

# Implementing Emerging Adult Diversion in Maine

A Policy Paper

COLBY COLLEGE JUSTICE THINK TANK

Group 1

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## Purpose and Acknowledgements

This policy white paper is a resource that has been primarily designed for Maine policymakers and district attorneys (DA) interested in the creation of a Maine Emerging Adult Diversion program (MEAD).

Starting MEAD as a pilot project in both prosecutorial Districts 2 and 6 (southern and midcoast Maine, respectively) would enable a proof of concept for this important evolution in the Maine Criminal Justice System.

The associated DAs—Jackie Sartoris and Natasha Irving, respectively—have shown an understanding of developments in neuroscience that reveal the developmental stage of emerging adulthood placing 18-29-year-olds more

similar to adolescents than fully developed adults, thus making diversion a more sensible option than incarceration. They are both members of Fair and Just Prosecution, working on [Young Adult](#) issues and diversion. These developments are supported by the sciences of sociology and psychology, and these DAs have shown commitment to integrating this understanding into their practice. MEAD will expand diversionary efforts already in place by supporting community-based alternatives to incarceration for emerging adults; this will be done through funding and guidance for programmatic sustainability and flexibility over time.

The Maine Emerging Adult Diversion program builds on Mathematica Policy Research’s *Detour to Opportunity: A guide on young adult diversion from the criminal justice system* (Stein et al., 2017), which iteratively built upon the work of the MacArthur Foundation’s

The **Colby Justice Think Tank** work reflects a deep commitment to Restorative Justice principles as explained by the Maine Department of Education:

“Restorative Justice means ‘a practice in which offenders take responsibility for causing harm and engage in a facilitated process with victims, family members, community members, advocates and others impacted by the harm that focuses on repairing the harm, addressing needs and preventing future harm.’

34-A MRSA 1001 § (15-B)”  
([www.maine.gov/doe/restorativepractices](http://www.maine.gov/doe/restorativepractices))

Models for Change *Juvenile Diversion Guidebook*, the resource that examines factors communities might consider when implementing a Juvenile Diversion program (Models for Change Juvenile Diversion Workgroup, 2011). Both of those reports provide substantive guidance on what makes a robust diversion program, highlighting initiatives of varying success from around the country. The latter document focuses on juvenile diversion, while the former addresses young adult diversion programming. Rather than duplicating these foundational works to provide a general guide for emerging adult diversion, this policy paper is designed for direct translation into policy and practice in Maine.

Development of this policy paper was sponsored by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, Colby College, and Maine Department of Corrections, a partnership aimed at the co-creation of public policy that is informed by those most directly informed and affected by lived expertise related to the criminal legal system. The members of Group 1 in the Justice Think Tank are deeply grateful to our faculty walkalongs who encouraged and supported us every step of the way, carefully reviewed our work, and provided meaningful suggestions and guidance through the iterative process of crafting this paper: Nazlı Konya, Kara Kugelmeyer, Kassi Miller, and Ana Noriega. We also extend a very special thanks to Catherine Besteman, the original visionary and creator of the Think Tank.

## **Problem Statement**

Maine’s criminal legal system does not have robust avenues of restorative justice or diversion programming for emerging adults, even though there is a strong body of research supporting the need for a criminal legal system that incorporates advances in neuroscience that tie 18-to-29-year-olds closer to adolescence than fully developed adulthood.

## **Defining “Emerging Adult”**

After interviewing 300 young people between the ages of 18 to 29 over a span of five years, psychologist Jeffrey Arnett, the originator of the theory of emerging adulthood, coined the term “emerging adults” (Arnett, 2014). Emerging adulthood is distinct from young

adulthood, which is a more general term that is used interchangeably with emerging adulthood in some places (Higley, 2019) and spans the ages of 18 to 39 or even middle age in others (Colarusso, 1992). The term “emerging adults” aptly invokes a critical developmental period: the transition from a child who is dependent on parents or guardians for supervision and guidance (as well as emotional and financial support) into a fully mature, independent adult who engages as a productive and healthy member of society (Perker & Chester, 2017). There remains variability between researchers in how the term is defined (some limiting it to 24 or 26) (Perker & Chester, 2017). Following Arnett, this proposal for a Maine Emerging Adult Diversion Program specifically targets those aged 18-29.

Recent research in neurobiology and psychology suggests that cognitive skills and emotional intelligence continue to develop into a person’s mid-20s (“National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism,” 2023), and even beyond, with the prefrontal cortex (the decision-making center in the brain) not fully developing until that time (“Understanding the Teen Brain,” 2023). According to a 2015 joint report by Harvard Kennedy School and the National Institute of Justice, sociologically, young adults today are in far more need of support—for education and employment, for example—to successfully enter adulthood than they were 40 years ago, not to mention roughly 160 years ago when juveniles were first “committed” into custody in 1860, and 125 years ago, when the first juvenile court was founded in 1899 (Schiraldi et al., 2015).<sup>1</sup> “In comparing adolescence and young adulthood in the 19th and 21st centuries, it is no exaggeration to say that 22 is the new 16” (Schiraldi et al., 2015). In short, psychologists, neuroscientists, and sociologists agree on the existence of the new developmental stage of emerging adulthood, spanning the ages of 18 to 29, and on the importance of providing additional support mechanisms to people at this stage. This policy paper’s focus on emerging adults responds to their importance as a significant demographic in the U.S. carceral system. Chester & Schiraldi (2016) state that emerging adults, “from the ages of 18 to 24 make up only 10 percent of the overall U.S. population, but represent 30 percent of the overall arrest rate and about one in five admissions to prison.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Committed” into custody could refer to any lockdown facility: hospital, orphanage, carceral setting, etc.

