Human Development

2022 Summer Board and Leadership Meeting
Atlanta, GA
Omni Atlanta Hotel at CNN Center
Thursday, July 28, 2022
1:30-5:00 p.m.
## Agenda: Human Development Federal Advocacy Committee

**Thursday, July 28, 2022**  
1:30 – 5:00 p.m.  
Room: Redwood – M1, North Tower

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| 1:30 p.m. – 1:40 p.m. | WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND MEETING OVERVIEW            | The Honorable Kacy Kostiuk, Chair  
_Councilmember, City of Takoma Park, MD_  
Councilmember Kostiuk will welcome the committee, provide an overview of the Committee agenda as well as an update on upcoming HD engagements. |
| 1:40 p.m. – 1:55 p.m. | FEDERAL ADVOCACY UPDATE                              | Stephanie Martinez-Ruckman  
_Legislative Director, Human Development NLC_  
An update will be provided on the recently enacted Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, federal appropriations and federal workforce development initiatives. |
| 1:55 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. | MOVE TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION ROOM       |                                                                                                |
| 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | JOINT SESSION WITH PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE | CAPT Christopher “Chris” Jones, PharmD, DrPH, MPH  
_Acting Director and Deputy Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIP), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)_  
CAPT Michael King, Ph.D., M.S.W.  
_SAMHSA Administrator for Region 4 (Atlanta), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration_  
The Human Development Committee will join the PSCP Committee for a discussion with experts from the Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for conversations around substance use, mental health and community violence prevention. |

*A brief break will be taken at 3pm for an ice cream snack.*
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| 4:05 p.m.  | WELCOMING AMERICA                   |                                                                 • Isha Lee  
  **Deputy Director, Welcoming America**  
  The Human Development Committee will be joined by leadership from Welcoming America for a conversation around how local leaders can support welcoming standards in their communities and regions. |
| 5:00 p.m.  | NEXT STEPS AND ADJOURN              |                                                                 • The Honorable Kacy Kostiuk, Chair  
  **Councilmember, City of Takoma Park, MD** |
| 6:00 p.m.  | OFFSITE JOINT EVENT                 |                                                                                                                                        |

**Other Events of Note:**

- Joint Welcome Reception: Wednesday, July 27th, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.
- Mobile Workshop (pre-registration required): Friday, July 29th, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Attachments:**

- HD 2022 Roster
- Speaker Bios
- Reimagining Public Safety: A Toolkit for Cities and Towns
- The Challenge & Promise of Reentry in Municipalities

**Next HD Committee Meetings:**

- **August 18, 2:00-3:00 p.m. eastern**
- **September 15, 2:00-3:00 p.m. eastern**
- **October 13, 2:00-3:00 p.m. eastern**

**Don’t forget to register for City Summit!**

**Kansas City, MO**

**November 16-19, 2021**
As a resource and advocate for more than 19,000 cities, towns and villages, the National League of Cities (NLC) brings municipal officials together to influence federal policy affecting local governments. NLC adopts positions on federal actions, programs and proposals that directly impact municipalities and formalizes those positions in the \textit{National Municipal Policy (NMP)}, which guides NLC’s federal advocacy efforts.

NLC divides its advocacy efforts into seven subject areas:
\begin{itemize}
  \item Community and Economic Development
  \item Energy, Environment and Natural Resources
  \item Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations
  \item Human Development
  \item Information Technology and Communications
  \item Public Safety and Crime Prevention
  \item Transportation and Infrastructure Services
\end{itemize}

For each of the seven issue areas, a Federal Advocacy Committee advocates in support of NLC’s federal policy positions. Members of each committee serve for one calendar year, and are appointed by the NLC President.

\textbf{Federal Advocacy Committees}

Federal Advocacy Committee members are responsible for advocating on legislative priorities, providing input on legislative priorities, and reviewing and approving policy proposals and resolutions. Additionally, Committee members engage in networking and sharing of best practices.

Federal Advocacy Committees are comprised of local elected and appointed city and town officials from NLC member cities. NLC members must apply annually for membership to a Federal Advocacy Committee. The NLC President makes appointments for chair, vice chairs, and general membership. In addition to leading the Federal Advocacy Committees, those appointed as committee chairs will also serve on NLC’s Board of Directors during their leadership year.

At the Congressional City Conference, Federal Advocacy Committee members are called upon to advocate for NLC’s legislative priorities on Capitol Hill, as well as develop the committee’s agenda and work plan for the year. Committee members meet throughout the year to further the plan, hear from guest presenters, discuss advocacy strategies and develop specific policy amendments and resolutions. At the City Summit, committee members review and approve policy proposals and resolutions. These action items are then forwarded to NLC’s Resolutions Committee and are considered at the Annual Business Meeting, also held during the City Summit.
Advocacy
Throughout the year, committee members participate in advocacy efforts to influence the federal decision-making process, focusing on actions concerning local governments and communities. During the Congressional City Conference, committee members have an opportunity, and are encouraged, to meet with their congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. When NLC members are involved in the legislative process and share their expertise and experiences with Congress, municipalities have a stronger national voice, affecting the outcomes of federal policy debates that impact cities and towns.
2022 Human Development (HD) Committee Roster

Leadership

- Chair Kacy Kostiuk, Councilmember, City of Takoma Park, MD
- Vice Chair Denise Adams, Mayor Pro Tempore, City of Winston-Salem, NC
- Vice Chair Adriana Rocha Garcia, Councilmember, City of San Antonio, TX

