



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF NARCOTICS ARREST  
DIVERSION PROGRAM**

*Updated program policy expands amounts and types of controlled substances*

**CHICAGO** — Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Chicago Police Department (CPD) Superintendent David O. Brown, and Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Allison Arwady today announced the expansion of eligibility for the Narcotics Arrest Diversion Program. The program is an initiative that diverts individuals who are arrested for the possession of controlled substances into substance use treatment in lieu of felony charges.

"The nation has experienced two of the worst years for overdose on record — and Chicago was not spared," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The timely expansion of this program underscores my commitment to connecting Chicagoans in crisis with the appropriate response and using data to inform decision-making."

The new criteria will now expand to individuals who have not been arrested in Chicago for a violent crime within the past ten years and were in possession of two grams or less of any controlled substance.

"This program is a great example of the collaboration between the Chicago Police Department, fellow City partners and community-based organizations to strengthen public safety," said Superintendent Brown. "This expansion allows us to reach more individuals and connect them with the resources that will save lives."

Additional narcotics also now qualify for this diversion initiative. These drugs include fentanyl, morphine, ketamine, and methamphetamine, among other controlled substances as identified by Illinois law.

"Thresholds is proud to be part of the NADP eligibility expansion and the opportunity to provide a recovery pathway for hundreds more individuals each year. Our partnership in the NADP program has shown the importance of offering people at high risk of overdose the opportunity to build a foundation for lifelong recovery," says Mark Ishaug, CEO of Thresholds. "Our hands-on approach saves lives



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by connecting people to overdose prevention education, substance use treatments, and practical assistance accessing housing, health care, peer support, and more."

The original program criteria for participants were limited to those arrested in possession of one gram or less of only heroin or cocaine and who had no prior violent arrest history. The initial evaluation findings of the program showed there was an almost 50% reduction in future arrests among the first 1,000 participants, 25% of whom were connected with treatment for the very first time.

"During this period of surging drug overdoses around the United States and in Chicago, it is critical that we link residents with substance use disorders to life-saving, evidence-based treatments at every opportunity," said Dr. Arwady, CDPH commissioner. "The Narcotics Arrest Diversion Program is one example of a growing number of city programs in which CDPH is working with our public safety partners to divert people with untreated health conditions toward treatment and away from the court system. We're proud to treat substance use disorder as the health problem that it is."

The change to the program was informed following an evaluation by the University of Chicago Crime Lab, with additional input from the Chicago Police Department, the Chicago Department of Public Health, and Thresholds, the nonprofit organization that provides treatment to program participants.

"The data show the promise of the Narcotics Arrest Diversion Program model, demonstrating that it's possible to connect people to resources that can help them and improve public safety in the process," said Panka Bencsik, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Chicago Crime Lab, which helped to lead the evaluation. "We are excited to see the program become even more accessible after the encouraging results we've seen thus far."

The Narcotics Arrest Diversion Program first launched in the 11th (Harrison) District in 2018 and has since expanded citywide. This program, which aims to provide alternatives to arrest for individuals with substance use disorder, is the largest program of its kind in the country.

The full program policy can be found on [CPD's website](#).

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