## Making the Case for Emerging Adult Diversion in Maine

This section reviews data on the demographics of emerging adults in Maine and their involvement in the criminal legal system. The following data on the incarceration of emerging adults points to issues with who is incarcerated in Maine and indicates that there is a marked racial disparity in who is confined. This data is from the [2022 Place Matters](#) report (Foley & King, 2022), which defines emerging adults narrowly as those between the ages of 18 and 24:

- In 2020, approximately 15,000 young people (11.5 percent) aged 16 to 24 in Maine were neither employed nor enrolled in school, following national trends.
- Young adults (aged 18 to 24) comprised 12 percent of the adult prison population in Maine.
- Nationally, one in seven young adults aged 18 to 24 have a substance use disorder, while 2.4 million young people nationwide aged 18 to 25 have co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders.
- Out of the emerging adults aged 18 to 24 referred to the juvenile justice system in Maine as youth, 86 percent (11,008) were diverted from confinement or faced no further action. Only 1 percent of these individuals were later incarcerated as adults before the age of 25.
- One in 10 young people aged 18 to 24 in Maine have had contact with the Maine Department of Corrections (12,809 individuals).
- Out of 100 young adults aged 18 to 24 in Maine, 1.5 have experienced incarceration as either an adult or juvenile (1,592 individuals, comprising 12 percent of the total sample).
- Among young Black men aged 18 to 24 in Maine, 35 out of 100 have had contact with the MDOC system, compared to 15 out of 100 white men.
- In 2020, 31 percent of the incarcerated 18- to 24-year-olds in Maine identified as BIPOC, with 22 percent identified as Black or African American and 6 percent identified as Native American or Indigenous.

- Among those who experienced confinement in Maine as juveniles (1,407 individuals), 25 percent were women, and 17 percent were BIPOC, with 13 percent identified as Black or African American.

Opportunities exist for juvenile diversion nationally and in the state of Maine. This is because juvenile diversion has been shown to be successful. The Council of State Governments released a report in 2014 stating that juvenile recidivism can be as high as 75 percent after three years (Seigle et al., 2014). A report by the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service had the following data for juvenile recidivism in Maine: for Discharge = 53 percent, Community Reintegration = 42 percent, Supervision = 35 percent, and Diversion = 7 percent (Pate, 2008). Similar numbers can be found across the country; as a recent Sentencing Project [report](#) reveals, incarceration of young people continues to be a dismal failure to community safety and well-being (Mendel, 2022).

**“Carcerality pulls people out of community. ... Diversion brings people back into community and enables them to repair the harm they caused.”**

– Hawo Mohamed, Youth Justice Liaison and Training and Consulting Coordinator,  
Restorative Justice Institute of Maine

Juvenile diversion shows promise for emerging adult diversion in part because, according to the New Thinking in Community Corrections [report](#) by the National Institute of Justice, emerging adults have similar recidivism statistics to their younger counterparts with roughly 78 percent of emerging adults released being rearrested within three years (Schiraldi et al., 2015). This same report states that emerging adults “are more developmentally akin to juveniles than fully mature adults.” So, if emerging adults are developmentally closer to juveniles than to mature adults, and emerging adults have similar outcomes in the criminal legal system to juveniles, it stands to reason that emerging adults would have similar outcomes when given the opportunity to participate in diversion programs.

A few **examples of successful emerging adult diversion programs** outside of Maine include:

- The [Brooklyn, New York, Young Adult Court](https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/brooklyn-young-adult-court/more-info) provides meaningful alternatives to conventional prosecution for emerging adults aged 18 to 24 who have been charged with misdemeanors. The court handles misdemeanor cases involving young adults that are not resolved at arraignment. The court places special emphasis on young people at high risk of re-offending and those facing more serious criminal consequences. The court uses risk and needs assessments along with evidence-based interventions.  
[\(<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/brooklyn-young-adult-court/more-info>\)](https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/brooklyn-young-adult-court/more-info)
- [Choose 180](https://choose180.org/impact) is a youth and young adult diversion program in Seattle, Washington, that partners with the City of Seattle Prosecuting Attorney’s Office and the King County Community Diversion Program (CDP) to offer young people an alternative to prosecution. Data shows that 92 percent of the young adults who complete the Choose 180 diversion program do not re-engage with the criminal legal system during the year they are served by the program. At [less than 25](https://choose180.org/impact) percent in 24 months after diversion, 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” (Davison, 2022). Choose 180 has helped nearly 4,000 young people avoid criminal charges since 2017.  
[\(<https://choose180.org/impact>\)](https://choose180.org/impact)
- Massachusetts’ Middlesex County District Attorney’s Office [Juvenile and Young Adult Diversion Programs](#) allow a young person the opportunity to complete an individually tailored program in lieu of prosecution and may include conditions such as educational programs, counseling, community service, letters of apology, and restitution. Young people under the age of 18, and up to the age of 26, are eligible for diversion for any misdemeanor. Diversion is also offered for any felony that, if committed by an adult, could be prosecuted in district court, and any case involving a victim—after consultation with the victim. There are some limitations in place when it



comes to eligibility.

<https://www.middlesexda.com/beyond-courtroom/pages/juvenile-and-young-adult-diversion-programs>)

- [Roca: A Model Community Program for High-Risk Young Men](#) is a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that specializes in helping court-involved young men, ages 18 to 24, stay out of jail and get jobs. Roca’s work with high-risk young men has reduced recidivism by two-thirds and doubled employment rates among this population. Keeping emerging adults in the community and out of jails and prisons through diversion programs strengthens communities and families while giving emerging adults skills and abilities to navigate the world and helping them gain meaningful employment and an education.  
<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/evidence-based-practices-comprehensive-intervention-model-high-risk>)
- The [San Francisco Adult Probation Transitional Age Youth Unit](#) diverts young people ages 18 to 25 from prisons and jails to supervision in the community. It is a community-based program that uses a risk-needs assessment model that puts young people in contact with needed community resources. They handle roughly 500 cases per year and see a 73-percent successful program completion rate.  
<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248900.pdf>)

**“We have a lot of minorities sent to us; we talk about immigration status; they may be over on a visa, where an offense could send them away.”**

– Wendy Allen, Young Adult Diversion Program Lead and Policy and Advocacy Design Lead, Restorative Justice Institute Maine

Diversion could be the much-needed equalizer for the ever-present racial disparities seen in the criminal legal system (Nembhard & Robin, 2021). An example of how diversion could help create equality is the restorative justice-based Community Works West's Restorative Community Conferencing Program in Alameda County, located in Oakland, California, which has diverted 102 youth (45 percent Black and 33 percent Latinx) who would have otherwise been placed on probation or possibly incarcerated (baliga et al., 2017). These participants were 44 percent less likely to be charged with another crime compared to youth who were on probation, and the program was also more cost effective than probation or incarceration (baliga et al., 2017).