Members

- Chris Callender, Council Person, Village of Oakwood (Cuyahoga County), OH
- Wally Campbell, Councilmember, City of Goodyear, AZ
- Sonja Coleman, Councilmember, City of Forest Hill, TX
- Mark Conway, Councilmember, City of Baltimore, MD
- Sona Cooper, Alderwoman, Town of Spring Lake, NC
- Rosa Ferraro-Santana, Alder, City of New Haven, CT
- Elaine Gaither, Council At Large, Village of Oakwood, OH
- Doreen Garlid, Councilmember, City of Tempe, AZ
- Denise Grant, Commissioner, City of Lauderdale, FL
- Susan Gutowsky, Councilmember, City of Fort Collins, CO
- Laney Harris, Board Member, City of Texarkana, AR
- Francisco Heredia, Councilmember, City of Mesa, AZ
- Lioneld Jordan, Mayor, City of Fayetteville, AR
- NanDrycka King Albert, Councilmember, City of Midway, FL
- Detric Leggett, Alderman, City of Savannah, GA
- Mike Lockhart, Mayor, City of Muscle Shoals, AL
• KaShamba Miller-Anderson, Councilmember, City of Riviera Beach, FL
• Corina Pfeil, Councilmember, City of Kenmore, WA
• Cristal Retana, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Farmers Branch, TX
• Karl Skala, Councilmember, City of Columbia, MO
• Cynthia Toles, Council President, City of Gadsden, AL
• Laura Weinberg, Mayor, City of Golden, CO
• Melissa Youssef, City Councilor, City of Durango, CO
• Margaret Desjarlais, Community Development Program Manager, City of Tuscaloosa, AL
• Gale Brewer, Councilmember, New York City, NY
• Yolanda Trout, Councilmember, City of Auburn, WA
• Heather Hill, Associate Director, City of Tuscaloosa, AL
• Junie Joseph, Council Member, City of Boulder, CO
• Kelbrey Porter, Grants Department Director, City of Montgomery, AL
• Estella Shabazz, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Savannah, GA
• Rose Glover-Hill, Mayor Pro Tem District 2, City of Greenville, NC
• Vanessa Fuentes, Council Member, City of Austin, TX
• Kevin Knowles, Mayor, City of Martinsburg
• Charles Myadze, Alder, City of Madison, WI
• Felicia Bridgewater-Irving, Alderwoman, City of Natchez, MS
• Paula Rhyne, Councilmember, City of Everett, WA
• Jeffrey Brown, Council Member at-Large, City of Lansing, MI
Christopher Jones, PharmD, DrPH, MPH
CAPT, US Public Health Service
Acting Director, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC

Areas of Expertise

- Substance use and overdose prevention
- Suicide prevention
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Injury data and surveillance
- Policy development and evaluation

Christopher Jones, PharmD, DrPH, MPH (CAPT U.S. Public Health Service), currently serves as the acting director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. When not serving as the acting director, Dr. Jones is the deputy director of NCIPC. In this role, he is the primary scientific advisor to the NCIPC director and other senior staff on science issues in public health, clinical care implementation, epidemiology, biostatistics, economics, and behavioral science. In addition, he provides scientific leadership and drives NCIPC’s strategic direction by overseeing the refinement of the scientific research agenda and the coordination on the NCIPC strategic priorities of drug overdose, suicide prevention, and adverse childhood experiences. As deputy director, he also oversees and enhances collaboration among NCIPC’s Office of Science, Office of Informatics, Office of Strategy and Innovation, and Overdose Response Coordinating Unit. Prior to becoming deputy director, Dr. Jones served as associate director of the NCIPC Office of Strategy and Innovation.

Prior to joining CDC, Dr. Jones served as the first director of the National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Policy Lab is responsible for identifying, coordinating, and facilitating the implementation of policies to improve mental health and substance use prevention, treatment and recovery, and with advancing innovation and the dissemination and adoption of evidence-based practices and programs related to mental health and substance use. Prior to SAMHSA, Dr. Jones served as acting associate deputy assistant secretary for Science and Data Policy and director of the Division of Science Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). During his career, Dr. Jones has served as senior advisor in the Office of the Commissioner at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and led the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) drug abuse and overdose activities, where he focused on strategic policy development and implementation, engaging national and state partners, and conducting research to improve policy and clinical practice. In addition, he was detailed to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy as the senior public health advisor, led the FDA’s Drug Safety and Risk Communication team, and served on the Science Team in the CDC’s Strategic National Stockpile.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Reinhardt College, a Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Mercer University, a Master of Public Health degree from New York Medical College, and a Doctor of Public Health in Health Policy from The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health. Dr. Jones is a captain in the U.S. Public Health Service and has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications on the topics of substance use, drug overdose, adverse childhood experiences, and mental health.
CAPT Michael King, Ph.D., MSW
SAMHSA Administrator for Region 4 (Atlanta), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

CAPT Michael King, Ph.D., M.S.W is a social worker and epidemiologist who has served at the intersection of behavioral and public health for over 15 years. Prior to joining SAMHSA in 2019, he supported State and Federal public health capacity at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an instructor and Field Supervisor for post-doctoral fellows enrolled in the Epidemic Intelligence Service. CAPT King previously served for over 10 years on the National Asthma Surveillance Team in the National Center for Environmental Health where his interests focused on chronic disease surveillance, environmental exposure and hazard assessment, and disaster mental health. As a Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Public Health Service, CAPT King deploys routinely following disasters and has had the privilege to lead one of five national Mental Health Response teams (Team 5) that provide crisis counseling and technical assistance to medically-underserved populations, with a focus on emergency public health response.

Isha Lee
Deputy Director, Welcoming America

Isha Lee is Deputy Director of Welcoming America. She is a nonprofit practitioner fluent in external affairs, government relations, and organizational development.

With more than 15 years of experience at national and local organizations, Isha’s previous roles include Chief Network Officer for Welcoming America, Chief of Staff for the national communications team at Teach For America, and founding Communications Director of the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, GA.

Isha is an alumna of Davidson College where she majored in political science with a focus on political theory and completed a thesis on feminist interpretations of Immanuel Kant. She also holds a Master of Arts in sustainable business and community from Goddard College, where she completed a thesis on sustainable nonprofit work environments.

Isha is the daughter of immigrants from Pakistan and grew up in rural North Carolina. She now calls Decatur, GA home with her husband, daughter, and cat.
Reimagining Public Safety
A Toolkit for Cities and Towns
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The Toolkit provides extensive context and examples for city leaders to replicate, reference, and adapt as they implement reimagined approaches to public safety that work well in a local context. Examples come from cities of varying sizes from across the country.

To truly reimagine public safety, cities must reflect, evaluate, engage, and act. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that this type of transformation requires a leader or leaders to think outside the box and toward innovation. This must all be done in conjunction and in true collaboration with various stakeholders – most notably, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous residents and those in communities of historic disinvestment.

