025 Program Goals

### Improving Upstream Preventative Care

For 2025, CHOOSE 180 aims to expand our existing models to improve upstream preventative care for youth at risk of legal system involvement, including our school partners and counseling services to better meet this need. This also includes providing more structured support for participants opting in for ongoing individualized care post-diversion, improving our current methods of referring internally to different programs. Because securing basic needs is crucial to an individual's long-term success, we are building partnerships with other organizations to meet fundamental needs including emergency shelters and sustainable housing. Many of our young people's basic needs include affordable housing, beyond the scope of CHOOSE 180's services. However, by engaging in strategic partnerships, we hope to mitigate these needs.