Due to Maine's low population and tightly networked justice organizations, Maine is uniquely positioned to implement emerging adult diversion. Maine ranks in the lower half of the nation in [poverty rate](#) and is ranked the second [safest state](#) in the nation. However, where Maine does rank as one of the worst states in the nation, and an area that is ripe for diversion, is in [drug use](#), [drug overdose mortality](#), and [percentage of offenses](#) related to drugs. Maine has implemented and operates successful juvenile diversion; there is buy-in from key stakeholders; there are a multitude of successful emerging adult diversion programs across the nation to learn from; and there is an absolute need in the State of Maine for emerging adult diversion. These facts show that there is indeed a strong case for emerging adult diversion programming in the State of Maine.

## **Background**

Challenges around the incarceration of young people have been a pervasive issue since the 'tough on crime' and 'Super Predator' rhetoric of the 1980s and '90s, respectively ("John Dilulio Retreats from His Super-Predator Theory of Black Teenagers," 2002; Roth, 2018). Maine was not exempt from the problem. Sadly, mass incarceration of Maine's youth went unaddressed, going so far as to make use of incarceration to serve as a means of sheltering children who did not have a safe home: the "Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force that was formed by the legislature in 2019 ... found that 53 percent of children incarcerated at Long Creek were detained because they were deemed

to lack physical care” (Neumann, 2023). To incarcerate youth for their own safety is deplorable. It needed to change, and, thankfully, it has and continues to.

In May 2019, Representative Michael Brennan announced the creation of the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment and Reinvestment Task Force to examine the state’s juvenile justice system and recommend policy changes for youth involved (and youth at risk of becoming involved) in the justice system (Hoey, 2019). The Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group identified three areas of focus for the task force: (1) reliable data on efforts to prevent delinquent behavior and respond to youth needs, (2) effective community-based alternatives to traditional juvenile justice-system involvement, and (3) a unified approach to addressing delinquent behavior (Marcellin et al., 2020).

In January 2020, the investigative news source *Maine Beacon* published an [article](#) about the task force’s work, and it cites Jill Ward, project manager of the Maine Center for Juvenile Policy & Law at the University of Maine School of Law, who served as one of the task force co-chairs (Maine News Service, 2020). Ward is quoted as saying that testimony heard by the task force shows that, for lack of good alternatives, the state was locking up too many less-serious young offenders in the Long Creek Youth Development Center—the state’s juvenile prison—and keeping them too long. She said research shows that locking up any young people for longer than six months does more harm than good. Maine was keeping them longer than 16 months (Maine News Service, 2020).

The Juvenile Justice Task Force, composed of 32 members, including Department of Corrections Commissioner Randall Liberty, officially published their report in February 2020 (Center for Children’s Law and Policy et al., 2020). Some of their findings and recommendations relevant to this policy paper’s proposal include:

1. Diversion works. The state should continue the progress that DOC has made, along with restorative interventions in schools by community-based organizations and police that avoid referral to DOC, in diverting youth away from the system while achieving low rates of recidivism.

2. The state should develop specific, written criteria for diversion eligibility that defines cases that should always be diverted, cases that should rarely be diverted, and criteria for handling cases that fall between the two.
3. The state should ensure that diversion programs are gender-responsive.
4. The state should transfer responsibility and funding to a community provider or coalition of organizations or to a non-court public agency that will oversee all aspects of diversion.
5. The state should create more options for police to divert youth directly into programs and services.

This official task force report was then followed in June 2020 by a *Maine Law Review* article, one of the co-authors of which is the aforementioned task force co-chair, Jill Ward (Northrop et al., 2022). Making the case for youth diversion, the article proposes two reforms aimed at improving outcomes for Maine's emerging adult population: (1) raising the age of original juvenile court jurisdiction to age 21 and expanding the continuum of supports and services the juvenile justice system provides this group, and (2) protecting emerging adults ages 21 to 25 from the most punitive sanctions of Maine's Criminal Code (Northrop et al., 2022).

This policy paper challenges Maine's system to stretch a little further than what the authors of the *Maine Law Review* article recommended, which is supported by the research cited herein.

Finally, a [report](#) was published by the University of Southern Maine's Cutler Institute in November 2022 grounded in data gathered specifically from and for Maine on emerging adults between 18 to 24 years of age (Foley & King, 2022). Based on findings related to rates of incarceration and disproportionality around the issue of race and socioeconomic status, the main relevant recommendation from this report is the continuation and expansion of pretrial diversion efforts for emerging adults in Maine and connecting them with supports and early interventions (Foley & King, 2022).

### **So, why isn't diversion used more frequently in Maine for emerging adults?**

1. Lack of available third-party programs and limited capacity to receive emerging adults who have been charged with a crime.

2. Inefficient allocation of funding for diversion (extant funding can be diverted from Long Creek Youth Development Center).
3. Lack of advocacy for diversion as well as a lack of community awareness of its benefits.
4. “Old habits die hard.” District attorneys interviewed for this policy paper have mentioned that it can be challenging to get their prosecutors to reach for new tools (N. Irving, personal communication, July 5, 2023; J. Sartoris, personal communication, August 31, 2023).
5. Only one community-based restorative justice provider in the state has a contract to focus on the emerging-adult population: Wendy Allen, Young Adult Diversion Program lead and Policy and Advocacy Design lead for Restorative Justice Institute Maine (W. Allen, personal communication, July 13, 2023).

**All of the district attorneys, state representatives, and restorative justice practitioners interviewed all agree: the most prominent barriers to diversion are FUNDING, lack of AWARENESS, and lack of EXPERIENCE with diversionary alternatives to incarceration.**

## **Diversion Programming - Purpose and Example**

The purposes of diversion programming nationally are to:

1. keep emerging adults out of carceral settings and in their communities;
2. get them the help and resources they need to better their chances of success;
3. allow them to thrive and contribute to their families and communities.