**A NOTE ABOUT THE SCOPE OF THE TOOLKIT**

The Toolkit places its emphasis on functions most commonly within the scope of local governments. This leaves out several important considerations for public safety and resident trust in government. For instance, whereas a few consolidated cities directly administer detention facilities for youth and adults, probation and other forms of community supervision including electronic monitoring and community supervision, most cities do not. Nevertheless, all cities need to give attention to the roles and effects of these systems in conjunction with county or state government partners.

In addition, the Toolkit does not focus on school safety, though once again, truly comprehensive planning, goal setting, and policy change initiatives of city leaders will engage school district- and school-level stakeholders regarding changes in the education domain as well.

Lastly, the Toolkit does not directly address some topics worthy of additional attention by city leaders, including domestic violence and death by suicide.

**Introduction**

In February of 2021, NLC launched the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force made up of local leaders from across the country. The NLC Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Recommendations Report, “A Path Toward Safe and Equitable Cities,” released in October, outlines five high-level recommendations for city leaders to improve the ways in which they ensure the safety of all residents. Whereas the Recommendations offer a general framework, this supplemental Toolkit shares detailed, actionable steps that City leaders can take.

This Toolkit consists of five sections that detail practical steps toward realizing the Task Force recommendations:

- Redefine Public Safety
- Engage, Restructure & Balance
- Deploy Appropriate Response
- Embrace Accountability
- Seek Guidance and Support
OVERVIEW

Directing municipal government leadership toward providing safety and well-being for all involves discovering what safety means to residents, and how city government and its partners can contribute to providing safety and increasing well-being. This discussion anticipates further guidance available in Sections 2 and 3 of the Toolkit about ways to reduce overdependence on law enforcement as the sole guarantors of public safety, while specifically giving attention to leadership activities such as setting citywide goals, reporting regularly on measurable progress, adopting a broader range of indicators, and reducing the overuse and misuse of jails and other criminal justice responses. As in so many other areas detailed in this Toolkit, some cities already serve as the leading edge of implementing such actions and suggest what other city leaders can do. That said, this Toolkit and Recommendations represent a call to action, given that no municipality has comprehensively accomplished structural change across the board as yet.

“Focus on making sure that every single face of city government works towards the goal of keeping residents safe. Policing alone will not save us.”
MAYOR BRANDON SCOTT, Baltimore, MD

SETTING GOALS FOR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL

Goal-setting efforts initiated by the mayor or city manager – perhaps with the participation of the City Council or an interagency or community task force – provide a way to build consensus around the results that a city seeks, and typically also launch discussions about how to achieve those results. The opportunity for cities seeking to Reimagine Public Safety centers around questions of what safety and well-being mean for residents – specifically Black, Latinx, and Indigenous residents as those most impacted by current public safety harms – and other stakeholders.

Redefine Public Safety

NLC RPS TF RECOMMENDATION ONE:

DIRECT MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP TOWARDS SAFETY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL

The time has come for the leaders of the nation’s cities, towns, and villages to declare that community safety requires a broader and more holistic definition including the components of public health and well-being, and that cities can make structural changes to align local policies to this new definition.

Our present framing for public safety is insufficient. The framework needs expansion beyond the traditional use of the word safety to embrace a far broader set of conditions and circumstances that center public health or more simply, well-being.

This focus on public health places an emphasis on living conditions free of hazards that cause illness or contribute to housing instability, on the availability of jobs that pay a living wage, on access to well-maintained open spaces and a built environment that delivers clean air and water, usable streets, and reliable technology connections.

This requires deep and complex public discussions and joint decisions about shared goals. In addition, the indicators and measurements to determine progress on these goals will necessarily change and expand. Instead of only measuring, for example, arrest rates or jail populations, new descriptors of improvements will measure housing conditions, economic mobility opportunities, and racial equity outcomes.

A PATH TOWARD SAFE AND EQUITABLE CITIES

NLC Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report, October 2021
As a source of further suggestions about areas that citywide goals could address, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center recently developed a list of categories encompassing programs, policies, and strategies for which evidence shows an ability to reduce violence without resorting to police intervention:

- Improve the physical environment
- Strengthen anti-violence social norms and peer relationships
- Engage and support youth
- Reduce substance misuse
- Mitigate financial stress
- Reduce the harmful effects of the justice process
- Confront access to guns

Considering a range of venues within which the city wants to ensure safety and well-being may also help inform citywide goal setting. For instance, venues worth considering include schools, hospitals, public housing developments and other neighborhoods, and public transit.

**TRACK AND SHARE PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELL-BEING**

With goals in place, city leaders’ attention can turn to establishing public channels to ensure transparency in tracking and sharing progress toward meeting those goals. Methods and approaches may range from online dashboards to regular reporting to City Council and residents. (For more on resident engagement, see Section 2). Along the way, to ensure reduction of racial disparities and move toward equity, leaders will need to direct their data teams to collect data and produce reports disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and neighborhood. Leaders will also need to ensure widespread accessibility of information, especially among those most impacted by current public safety harms. In addition, in order to achieve reporting on agreed citywide indicators, setting up public reporting mechanisms will likely involve negotiating new and improved data sharing agreements with agencies such as housing authorities, economic development commissions, jails, local justice system agencies, and county health departments.
ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

Despite generally decreasing crime rates, 2020 brought about increases in gun violence in many cities across the country. Recognizing the need to address the increases—which may have slowed—observers attribute the fluctuation to a variety of causes, and still recommend the use of targeted approaches to reduce violence through prevention and intervention. As a way of establishing a new framework for understanding gun violence, well before the recent developments, elected officials in cities such as Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD, Richmond, VA, New York City and Flint, MI, acted to declare gun violence a public health crisis. These declarations have the effect of shifting city responses from enforcement alone to overall wellness and prevention. In turn, the declarations help balance and shift the responsibility for addressing gun violence to a wider range of stakeholders.

