

# TREATMENT NOT PRISON

## *Prioritizing Diversion and Alternatives to Incarceration*



Research has shown that public safety and community well-being are often best served by keeping people who commit low-level offenses out of the criminal justice system. **Diversion & alternatives to incarceration** provide ways for individuals who have broken the law to be held accountable without disrupting their ability to lead productive lives and contribute to their community.

### WHERE IT'S HAPPENING & WORKS

- *Cook County, IL; St. Clair County, IL*

After their preliminary hearing, individuals charged with misdemeanor or felony drug offenses are given access to Drug School, a ten-hour educational course on substance abuse and justice involvement. At the end of the program, prosecutors dismiss the charges, allowing the participant to immediately seek record expungement. Cook County has saved an estimated \$2,000,000 per year as a result of the case dismissals. 90% of participants have completed the program, and have been shown to be 4x less likely to obtain a new drug arrest.



## DISTRICT ATTORNEYS, LAW ENFORCEMENT, & POLICYMAKERS CAN:



- Decline to prosecute low-level substance abuse and "quality of life" offenses (sleeping in cars, drug/alcohol intoxication, unlicensed street vending, vandalism, sleeping in etc.).



- Expand pre-filing and pre-plea diversion and alternative sentencing programs for both misdemeanor and felony cases to reach more people and divert people away from incarceration



- Support local and statewide reinvestment policies that have a preventative approach, including investing in youth programs, mental health care, and employment opportunities for vulnerable populations.



**Samantha**

The loss of a child in a fatal automobile accident, spiraled Samantha into years of drug addiction and a cycle of incarceration. Her first opportunity to get clean and sober was while in jail. ***"My cycle of addiction could have ended sooner if I had been sentenced to treatment instead of incarceration."*** After her release, Samantha completed her education, earned a Bachelor's degree in Human Services and is registered to work with people in Drug and Alcohol recovery. As a Director with Rebound CDC, a prisoner reentry program, Samantha provides the tools, resources, and sense of community for men and women in her community.