In such diversion programs as described in this paper, an emerging adult will complete a trauma-informed intervention program or access a set of services, either instead of undergoing “formal court processing” or in exchange for a reduced charge or sentence

(Stein et al., 2017). Diversion programs often include such services as case management, cognitive behavioral therapy, education, and employment (Results for America, 2023). Some diversion programs encourage people who have been harmed and those who caused that harm to sit together and discuss how they feel about the situation and what needs to be done. Others require community service, the payment of restitution, or engagement in educational, vocational, or therapeutic programming (Stein et al., 2017). From New York to California, Illinois to South Dakota, and even down south in Texas, diversion programs for emerging adults exist all over the country (Johnson & Ali-Smith, 2022; Stein et al., 2017). One organization in New York, Common Justice, is "the first alternative-to-incarceration and victim-service program in the United States that focuses on violent felonies in the adult courts" and states its purpose as "to heal and to make things right as possible."

Common Justice is just one of a multitude of programs using diversion practices nationally (Stein et al., 2017). It describes its robust restorative justice conferencing process as "a rigorous, cutting-edge response to serious and violent felonies, including assault and robbery, based on restorative justice principles"—"if and only if—" the survivors of the case consent (Common Justice, 2023).

**"In contrast to the core features of prison: shame, isolation, inability to meet economic needs, and exposure to violence. ... Ours is the opposite: connection, bringing people into community (people meet with us five times a week); making sure that people's basic needs are met (harmed person and harm-doer); equipping people with new skills makes a massive difference."**

*– Stephan Thomas, Director of Partnerships and Replication, Common Justice*

Common Justice works with emerging adults aged 16 to 26. It diverts cases into a process designed to recognize the harm done, honor the needs and interests of those harmed, and develop appropriate responses to hold the responsible party accountable for making things as right as possible, according to the stated needs of the person harmed. Common Justice shows that diversion is not, and must not be, limited to the "low-hanging fruit" of nonviolent

juvenile and misdemeanor offenses (Common Justice, 2023), a principle that this white paper takes to heart.

## **Young Adult Diversion Programs – Maine**

Despite the challenges, such as funding, structural barriers, and the need for more available information to inform the public about emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental stage, emerging adult diversion programs do exist in a limited capacity in Maine.

Organizations and initiatives such as Restorative Justice Project Maine (RJPM), Maine's Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts (JDTC), Restorative Justice Institute of Maine (RJIM), Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE), Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), and Youth-Led Justice (YLJ) engage in this work. These programs in Maine exemplify the power of restorative justice and what can be achieved by expanding this practice. Individuals involved in the existing programs benefit and can grow, learn, and reintegrate into society by offering accountability-centered alternatives to traditional punishment.

**“You have to have the wraparound services to actually help kids. You have to have a place where they are safe, and you have to have someone who knows about mental health issues and/or family issues.”**

*– Representative Kristi Mathieson*

Programs currently serving prosecutorial Districts 2 and 6 include Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), Maine Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts (JDTC), Restorative Justice Institute of Maine (RJIM), Restorative Justice Project Maine (RJPM), Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE), and Youth-LED Justice (YLJ).

- [LEAD: Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion](#) is a community-based diversion program to improve public safety and order by reducing unnecessary criminal

justice system involvement. Illegal drug use and crimes to support drug use, such as property crimes and prostitution, have a higher recidivism rate than other crimes (<https://bjia.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pbja-21-gg-04487-coap>). This program funded the creation of a LEAD case manager position in the Scarborough Police Department, the duties of which are performed by their social services navigator. As shown below, VOANNE also has LEAD case managers serving Waldo and Knox counties.

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Lauren Dembski-Martin, Social Services Navigator

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- [Maine Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts](#) (0–18-year-olds) offer court-supervised, post-plea (but pre-final disposition) drug-diversion options for juveniles and their families. These programs focus on providing comprehensive, community-based treatment services. The main objective of the drug court programs is to decrease substance abuse and the probability of arrest among participants. (<https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/339>)

**Contact Info:**

Contact CrimeSolutions: [contact@crimesolutions.gov](mailto:contact@crimesolutions.gov).

- [Restorative Justice Institute of Maine](#) (Young Adult Diversion Program (YADP)) brings together 18- to 25-year-olds diverted from the District Attorney’s Offices, with participants going through a one-time, two-hour program held every first and third Thursday evening of the month. Through a facilitated dialogue circle, a foundation of restorative practices is built to have intentional communication and establish values, share experiences, and build community relationships with members sharing a collaborative accountability and repair process to prevent future harm. Further, participants can connect with peers with similar offenses around what happened, explore underlying issues that



led to the occurrence, and get connected to community-based resources. Wendy Allen, Young Adult Diversion Program lead and Policy and Advocacy Design lead, has developed a plan for the expansion of YADP to span the state (see Appendix A) (<https://www.rjimaine.org/>).

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**Main Office and Mailing Address**

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- [Restorative Justice Project Maine](https://www.rjpmidcoast.org/) seeks to promote belonging and foster a culture of inclusivity, where it welcomes, considers, and applies the wisdom of everyone's views to the ways of being and operating both in its organization and in their relationships. (<https://www.rjpmidcoast.org/>)

**Contact Info:**

Executive Director: [kathy@rjpmidcoast.org](mailto:kathy@rjpmidcoast.org)

Restorative Justice Project Maine

PO Box 141 / 132 High Street

Belfast, ME 04915

- [Volunteers of America Northern New England](https://www.volunteersofamerica.org/) seeks to serve the people of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont with the promise to reach out and uplift the human condition and provide opportunity for individual and community involvement. In cases of diversion, a community liaison officer (CLO), who is a non-law enforcement professional, responds alongside a police officer to the scene of an emergency or any other situation that would traditionally be responded to solely by law enforcement. Whether responding to in-progress calls or conducting follow-up, the goal of the community liaison is to divert

individuals from the traditional criminal justice system and redirect them to the most appropriate resources. VOANNE also engages in law enforcement-assisted diversion for low-level offenses, serving Waldo and Knox counties. (<https://www.voanne.org/services/diversion-programs/>)