Such declarations and follow up also align cities with a four-step public health approach to violence prevention outlined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

1. Define and monitor the problem,
2. Identify risk and protective factors,
3. Develop and test prevention strategies.

CASE STUDIES

Milwaukee, WI (pop. 594,548) provides an interagency example hosted at the Medical College of Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission. With a focus on reducing homicides and non-fatal shootings, this collaboration of law enforcement professionals, criminal justice professionals, and community service providers regularly exchanges information about the city’s homicides and other violent crimes to identify methods of prevention from both public health and criminal justice perspectives. With support from several sources, the Commission created a first-of-its-kind data hub through which researchers and law enforcement can analyze trends and dynamics regarding individuals and neighborhoods. The hub tracks arrest, pretrial, and health department data from the city of Milwaukee. Its design allows for regular feeds of updated data as well as new data sets, such as workforce development and Department of Corrections data. Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett notes that the Commission “helps solve crimes, and also helps us prevent violence in the city.”

Louisville, KY (pop. 617,790), like many other cities, has invested in and closely monitors results from hospital-based violence intervention through the Pivot to Peace program, as a key technique to reduce retribution and other poor outcomes of violence.
As filtered through various media and individuals’ understandings and biases, relying upon the current sources to describe public safety appears to have a cumulative distorting effect: Americans tend to believe that crime rates are up even when the data show the trend is down. In 20 of 24 Gallup opinion poll surveys conducted since 1993, at least 60% of U.S. adults have said there is more crime nationally than there was the year before, despite the generally downward trend in national violent and property crime rates during most of that period.

In reimagining public safety, city leaders can drive discussion toward new indicators that: a) reflect agreement as to what actual safety, well-being, and justice for all their residents involves; b) measure whether residents have consistent, equitable access to those desired conditions; and c) establish a basis for taking further steps when inequities present themselves. For instance, a short list of what it looks and feels like to experience safe living conditions could include:

- Fair working conditions including living wages and sufficient, affordable child care;
- Safe places to live and learn, including adequate housing and quality schools;
- Rapid, calm resolution of interpersonal, individual, and person-against-property incidents, minimizing the use of formal state-sponsored means of resolution and maximizing community-based means; and
- A sense of ongoing access to fairness and justice among residents when interacting with any representative of government, particularly those carrying weapons or with the power of arrest.

The final portion of this section proposes a new set of indicators for cities to consider.

Toolkit Sections 2, 3, and 4 describe other kinds of municipal leadership beyond goals and indicators. The experience of cities in the California Violence Prevention Network and the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention demonstrates the importance of multiple forms of leadership, including providing a moral voice, pursuing policy innovation, and ensuring administrative follow-through.
FULFILLING CITY ROLES IN REDUCING THE OVERUSE AND MISUSE OF JAILS

Reducing the overuse and misuse of jails represents a crucial policy-and-practice intervention for cities seeking to reimagine public safety. Significantly reducing the use of jails in particular helps avoid the negative effects of incarceration, community supervision, and other forms of correctional control that can create trauma, economic instability, and may even increase crime. It also addresses the racial disparities that pervade current use of jails. The scale is immense: Some 9 million people cycle in and out of U.S. jails each year; most spend time in jail pre-trial, i.e., without having been convicted of a crime and often simply because they cannot afford bail. In a key effort to turn in another direction, dozens of sites participating in the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s Safety and Justice Challenge have changed their approaches to cases in which antisocial behavior stems from mental health needs or substance use disorders, as well as for young people charged with involvement in criminal activity (see also Section 3 of this Toolkit).

City leaders can work across governments with justice system agencies to braid a range of policy and programmatic options to form comprehensive, sustainable, and scalable initiatives to reduce the use of jails responsibly. Indeed, recent research from the JFA Institute and the Public Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG) substantiates that declining jail populations do not compromise public safety. This continuum of options for cities includes mechanisms to offer more appropriate interventions and supports for people in crisis including pre-arrest diversion, triage centers, and restorative justice, as well as joint efforts with counties, for instance to reduce the use of pre-trial detention.

PROPOSED AFFIRMATIVE MEASURES AND INDICATORS OF SAFETY, WELL-BEING, AND JUSTICE

Major categories of public safety and well-being indicators, as well as sub-indicators, could include the following. Understanding the patterns and implications from these indicators will require tracking and disaggregating them by setting – such as schools, homes, neighborhoods – as well as age, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender.

RATES OF UTILIZATION OF MENTAL HEALTH, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Drawdown of Medicaid or other insurance reimbursements
- Incidence of mental health and physical health issues
- Numbers of beds or treatment sites
- Deaths by suicide
- Prevalence of trauma and adverse childhood experiences
- Length of waiting lists for various services
- Availability of culturally competent health care

ADOPTION OR EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY RESPONDER APPROACHES

- Changes in dispatch staffing and procedures
- Deployment of community response mechanisms
- Budget allocations to community responders / changes in law enforcement budgets
- Reduced enforcement of low-level offenses

ADOPTION OR EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

- Budget allocations to violence interruption, hospital-based services, etc.
- Changes in behavior among recipients of intervention and prevention services, such as school engagement, employment, recourse to retaliation

INFORMATION WITH THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

- Arrears, prosecutions, convictions, sentences
- Under community supervision
- Reentry into incarceration
- Rate of system involvement primarily due to behavioral health reasons, homelessness, or both

INCIDENCE AND CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE, PROPERTY CRIME, AND VEHICULAR INJURY

- Prevalence of firearms and related injury and death, number of shootings
- Domestic violence
- Felony assault / sexual assault
- Robberies, thefts, break-ins
- Cost of treating injuries stemming from violence
- Traffic injuries and fatalities
- Adoption or expanded use of trauma-informed and restorative responses

PREVALENCE AND IMPACT OF PRO-SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS, AND RETURNING CITIZENS

- Availability and takeup of high-quality multiple education pathways, employment, and training + education indicators such as attendance, progress, graduation
- Availability and takeup of high quality, affordable childcare (ages 0-5) and out-of-school time programs and supports (grades K-12)
- Access and takeup of safe housing and transportation
- Access and takeup of services such as expungement and related legal assistance
- Access and takeup of regular connections to nature and healthy food options
- Access and takeup of small business supports
Engage, Restructure, and Balance

NLC RPS TF RECOMMENDATION TWO:

BALANCE THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, RESIDENTS, AND PARTNERS

Implementing a new, balanced framework for public safety and well-being, in a manner that promotes trust, requires city leaders to center resident engagement processes throughout – specifically to increase the engagement and input of Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities that disproportionately face the most acute safety issues both because of disinvestment and the negative impacts of the criminal justice system. Such engagement can inform initial formation of policies and indicators as well as subsequent reviews of results and lay the groundwork for structuring new ways to manage a wide range of situations through increased transparency and collaboration.

