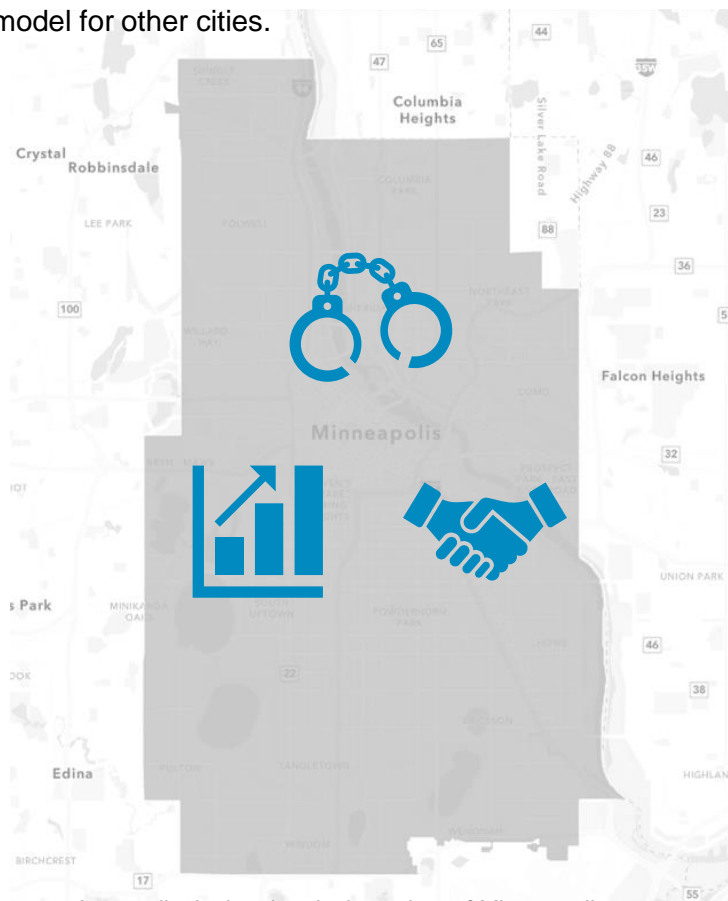


City Attorney's Office: Enhancing Public Safety Through Gun Diversion Program

The challenge and the change: Addressing reoffending in Minneapolis

Gun violence, overcrowded jails, and the disproportionate impact of gun charges on certain communities have been ongoing challenges in Minneapolis. In response, the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office partnered with Urban Ventures in 2017 to create the Pathway to New Beginnings program. The program offers an alternative to jail for people accused of nonviolent gun possession. Its goals include helping people avoid reoffending by addressing underlying sources of trauma and behavior. It also works to ensure fairer sentencing and offers the opportunity to avoid a permanent conviction on a person's record. This is especially important for communities affected by racial disparities. Early results show that participants are much less likely to reoffend. This is in comparison to those who go through the traditional court system. The program is fully funded by the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office (MCAO) and has become a national model for other cities.



A map displaying the city boundary of Minneapolis overlaid with blue icons representing a handcuff, an increasing bar chart, and a handshake.



Gavel and Scales of Justice on a wooden table.

Rising rates of reoffending

In the mid-2010s, the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office observed rising rates of reoffending in gun possession case. Most of the people involved were young African-American men, aged 18-30. Many of these individuals were first-time offenders, and typical sentences involved a conviction with 30 days in jail or home monitoring, without probation or active supervision. Between 2012 and 2016, 88% of individuals charged with gun possession were people of color, with 75% being young Black men, despite Black males making up less than 6% of Hennepin County's population.

Recognizing that the traditional approach was not reducing reoffending or improving public safety, the City Attorney's Office partnered with Urban Ventures in 2017 to create the Pathway to New Beginnings program. The program offers an alternative to jail for individuals charged with nonviolent gun possession, with the goal of reducing repeat offenses and addressing the root causes of behavior. Early results suggest the program is effective, as participants are less likely to reoffend compared to those who go through the traditional court system.

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A new approach to reduce repeat offenses

The program is structured into two phases over 6 months.

ELIGIBILITY CHECKPOINT

To be eligible for the Pathways to New Beginnings program, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ No prior gun convictions or violent convictions
- ✓ No felony convictions in the past 5 years
- ✓ Not currently on probation
- ✓ Entering a guilty plea to the charge

PHASE 1

- 12 weeks
 - 48 hours of programming
- During the program, participants receive services such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, trauma-informed approaches, and case management support.