**Contact info:**

For general, media, or volunteer inquiries, email: [info@voanne.org](mailto:info@voanne.org)

Phone: 207-373-1140

Volunteers of America Northern New England

14 Maine Street, Suite 100

Brunswick, ME 04011

- [Youth-LED Justice](#) is led by young individuals who believe in the values and practices of restorative justice programs. The aim of the organization is to assist young people (between ages 11 and 18) who find themselves in trouble with the law, school, or community by diverting them from negative paths and providing support. The program collaborates with youth volunteers to facilitate a circle process, which brings together all parties involved to heal and repair the harm caused. Young individuals lead the restorative justice program with reference to the following four pillars (<http://www.youthledjustice.org/>):
  - Repair harm done to relationships
  - Increase skills, knowledge, and resources
  - Increase connection to the community
  - Build on and build up strengths

**Contact info:**

Youth-LED Justice in Portland

175 Lancaster Street, Suite 217 A

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## Key Stakeholders

**“I think we have really effective diversion programming in places like Cape Elizabeth and Bar Harbor and really wealthy communities because people and youth in those communities commit serious criminal offenses and they don’t end up in Long Creek.”**

*– Representative Nina Milliken*

There are numerous key stakeholders in Maine who are crucial to promoting justice and positive change within their communities, which should include developing a culture of restorative practices. Some of these critical agencies and partners who will be integral to redressing the harmful nature of the criminal legal system include, but are not limited to:

- **Schools, courts, and local community hubs** in Districts 2 and 6, and nonprofit organizations advancing the needs of young adults and immigrant communities.
- **Probation officers** must refrain from the old methods of re-incarceration for possible violations; instead, they must embrace and adopt a community-care approach for their clients.
- **Colleges and universities** should bravely empower young adults and promote community integration by expanding education opportunities for the emerging adult population—especially those from disadvantaged communities. These opportunities should include engagement in systems change-oriented research into restorative alternatives to incarceration.
- **Homeless shelters** and other social services must address and set long-term and short-term goals for an interdisciplinary approach.

State, local, and employee agencies or schools, probation officers, social workers, and other community-based organizations should proactively organize community-based affairs that engage the community members who are directly impacted by their services. Furthermore,

school systems should take meaningful action steps that enact policies and practices that will decrease the number of students/young adults entering the system through the school-to-prison pipeline. For instance, a meaningful action step is to reduce their dependency on suspension and other punitive actions as discipline methods instead of prioritizing restorative practices and exploring the principles of practice, prevention, and integration to reduce the number of students and emerging adults' chances of entering the system. These stakeholders are the gatekeepers of protecting our young adults falling victim to the legal system. Hence, embracing and implementing diversion programs will create an environment that supports Maine's emerging adults in escaping ensnarement in the carceral system cycle.

Most importantly, Maine's elected officials (**state legislators**) must endorse bills to advance diversion and restorative justice/practices programs with intentional bipartisanship, regardless of their political party. Diversion and restorative justice programs provide an opportunity to support accountability, healing, and repair, rather than perpetuating systems of punishment. As shown throughout this document, this approach supports all parties involved in crime and harm—those who caused the harm and those who have been harmed. State lawmakers are well positioned to support these needed changes and reform initiatives that align with the ideals of true justice that heals by growing the funding to empower the existing organizations carrying the mission of diversion programs in Maine.

Each stakeholder and organization mentioned plays a role in meeting the fundamental needs of emerging adults in our communities. However, the main focus of this policy paper is to investigate how we can combine strengths and establish a system that prevents emerging adults from becoming involved in the legal system. With this goal in mind, the following are recommended actions for **LEAD: Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, Maine Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts, Restorative Justice Institute of Maine, Restorative Justice Project Maine, Volunteers of America Northern New England, and Youth-LED Justice.**

- Act as the entity responsible for executing the diversion program in Maine's designated areas (Prosecutorial Districts 2 and 6).

- Strive to secure financing and develop strategies for private and federal government grants and state and local budgets to support transformative and restorative justice-based programs.
- Improve the existing programs within each community to expand the range and impact of their community-based work.
- Share success and transformative stories for inspiration to further convey the diversion program's significance.
- Create lasting, meaningful partnerships with district attorneys while gaining support from key stakeholders such as courts and probation officers.
- Organize quarterly or semi-annual stakeholder meetings to engage all applicable parties, reevaluate strategies, plan actions, and implement necessary adjustments.
- In these programs' planning, implementation, and assessment phases, engage with emerging adults and those impacted by the system (e.g., local communities).
- Plan and expand upon the current diversion programs while eliminating punitive practices that do not align with the program's goals and objectives and the needs of the communities to which the young people will return post-incarceration.
- Seek to collaborate with other regions and states where existing programs and practices have demonstrated evidence of the success of diversion programs; learn from what worked and what did not to meet the needs of emerging adults.

## **Maine Emerging Adult Diversion Program Design**

As recommended by Stein et al (2017), Maine Prosecutorial Districts 2 and 6 should implement MEAD programming **starting with a single point of diversion**: pretrial (Schiraldi et al., 2015). As they are already widely doing with juveniles, prosecutors should review the case before them and decide if it should be diverted instead of formally filing charges against the emerging adult. Prosecution would then be deferred, pending completion of the diversion program. Diversion for emerging adults can be modeled and adapted from the Middlesex District Attorney's Office Juvenile and Young Adult Diversion [Program](#) in Massachusetts referenced above in the "Making the Case for Emerging Adult Diversion in Maine" section.