Adjusting to the new framework also means redefining the scope and roles of government agencies, something that communities have demanded and for which many police leaders have asked, in lieu of having their departments hold perceived or actual sole responsibility for providing public safety.

Further, a broader framework necessitates involvement of the wider range of community- and county-based partners with the ability to contribute to safety and well-being. Notably, this balancing exercise implies consideration of city budget resources and other new or leveraged funds around a new vision, and aligning spending according to role, scope, and relative contributions to safety and well-being.

A Path Toward Safe and Equitable Cities
NLC Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report, October 2021

OVERVIEW

Increasingly, police departments have become over utilized as the only method by which to achieve safety in cities. Through the engagement and involvement of residents and community partners and through a shared ownership of community safety, a more balanced public safety system is attainable. In order to move toward new approaches to public safety, cities need to pursue collaboration and find an effective balance across agencies, residents, and partners.

Using public funds and leveraged resources to promote effective and equitable public safety, as defined by community members, is key to achieving a more balanced system. Further, the urgency of the moment requires city officials to think about what changes are possible immediately, as well as what groundwork can be done to sustain changes and meet longer-term goals.

Three key elements are needed to achieve this balance: effective and inclusive community engagement, redefining the scope and roles of city government agencies, and reorienting city budget resources and leveraged funds around new vision.
An inclusive engagement process features:

ACCESSIBILITY

Whether online or in person, resident engagement – particularly of those most impacted and often left out – must be accessible. Offering multiple ways to participate contributes to accessibility as well. Some key accessibility questions for municipal leaders:

- If seeking resident engagement in person, can residents without personal vehicles readily walk or use mass transit to attend? Will costs be reimbursed? Is the space accessible to those of different abilities?
- If virtual, do residents have Wi-Fi? Cell phones? Computers? If not, how can we get this type of accessibility to them?
- If using surveys or written materials, has the city distributed them in multiple languages, and in a form that works for those with vision impairments? Are they written at a level that is understandable to everyone? Are there both electronic and paper versions available?
- How are we getting the youth voice at the table? What forms of communication work best for them? Are we considering social media and text messages?
- Do meetings or consultations take place at a convenient time or at multiple times?

TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

- Access without trust will not lead to effective engagement. Ensuring that those facilitating this engagement are trusted members of the community is an important factor in authenticity. This involves elected officials actively engaging and incorporating black- and brown-led community organizations, faith-based institutions, activists, youth-led movements, credible messengers and other local leaders. Past false promises and failed commitments have led to longstanding distrust in many neighborhoods and communities. Rebuilding this trust requires acknowledgement of past harm and consistent, authentic commitment.
- Transparency is key to maintaining trust and moving toward more authentic community engagement. At each step of the process, open sharing of information, goals, and data helps to support ongoing engagement and involvement.

“We can transform our institutions, but not without identifying existing problems and injustices. Recognize the harm that exists and implement solutions to prevent the problems from happening in the future.”

MAYOR SHARON WESTON BROOME, Baton Rouge, LA
Oakland, CA (pop. 425,097) established the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force through a City Council vote in July 2020 to better engage the community in the conversation regarding public safety. The Task Force was convened to recommend ways the city could rapidly reimagine and reconstruct public safety systems for Council consideration. Membership from communities with relevant experience, including formerly incarcerated individuals, victims of violent crimes, communities impacted by police violence, immigrant communities, historically underrepresented populations, and those with expertise in health/public health, labor/union, and law enforcement operations/budget was prioritized.

In April 2021, the Task Force presented a draft set of recommendations to the City Council, and a month later, released the Oakland Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report and Recommendations. The report details ways that the Task Force engaged with community members throughout the process, including focus groups, public education campaigns, town halls, listening sessions, and surveys. The task force made 152 recommendations in total.

Council President Bas and Councilmember Carroll Fife subsequently authored a resolution prioritizing recommendations from the Task Force to integrate in the city’s FY 2019-21 city budget, including significant expansion of citywide services and supports for trauma-informed mental health response, civilian traffic enforcement, violence interruption, gender-based violence response, restorative justice, youth programming and housing solutions.

Champaign, IL (pop. 87,636) last year “held five community listening sessions, inviting members of the public to share their vision for the future of public safety in Champaign.” According to the City, “the listening sessions were the first step in a community engagement process to gather information from the public so it can be shared with the City Council as they make future public safety policy decisions to best address the needs, interests, and values of our community.”

CASE STUDIES

COMPENSATION

- When possible, compensating residents for their thoughts, insight, and participation is a good practice. Compensation can come in various forms and helps to ensure that people attend, stay, and contribute to the work to reimagine public safety. Residents are experts; they are consultants in this work and therefore compensation is the best practice. However, to avoid transactional relationships, transparency around the importance of their contributions and in maintaining open information sharing and involvement must be paired with compensation.

YOUTH VOICE

- Intentional inclusion of youth and young adults is a necessary aspect of community engagement strategies. Authentic youth engagement requires adults to acknowledge power structures that have historically presented barriers to youth truly being a part of city resident engagement. Ensuring that youth are actual partners in the work, that their voices are valued, and that they feel safe, respected, and comfortable, is the only way for true partnership to exist.

“I want my colleagues to know that young people care deeply, and we want to be a part of that change – real progressive change. We want to be a part of intergenerational cooperation and engagement.”