PHASE 2

- 3 months
 - 9-15 hours of programming
- This phase builds on the foundational understanding developed in Phase 1. Participants receive support for employment, mental health, and substance use issues.

Termination from the program can occur for the following reasons:

- Failure to complete program requirements
- New charges during the probationary period, including:
 - Carrying a pistol without a permit or new gun offense
 - New felony offense
 - Driving While Intoxicated/Impaired (DWI) or Drug Recognition Expert/Evaluator (DRE) offense
 - Gross misdemeanor obstruction with force
 - New crime of violence as defined by Minn. Stat. §624.712.5

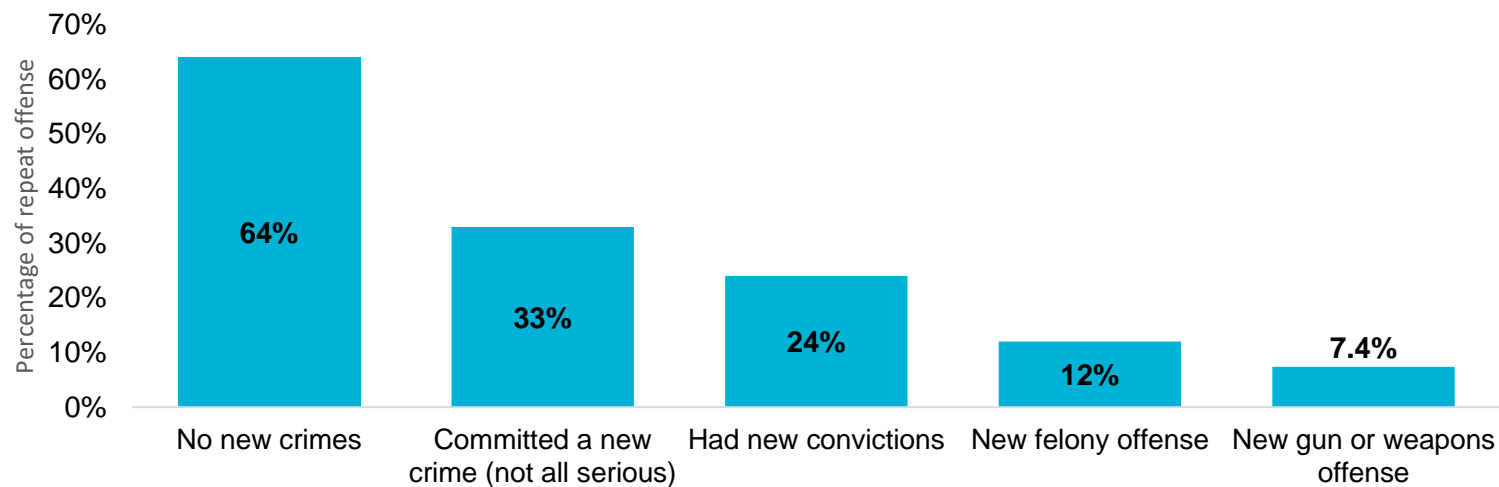
COMPLETION

Successfully completing the program provides participants with the opportunity for a fresh start. The Minneapolis City Attorney's Office (MCAO) offers graduates a chance to clear their criminal records. This process, called expungement, which allows people to remove certain offenses from their records, lowering the barriers to find jobs, housing, and participate in the society. Graduates can begin the process one year after completing the program and can get help with filing expungement requests under Minn. Stat. §609A.025.

Breaking the cycle: Graduates reducing reoffending

The Pathway to New Beginnings program has shown strong results in helping people avoid reoffending and make positive changes. By offering a different approach than traditional court processes, the program has lowered re-offense rates and given participants a chance to improve their lives.

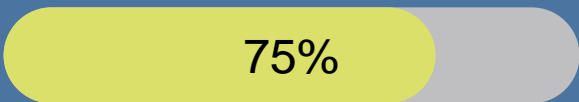
Reoffense Rates of Pathway To New Beginnings Graduates



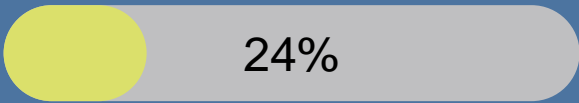
Reoffense rates for program graduates:

- 64% of graduates (60 out of 94) did not commit any new crimes
- 33% of graduates (33 out of 94) committed a new crime, but not all of them were serious
- 24% of graduates had new convictions, and 12% of them were new felony offense
- 7.4% of graduates (7 out of 94) were convicted of a new gun or weapons offense.