### *Hold a Diversion Meeting*

1. Emerging adult and counsel, if applicable, meet with the diversion case manager to discuss the case and diversion plan. If there is no counsel, the diversion case manager must ensure that the emerging adult understands their rights and agrees to the diversion process.
2. Emerging adult accepts responsibility. Strategies for better decision-making and areas in which the emerging adult needs support are identified. Key areas to address include employment, education, housing stability, safety, health, healthy relationships and connections to responsible adults, civic engagement and community involvement, and effective parenting (Sakala et al., 2020). Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center provides guidance on strategy development in their recent [report](#), "A Guide to Community Strategies for Improving Emerging Adults' Safety and Well-Being" (Sakala et al., 2020).
3. Emerging adult signs individualized written diversion contract. The contract may include assignment to educational programs, community service, letter of apology, restitution, essay writing, restorative dialogue or harm repair circle (if acceptable to the person harmed, as these processes are strictly voluntary), curfew, and/or other case-specific conditions (that could include a workshop offered by [Choose 180](#), followed by their curriculum developed to support positive change). Duration of the agreement and date by which conditions must be met is set for six months, but a longer term of diversion may be called for and will be employed on a case-by-case basis.

### *Bring the Case to Conclusion*

1. Emerging adult successfully completes conditions in diversion contract and the case is closed with no trial or plea agreement being sought.
2. Emerging adult voluntarily withdraws from the diversion program and a trial or plea agreement may be sought. OR

3. Emerging adult violates diversion contract and the case may proceed to trial or plea agreement.

The utility of starting with a single point of diversion is supported by experts and programs reviewed in the creation of the [report](#) “Detour to Opportunity: A guide on young adult diversion from the criminal justice system” (Stein et al., 2017). Starting from a single point will allow for troubleshooting any issues that arise and making sure there are sufficient services available to meet the demand **before expanding to multiple points** of diversion. (These could include at arrest, preconviction, and post-conviction; law enforcement assisted diversion [LEAD] is currently happening, which operates at the arrest level. This would be the logical next step of expansion).

District Attorneys Natasha Irving and Jackie Sartoris (Districts 6 and 2, respectively) already see juvenile diversion as a first option, take special consideration for diversion of young people between ages 18 to 25, and understand the need to expand more broadly to emerging adults (N. Irving, personal communication, July 5, 2023; J. Sartoris, personal communication, August 31, 2023). What they need is support—from the voting public, from media personnel covering the legal system, and from the legislature. As addressed in the previous section, the legislature and other sources need to fund an expansion of community-based services that meet the criteria of diversion programming that is trauma informed, strengths based, and grounded in accountability.

Guided by the previously cited research, **the target group** of this pilot project should be emerging adults aged 18 to 29, at the discretion of the district attorney, and supported by an intake clinician. As stated above in the “Defining Emerging Adult” section, recent research in neurobiology and psychology suggests that cognitive skills and emotional intelligence continue to develop into a person’s mid-20s and beyond. Sociological research also reveals that key milestones bridging youth to adulthood—such as completing education, employment, and marriage—come later in an individual’s life course compared to previous generations (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults et al., 2015).

Since diversion is already widely used for the low-hanging fruit of non-violent misdemeanor charges, with a primary focus on juveniles, and research shows that the likelihood of committing a crime drops significantly by the age of 30 (Northrup et al., 2022), this emerging adult diversion program should specifically, but not exclusively, **target violent felonies**. In *Until We Reckon*, Danielle Sered cites a Harvard [study](#), saying that emerging adults “from the ages of 18 to 24 make up only 10 percent of the overall U.S. population, but represent 30 percent of the overall arrest rate and about one in five admissions to prison” (Chester & Schiraldi, 2016). Sered also incorporates multiple perspectives, experiences, and case studies on how restorative justice supports accountability, healing, and repair in the lives of crime survivors (Serred, 2019). Emerging adult diversion can thus serve to ameliorate the gross over incarceration of, and unnecessary harm inflicted upon, emerging adults through carceral responses, while also providing opportunities for survivor care and healing.

Prosecutorial discretion is broadly trusted with regard to sentence severity (Miller, 2019); it should now be trusted in the expansion of diversion programming, with the added accountability mechanism of a district diversion manager outlined below. According to Lauren Blair, an attorney at Free Advice, prosecutors have a duty to seek justice (Mesrobian, 2022). With that duty comes the authority to bring criminal charges. Yet, prosecutors are not required to seek criminal prosecution if justice would not be served. Therefore, prosecutors have a responsibility to use their power to ensure justice is served, which for young adults should mean they receive the support and care they need to take accountability for their actions and redirect their behavior. Diversionary programs that prioritize accountability and support better ensure sustained public safety and prevent undue harm to the lives of emerging adults.

In the implementation of MEAD, there needs to be a **referral process** that makes it easy for referral sources to make referrals of cases (Stein et al., 2017). Prosecutors should have access to an easy-to-complete form that enables community members and law enforcement professionals to refer young people for diversion rather than criminal prosecution (the Choose 180 program, cited in the “Making the Case for Emerging Adult Diversion in Maine” section above offers a model [referral form](#)). For the **assessment process**, there needs to be a risk-needs assessment that is adjusted for implicit bias



according to [guidance](#) provided by the Council of State Governments' Justice Center in 2016. As is widely acknowledged, there is implicit bias in many of the risk-needs assessments currently in use. So, in addition to the assessment, there need to be broad suitability criteria that are based upon an intake clinician's assessment of whether diversion would benefit the young adult and meet their primary needs.

There must also be an acknowledgment that emerging adults often regress even when they are on an overall path of improvement, so this programming needs to have **flexibility** built into it to accommodate for this, using incentives to motivate participants rather than punishments. The criminal legal system should reflect scientific developments in its handling of emerging adults. As Harvard scholars [Perker and Chester](#) (Perker & Chester, 2017) state, "...priority should be placed on keeping young adults in the community whenever possible, where they are able to maintain and build prosocial relationships through education, housing, family and employment."

Sarah Mattox, an independent and long-time restorative justice practitioner in Maine, recommends that a district diversion manager should be empowered to liaise between the DA's office and community-based organizations; to look at dockets, make sure that appropriate, equitable recommendations are being put forward; be available and responsive to the shifting needs and dynamics of an expanding program, and so forth. The district diversion manager should also call upon assistant district attorneys—the ones who review cases for diversion—as well as victim advocates to utilize the diversion options available. Together, this entity should have stated goals for diversion numbers by quarter and year. Stakeholders who make referrals deserve to hear about outcomes, e.g.—is increasing their referrals making a positive difference?