SHANIA BENNETT, the youngest elected Committee Person for the 48th District 12 Division in Philadelphia, and a Cities United Young Leader

CASE STUDIES

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Richmond, California (pop. 109,884) was among the first cities to develop and launch an office of this kind. The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) took shape in 2007 as the city experienced record homicide numbers. The city positioned ONS as an entity outside of the justice system, with no power to arrest, convict or prosecute, to build and maintain trust with those most likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence. They office utilizes street outreach and credible messengers to connect with those most likely to be engaged in gun violence and most resistant to change. Through city and community connections, alternative opportunities, support and care are presented to stakeholders. In its first ten years, a 71% reduction in gun violence causing injury or death was reported in the city.

Milwaukee, WI (pop 594,548) created the Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention in 2008, using a public health-based approach to reduce violence in the city through partnerships with government, non-profit, neighborhood, and faith-based groups. The office operates under the City’s health department, with the goal of stopping violence before it starts. Community-wide prevention is the most effective, long-term solution to violence, and the Office of Violence Prevention engages a wide range of partners to facilitate a multidisciplinary, population-level approach to influence the social, behavioral, and environmental factors that contribute to violence. The OVP brings together agencies, experts, and community resources on efforts that reduce domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, gun violence, and more.

Prior to increases in 2020, Milwaukee had seen violent crime decrease in priority areas since the inception of the OVP. In 2021, the office requested additional funding through ARPA investment to better combat community gun violence.

CASE STUDIES

Austin TX (pop. 950,807): City Council passed a budget in August 2020 to redefine public safety, and also created a City-Community Reimagining Public Safety Task Force to consider new ways to help and support the community in times of crisis. Over the course of seven months, the Task Force held listening sessions to broaden the engagement of residents. The Task Force, which included city staff, local leaders, activists and community members, presented a comprehensive set of reform recommendations to the City Council on April 20, 2021.

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CASE STUDIES
LOCAL SAFETY BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

In 2018, state and local governments spent $119 billion on police, with localities delivering 86% of this spending. Among local governments, cities typically spend the most on police as a share of their direct general expenditures (13% in 2017, the most recent year data is available), but counties and townships fund police at relatively similar shares of their budgets. This section focuses on police spending because it accounts for the largest component of state and local public safety spending and is a function for which cities most often have direct responsibility, unlike jails, prisons, and courts. Still, it’s worth noting that state and local governments spent $81 billion on corrections and $49 billion on courts in 2018.

Community-based public safety approaches, such as community violence intervention, typically receive funding at relatively modest levels relative to traditional justice agencies and approaches. For example, Colorado’s Community Reentry program (reentry and rehabilitation) and the District of Columbia’s Cure the Streets program (violence prevention) both cost roughly $3 million annually in their respective pre-pandemic budgets.

Overall, spending on policing is a function of historical factors and cost of living, not related to variation in actual changes in crime and safety. Police spending as a share of total state and local general expenditures has remained at roughly 4% since 1977. That is, while the total amount spent on police has increased significantly, the share of state and local spending going to police has not changed despite huge variation in crime rates over that period. Indeed, there is no research-based “optimal” level of police presence.

Nearly all (97%) state and local spending on police went toward operational costs in 2018, with a majority (59%) dedicated to salary and wages. (Personnel costs are also the majority of spending for other traditional public safety programs.) Thus, any shift in public safety funding requires re-thinking what a local public safety workforce looks like and does. The structure for these investments matters, too. For example, public safety challenges – including but not limited to just crime rates – are dynamic, and some parts of the budget are responsive to that (e.g., spending on police overtime) but not others (e.g., grants to community violence interruption partners).

Investment in education, health, housing, and other social supports can have a huge impact on public safety and ensuring investment in these longer-term public safety strategies is just as critical as funding more immediate public safety priorities such as violence prevention. Cities need to take a holistic approach to public safety - and work across levels of government - to achieve these goals.

CASE STUDIES

Albuquerque, NM (pop. 559,374) The move by Mayor Tim Keller to create a Community Safety Department represents a somewhat different approach that still involves restructuring city functions. Mayor Keller recognized the need to provide a trauma informed, public health response, in order to provide more appropriate services to certain situations and relieve pressure on the city’s police and fire departments. This recognition led to the creation in 2020 of a totally new city department: the Albuquerque Community Safety (ACS) Department. ACS fields responders who are unarmed and have training as social workers, behavioral health workers, clinicians, or peer-to-peer support workers. A strong community engagement effort pre-dated the creation of the office and resulted in a detailed report. ACS is an official third branch of 9-1-1 in Albuquerque and the nation’s first cabinet-level department of its kind. ACS responders have begun taking dispatches from 9-1-1 and the department is currently funded at $7.7 million. “Police officers should be fighting violent crime, firefighters should be fighting fires, paramedics should be responding to medical emergencies,” ACS Director Mariela Ruiz-Angel said, and “trained, unarmed professionals should be addressing calls on mental health, addiction, inebriation, and homelessness where there is not a threat to public safety.”

REORIENTING CITY BUDGET RESOURCES AND LEVERAGED FUNDS AROUND A NEW VISION

Creating a new framework for public safety requires embracing a broader definition of public safety and aligning and directing public spending to agencies and activities that support the well-being and safety of community members. No comprehensive version of such a realignment exists as yet, but there are several considerations and illustrative next-step examples for city leaders.
STRATEGIES TO ADJUST LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY BUDGETS

Strategies to adjust local public safety budgets vary because the circumstances, funding structures, and public safety needs of each community are unique. However, the most important consideration is to ensure that budget adjustment strategies are aligned with the desired outcomes. The following questions can help guide these conversations:

1. Are the changes focused on building new safety infrastructure, on reducing the scope or impact of policing and justice involvement, or both?
2. Are the changes temporary, or are they sustainable in an ongoing way?
3. Do the changes reflect residents’ priorities (specifically Black, Latinx and Indigenous residents and those in neighborhoods of historic disinvestment)?
4. What is it possible to achieve now, and what is possible to make progress toward in the long run?
5. How can you assess whether the changes were successful in terms of maintaining safety and reducing harm associated with prior practice?

There is a wide range of approaches to budgeting for broader public safety goals, but they generally fall into two categories: 1) creating or harnessing new revenue sources to address urgent public safety issues, or 2) shifting resources from traditional to newer safety approaches. If your community is looking to change how city government seeks to promote resident safety, your government will need to consider something on this list.