The program has shown improvement in reoffense rates:



Reoffend rates before the Pathways program



Reoffend rates after the Pathways program

These results show that the Pathway to New Beginnings program works well to reduce repeat offenses. The program has lowered repeat offense by more than 50 percentage points, showing how this approach helps reduce gun-related crimes and contributes to the efforts towards advancing public safety.

From doubt to transformation: A graduate's perspective

A notable success story features Nathan, a program graduate who initially doubted its effectiveness but ultimately found it transformative. He described it as "group therapy" that equipped him with tools for long-term thinking and improved emotional intelligence.

“
Now I have the tools to think in a long-term state of mind, not just short-term...
I don't need a gun to feel safe.
”

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Sustaining success and looking ahead

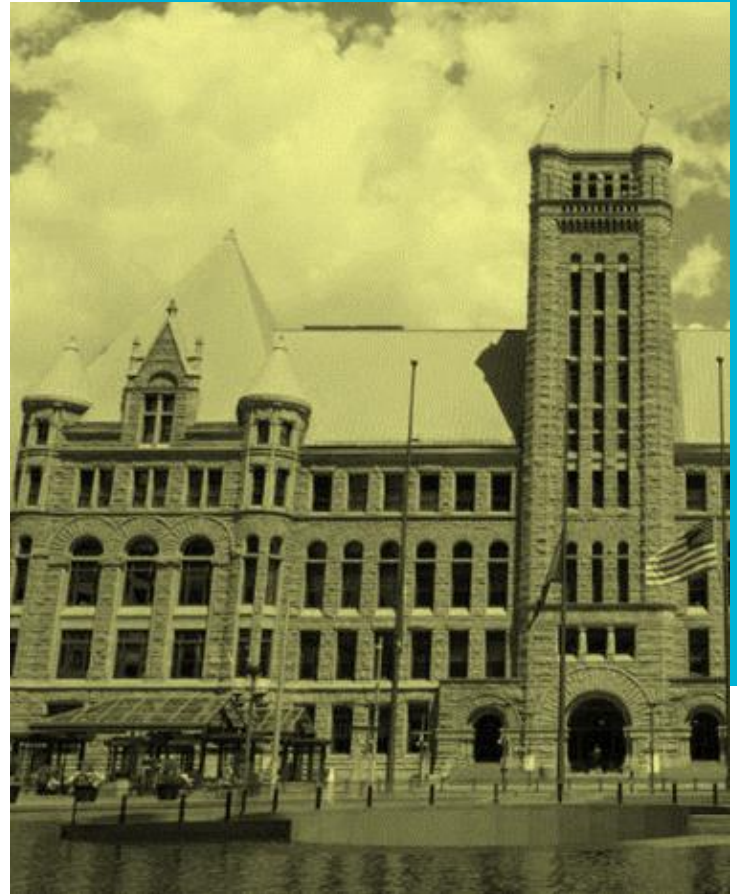
The Pathway to New Beginnings program presents a valuable alternative to jail for people charged with nonviolent gun possession. It focuses on helping participants make better choices, reduce repeat offenses, and improve public safety. The program has shown results. It helps reduce repeat offenses and gives people a chance to change their lives for the better compared to the courts approach.

Looking ahead, there are several opportunities to build on the success of the Pathway program:

- Continue long-term follow-up studies to assess the program's impact over time.
- Continue to review eligibility criteria to identify and target individuals who will be successful in programming.
- Enhance support services for participants post-graduation to further reduce re-offense.
- Consider implementing similar programs in other jurisdictions, using Pathway as a model.

These steps can help ensure that programs like Pathway continue to contribute to a more just and effective approach to gun-related offenses in the criminal justice system.

Minneapolis City Hall and fountain, seen from Hennepin County Government Center.



Minneapolis skyline view from Boom Island Park. Photo by Lane Pelovsky Courtesy of Meet Minneapolis



Learn more and get involved

For those inspired to learn more or explore how you can stay informed and participate in Minneapolis initiatives:

- [Minneapolis City Attorney's Office](#) – Learn about the office's work and programs.
- [Urban Ventures](#) – Discover how this organization supports local communities.
- [Diversion Program](#) – Explore how alternative approaches offers a path to address offenses and foster learning.