Finally, the district diversion manager should be charged with **monitoring, evaluation, and information dissemination** to show efficacy. It is vital that DAs and MEAD service providers keep a detailed record of any changes they make to policies and procedures. The various dialogue circles proposed in the "Funding" section of this paper may serve as a source of mixed-methods data collection to guide formative evaluation efforts. To maintain flexibility, the evaluation and monitoring should be ongoing to allow for periodic modifications of the

program as needed. As information is collected, the district diversion manager then needs to translate it into accessible language and formats to increase awareness and advocacy for legislative reforms.

Regarding the **tracking and dissemination of data** for MEAD, robust methods must be in place. Far too often when data is collected around efforts in the criminal legal system, the sole focus is on quantitative data. While quantitative data is indeed important, it is imperative for MEAD, in order to be responsive to shifting needs and dynamics in implementation, to employ a mixed-methods approach to collecting data that includes qualitative data and centers the voices of the people directly impacted by the system. This should be done through interviews with participants and self-reporting evaluations. Quantitative data should not focus solely on recidivism rates because recidivism rates are not necessarily indicative of successful release. Along with recidivism rates, data should be collected on rates of involvement and satisfaction in employment, education involvement (secondary, postsecondary, technical, etc.), mental health counseling, substance use counseling, etc.

When shortcomings and challenges are discovered through the data, they must be highlighted and accurately portrayed so that they are clear to all of the stakeholders. Any shortcomings or challenges must be addressed as they are identified, and not when the annual report is made public.

The data would have more validity if it were collected and disseminated by a third-party partner like the Vera Institute, Prison Policy Initiative, the Sentencing Project, the Center for Effective Public Policy, or another organization. Such third-party partners are both experienced at gathering data (and so have the infrastructure capacity) and have no particular outcome in mind. Any and all data should be published annually and made available to all stakeholders as well as the public. Any and all data must be gathered with the intention of comprehensively representing the voices and experiences of the full variety of individuals who engage with MEAD—prosecutors, participants, and service providers of various disciplines. The data must accurately depict what is happening with each diversion program and with diversion as a whole in the state of Maine.

## **Proposed Oversight System, Partnerships, and Funding**

Now that this policy paper has examined the research supporting the existence of emerging adulthood as a unique stage of human development, explored the data exposing disproportionate harm inflicted upon emerging adults, particularly those of BIPOC identities, reviewed a cross-section of young adult diversion examples, and put forward a Maine Emerging Adult Diversion Program design, what follows is a proposed model for program oversight, potential partners and members, and funding.

### **Oversight**

A robust Maine Emerging Adult Diversion Program will have an advisory board that includes, at least: a case manager; community members who work, live in, and care about what happens in the community; and emerging adults reflective of the district's general population regarding race, ethnicity, and gender. Advisory board members should be the main leaders in coordinating services, partnerships, and program implementation in their area. For example, in the [PATH Program](#) in Long Beach, California, Councilman Rex Richardson teamed with a Workforce Investment Network to develop initiatives for youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 (Global Business Solutions, 2023). Another example of a program that is helping its emerging adults is Common Justice in New York whose founder, Danielle Sered, stated in 2017, "Any policy or practice targeting violence should be survivor-centered, accountability-based, safety-driven, and racially equitable" (Serred, 2017). A diverse advisory board as outlined here will help ensure the application of these principles in programmatic practice.

### **Partnerships and Members**

The Maine Emerging Adult Diversion Program expansion in Districts 2 and 6 should partner with organizations that already exist in Maine whose services explicitly target young or emerging adults and which implement youth diversion practices. While the list may not be exhaustive, see "Maine's Emerging Adult Diversion Programs – Maine" section of this paper for key examples. Additional potential partners may include Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition, Pope Memorial Humane Society, Midcoast Youth Center, VolunteerME Mid Coast Maine, City of Portland, and Volunteer Maine. Partnering with agencies whose services

explicitly engage with young or emerging adults will allow the target age of residents involved in MEAD to grow in numbers of success while providing data (see “Data Tracking and Dissemination” section).

In considering the location of partners’ services and the emerging adults’ ability to get there, MEAD programs must factor in the ability of participants to have mobility to and from the required programs. The Regional Transportation [Program](#) (RTP) for the Cumberland County area can address this need in Prosecutorial District 2. RTP provides general public transportation to residents of Cumberland County on a space-available basis.

Transportation is available for shopping, hospital visits, the library, **or any other purpose** as long as the trip takes place in Cumberland County. Rides are arranged by calling RTP at least two days in advance, which can support the development of discipline and time-management skills in young people while also meeting their transportation needs.

Noting a marked absence of public transportation in the midcoast counties that make up District 6, this exposes an area in need of funding.

## **Funding**

Maine’s Emerging Adult Diversion Program should be funded by organizations and sources that share its focus on community and emerging adult well-being. Allocated funds from the legislature will be used in implementing the program, as well as grants and fundraising. Collaborating with parents, local businesses, schools, and community groups, the program should regularly engage in activities where members of the diversion program can share and grow as a community, such as circles for community building, bonding, healing trauma, and developing communication skills. The program should intentionally partner with social service agencies that may have existing funding to serve emerging adults, the local business community, and use fundraising events to help fund the program. MEAD should also hire or enlist the help of a grant writer.

Potential funding sources include:

- Social service agencies that may have existing funding to serve young adults (DHHS)
- Local businesses
- Schools
- Community groups
- State legislature
- Program participants (For those who are able—not allowing financial hardship to prevent participation)

## **Conclusions**

The challenge of incarcerating emerging adults is a pervasive one. In order to incorporate advances in neuroscience that reveal the developmental stage of emerging adulthood, supported by the sciences of sociology and psychology, Maine's criminal legal system should implement the Maine Emerging Adult Diversion Program (MEAD), starting in prosecutorial Districts 2 and 6. District attorneys therein have shown their understanding of these developments and commitment to integrating them into their practice. Juvenile diversion programming exists widely throughout Maine and the United States. Young adult diversion programs have been increasing in number and showing efficacy in their implementation. Although sparse, young adult diversion programs also exist in Maine. Key stakeholders abound and need to be included in this work, from community members to business owners, restorative justice practitioners to school teachers and administrators.