Examples of using new revenue sources include:

- Using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to invest in public safety programs. The ARP provided cities with $651 billion in direct financial support, with half delivered in May 2021 and the other half provided in May 2022. Cities can spend the funds through December 2024. Treasury permits cities to use these funds for a variety of uses related to the pandemic, including replacing lost revenue, and has specifically cited police and other public safety services as qualifying programs. The mayor of Minneapolis prioritized such programs within an $11.5 million public safety portion of ARP funding that also includes investment in MPD capacity. See Section 3 for examples of cities that have pledged ARP funding to violence interruption.

- Using a social impact bond (SIB). For example, Denver recently used SIBs as a vehicle to combine financing from private investors and public dollars from Medicaid and housing assistance programs to implement a Housing First approach to rapidly get people experiencing homelessness into housing. The evaluation of the initiative was funded by the city and county of Denver. Participants accessed and maintained housing, while use of shelter beds, police contact and jail stays and jail days all decreased. Given the evidence of benefit, other cities may wish to replicate this approach using direct budget investments.

- Using ballot initiatives, where available, to garner dedicated tax revenue for public safety purposes. Several California cities have successfully taken this step.

Examples of shifting resources include:

- Prioritizing new safety approaches by creating, expanding, and resourcing them using budget line items within government to coordinate and consistently fund safety and antiviolence efforts, outside of traditional justice agencies.
- Removing civilian functions from the police department and allocating budget savings from high officer turnover and hiring freezes to public safety initiatives.
- Redirecting budgets to non-police infrastructure.
- Re-allocating budget resources within police and traditional justice agencies to focus on activities that address serious public safety issues more effectively. For example, research indicates that clearance rates for serious violence can be improved through the dedication of enhanced investigative resources, along with improved management structures and oversight processes.
LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND CONSTRAINTS ON MUNICIPAL ACTION

While local officials have a lot of discretion over their public safety budgets, the ability to exercise that discretion can be hampered by restrictions arising from state-level preemption of local changes, or constraints embedded in the definition of public safety agencies in places like city charters. Aligning public safety budgets with public safety effectiveness broadly defined requires the leeway to make those decisions.

CASE STUDIES

The City of Los Angeles, CA (pop. 3.89 million)
Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Office, which was established in 2007, by 2020 had an annual budget of over $30 million, with contracts funding 25 community-based service providers for delivery of a combination of prevention, intervention, and incident response in 23 areas across the city.

The City of Seattle, WA (pop. 737,015) removed civilian functions from the police department in November, 2020. These changes reduced the overall size of the Seattle Police Department and freed up funds to support a city initiative to invest in projects that benefit communities of color, a portion of which will be allocated via participatory budgeting.

In Phoenix, AZ (pop. 1.62 million) the Phoenix Union High School District took this approach in the summer of 2020 when it ended a contract with the Phoenix Police Department for school resource officers. The district is instead reallocating the $1.2 million annual budget through a participatory budgeting process that includes teacher, parent, and student voices to determine how public safety resources will be spent.

The Boston, MA (pop. 675,647) Police Department undertook and rigorously evaluated an effort to enhance their investigative practices for homicides, successfully improving their clearance rate. They further found that gun homicides and nonfatal shootings shared many similar case characteristics, but the homicide cases received much more sustained investigative effort. This suggests that devoting equivalent resources to investigations of nonfatal shootings could increase the rates at which they are solved, thus enhancing public safety.
PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Many communities have identified participatory budgeting as a useful model to facilitate community involvement and power in setting public safety budgeting priorities. Participatory budgeting is an innovative democratic approach through which residents engage in deliberation, negotiation, and monitoring to work with the government to identify their priorities, the way they believe key local problems should be solved, and how public funds should be allocated to solve them. In practice, a portion of public budgeting is made available for allocation via a participatory budgeting process, and residents propose options for using those resources, and vote among the candidate ideas.

Additional Resources

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement, Racial Equity Tools Online Resource Library
A Path Toward Community Engagement, Living Cities

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Authentic Youth Civic Engagement, National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
Authentic Youth Engagement: Youth-Adult Partnerships, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

BUDGETING & FINANCE

Outreach Toolkit, Facilitator Training and related documents, Participatory Budgeting Project
Shifting Police Budgets: Lessons Learned from Three Communities, Urban Institute
Investing Public Funds in Community Safety Strategies and How Can We Fund a Continuum of Care and Opportunity?, Urban Institute

The Austin, TX (pop. 950,807) City Council voted in August 2020 to cut the police department budget by nearly one-third, or about $150 million. Funds were meant to be reallocated to community-based services and resources. However, in June 2021, Texas enacted legislation to penalize cities that reduce law enforcement budgets by placing restrictions on sales and property tax increases, among other penalties, and requires cities with a population over 1 million to hold elections before reducing law enforcement budgets. As a result, efforts to reallocate police funds have halted and civilian functions initially transferred out of APD will be restored. Austin illustrates how state-level politics can interfere with efforts to reallocate funding from police budgets to other public safety resources and infrastructure. Local officials facing similar constraints may need to look to harness new revenue sources to avoid the immediate consequences of reducing police budgets.

Ithaca, NY (pop. 30,569) provides an example of what is possible when different levels of government align in support of reimagining public safety. The city and surrounding Tompkins County collaborated on an effort to rethink the city and county public safety approach, with budget adjustments to match, captured in their Reimagining Public Safety report which responds to the New York State Executive Order 203 New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. The report, developed in collaboration with the Center for Policing Equity, is notable for the intergovernmental nature of the joint effort, which allowed for thinking across the public safety responsibilities at the municipal and county levels, the extent of community engagement, and the degree of transparency in sharing material on the development of the report, including budget components. Among other means of allowing community input into the process, the draft report and appended material were made readily accessible online. While the implementation of the many components of the strategy outlined in the report are either pending or in very early stages, the work in Ithaca can serve as a model for undertaking a broad and collaborative rethinking approach to local public safety provision.
Deploy Appropriate Responses

NLC RPS TF RECOMMENDATION THREE

SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND THE USE OF CIVILIAN-LED AND COMMUNITY-BASED WELL-BEING AND PREVENTION-FOCUSED STRATEGIES

Building upon the momentum established in numerous cities that have already begun to see promising results, municipal leaders should expand civilian response mechanisms for emergency and crisis response calls. This entails connecting people in need to the most relevant services and support, while reducing reliance on armed, uniformed response.