The case for emerging adult diversion in Maine is strong. This policy paper has proposed the MEAD program design, including a possible oversight system, potential partnerships, and guidance regarding methods of data tracking and dissemination. MEAD offers an opportunity to: 1) ameliorate harms of the carceral system on emerging adults; 2) offer restorative, accountability- and strengths-based, trauma-informed programming that supports positive change; 3) offers cost savings to the State of Maine (yet to be determined); and 4) provides victim-survivors of crime an avenue toward healing and repair in the wake of harm. It is vital that Maine lawmakers support the expansion of emerging adult diversion programming throughout the state, beginning with a MEAD pilot project in prosecutorial Districts 2 and 6.

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## **Appendix A - YADP Expansion - Wendy Allen**

Young Adult Diversion Program Lead and Policy and Advocacy Design Lead for Restorative Justice Institute Maine

**Restorative Justice Institute of Maine's Young Adult Diversion Program (YADP)** currently brings together 18- to 25-year-olds diverted from the District Attorney's Offices, with participants going through a one-time, two-hour program held every first and third Thursday evening of the month. This pilot program operates out of Cumberland and Androscoggin counties and is conducted through a facilitated dialogue circle: a collaborative accountability/repair process based upon a foundation of restorative practices; this foundation supports intentional communication to establish values in the program, share experiences, and build community relationships between participants. Further, participants can connect with peers who have committed similar offenses around what happened, explore underlying issues that led to the occurrence, and get connected to community-based resources. Below, Allen proposes a means of expanding this program to cover all 16 counties in Maine. (<https://www.rjimaine.org/young-adults>)

### **Proposed Expansion:**

- Cost per participant: \$100
- Zoom works best for circles due to transportation barriers for participants
- Invoice for payment monthly
- 30-day completion for all participants from the day referral was received
- If participants don't respond after the third call, they get sent back to D.A. for non-compliance Weekly circles
- Referring party must provide participants with the next circle date and time so participants can make themselves available
- 40 referrals per month or 10 per week for each county

## **Sixteen Counties**

### **Cumberland:**

Circles held Thursdays 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Mondays to be onboarded for Thursday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Thursday evenings.

### **Franklin:**

Circles held Thursday afternoons 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Mondays to be onboarded for Thursday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Thursday afternoons.

### **Piscataquis:**

Circles held Friday evenings 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Tuesday to be onboarded for Friday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Friday evenings.

### **Kennebec:**

Circles held Friday afternoon 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Tuesday to be onboarded for Friday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Friday afternoons.

### **Aroostook:**

Circles held Monday afternoon 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Wednesday to be onboarded for Monday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Monday afternoons.

**Androscoggin:**

Circles held Monday evenings 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Wednesday to be onboarded for Monday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Monday evenings.

**Waldo:**

Circles held Tuesday afternoon 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Wednesday to be onboarded for Tuesday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Tuesday afternoons.

**Washington:**

Circles held Tuesday evening 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Wednesday to be onboarded for Tuesday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Tuesday evenings.

**York:**

Not sure about offering assistance unless payment is upfront.

**Lincoln:**

Circles held Wednesday afternoon 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Thursday to be onboarded for Tuesday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Wednesday afternoons.

**Knox:**

Circles held Wednesday evenings 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Thursday to be onboarded for Tuesday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Wednesday evenings.

**Hancock:**

**Combine with Cumberland**

Circles held Thursdays 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Monday to be onboarded for Thursday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Thursday evenings.

**Sagadahoc:**

**Combine with Franklin**

Circles held Thursday afternoons 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Monday to be onboarded for Thursday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Thursday afternoons.

**Somerset:****Combine with Piscataquis**

Circles held Friday evenings 5:30-7:30 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Tuesday to be onboarded for Friday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Friday evenings.

**Oxford:****Combine with Kennebec**

Circles held Friday afternoon 3:00-5:00 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Tuesday to be onboarded for Friday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet, including to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Friday afternoons.

**Penobscot:**

Circles held Mondays Noon- 2 pm

Weekly referrals sent on Tuesday to be onboarded for Monday's circle.

DA or referring party must have participants sign an agreement to participate as well as provide an expectation sheet including, to expect a phone call within three business days for onboarding. Letters of completion sent upon closing of the circle on Monday afternoons.

**Hire a part-time facilitator to facilitate the 3-5 pm circles****All data collected through the Airtable app**

**Communication interaction with DA will be done via email. MUST STAY ON TOP OF COMMUNICATION!**

**Resources should always be provided to participants!**

## **Appendix B - Thanks to interviewees**

The members of Group 1 in the Justice Think Tank want to offer thanks to those who made time to sit with us for interviews, as their insights and perspectives were integral to the shaping of this policy paper. Each interviewee was gracious with their presence and time, answered questions generously, and spoke with us about Diversion practices from their wealth of wisdom and experience. They also envisioned futures of diversion programming and how Maine could benefit from embracing it as a primary practice for emerging adults.

**Wendy Allen** – Young Adult Diversion Program Lead and Policy and Advocacy Design Lead, Restorative Justice Institute of Maine

**Natasha Irving** – District Attorney (Prosecutorial District 6)

**Kristi Mathieson** – State Representative (D-Kittery, House District 1), Criminal Justice and Public Safety, Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services committees

**Nina Milliken** – State Representative (D-Blue Hill, House District 16), Criminal Justice and Public Safety committee

**Hawo Mohamed** – Youth Justice Liaison, Training & Consulting Coordinator, Restorative Justice Institute of Maine

**Jacqueline "Jackie" Sartoris** – District Attorney (Prosecutorial District 2)

**Stephan Thomas** – Director of Partnerships and Replication, Common Justice

We are grateful for their knowledge and look forward to working with them in the future to make Maine's Emerging Adult Diversion Program a success—and, thus, making Maine's communities safer.