In parallel, and to meet the challenge of gun and domestic violence, city leaders should ramp up use of effective community-based strategies for violence prevention, intervention, and reduction. Across crisis response and violence reduction, local leaders will do well to rely on trauma-informed practices, utilize credible messengers, and adopt restorative justice mechanisms as alternatives for dispute and conflict resolution.

A PATH TOWARD SAFE AND EQUITABLE CITIES
NLC Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report, October 2021

OVERVIEW

Law enforcement has historically served as the primary response agency for calls for service and violence in cities, regardless of whether they are the best suited to do so in any situation. Additionally, victimization and violence often go unreported – a signal of the need for alternatives. These alternatives do exist and have spread to more cities in recent years.

A recent study of eight cities by the Center for American Progress and Law Enforcement Action Partnership found that 23% to 39% of 911 calls were low priority or non-urgent while only 18% to 34% represented life-threatening emergencies. With investment in response infrastructure and training, cities can divert many of those non-urgent calls to other methods of intervention that would better serve the parties involved. Trained professionals can address behavioral health concerns, homelessness, substance misuse, and other non-violent issues alongside or independent of the police department. Street outreach and mobile response teams can complement responses initiated through 911. Additionally, cities can strategically deploy violence interruption and intervention professionals – credible messengers – to serve as alternative responders.

“In the absence of collaboration, we have always deployed, unfortunately for those seeking help, members of law enforcement to do what they have not been trained to do. We have all been rather complicit in sustaining a model that has not really addressed the root causes or what individuals need.”

COUNCIL-MEMBER MONICA RODRIGUEZ, Los Angeles
Co-Responder Models

Co-responder models vary in practice, yet generally involve law enforcement and clinicians working together in response to calls for service involving a person experiencing a crisis. The model provides law enforcement with appropriate alternatives to arrest as well as additional options to respond to calls. More importantly, it creates a means by which to support and treat individuals in crisis, as opposed to criminalizing them. These models must be paired with a crisis continuum of care that promotes the development of and access to quality mental and substance use disorder treatment and services as opposed to arrest and incarceration. In addition, the continuum of care must include a specific focus on analysis of demographic data and a focus on racially equitable options for care.

Co-response models vary, and cities can implement them in a variety of ways. Whether by technology (telehealth paired with law enforcement), collaboration with peer support specialists or through multidisciplinary teams, co-response provides options to municipalities better suited to address the issue at hand rather than turning to arrest and incarceration over treatment and care.

CASE STUDIES

Colorado Springs, CO (pop. 464,871) The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) and the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) collaborated with AspenPointe, a local behavioral health organization, to form a specially staffed mobile integrated mental health emergency response team. First deployed in December 2014, the Community Response Team (CRT) consists of a CSFD medical provider, a CSPD officer, and a licensed clinical behavioral health social worker. The medical provider performs medical clearance and screens for psychiatric admission eligibility, while the police officer ensures scene safety, and the social worker provides behavioral health assistance. This approach significantly reduced admissions to the emergency department by directing individuals in crisis to community resources, like the local Crisis Stabilization Unit or county detoxification facility. The local 911 call center helps by diverting qualified calls directly to the CRT, therefore decreasing the burden of these calls from the regular EMS, fire department, and police department dispatch.

A variety of local models of alternative response and prevention have proven to be effective. These models can result in:

- Appropriate and more racially equitable responses
- The diversion of individuals from criminal justice responses to appropriate treatment options
- Decreased levels of violence in neighborhoods
- Opportunities for community employment and involvement in safety efforts
- Connection to resources, support, and trauma-informed care

Models for alternative response are consistently evolving. While some have been studied and proven to be effective, others are just emerging but provide promising innovations. When planning for, evaluating, or enhancing these programs and initiatives, it is important to do so with the engagement of residents, specifically those most impacted, as outlined in Section 2.

Considerations to support strong community-based strategies include:

- Ensuring equity is centered in both development and implementation; without attention to equity, it is likely that strategies will primarily benefit city residents in neighborhoods that already receive a lot of services
- Developing or tapping into the continuum of care needed to connect individuals to the appropriate care or resource (i.e., once diverted, where do they go to access services?)
- Prioritizing alternatives to jail and emergency rooms
- Engagement of all relevant stakeholders (impacted residents, city agencies, local nonprofits, community-based organizations, mental health/substance use organizations, etc.)

There are several initiatives and models to consider when assessing the needs of your local community.
Community Responder Models

Some cities have recognized that the involvement of uniformed, armed responders, even alongside clinicians, may reduce the effectiveness of responses to calls for service. Using trained, unarmed community responders provides a less intimidating and more people-centered approach to mental health crises, substance use disorders, homelessness, and more.

The Community Responder model takes alternative response a step further than co-response in its approach to crisis response. It removes the role of law enforcement in at least the initial interaction with those in need of support, treatment, and resources. A key factor a municipality should consider in the development and implementation of community response models involves the need to professionalize the role through adequate and equitable compensation and sustainable staffing mechanisms.

CASE STUDIES

Indianapolis, IN (pop. 864,447) The Mobile Crisis Assistance Team (MCAT) pilot program launched in August 2017, serving the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD)’s East district. Spearheaded by the city of Indianapolis, MCAT is a multiagency partnership program between IMPD, Indianapolis Emergency Medical Services (IEMS), and the Sandra Eskenazi Mental Health that aims to redirect time intensive, complicated, pre-arrest situations to dedicated, specially trained teams. The program was recently evaluated by the Public Policy Institute at Indiana University.

Poulsbo, WA (pop. 10,602) The Poulsbo Police Department partners with behavioral health navigators in the city’s Behavioral Health Crisis Outreach Program. The program initially began in the court system and expanded to a law enforcement partnership in 2017. It has since been extended to multiple police departments and is funded through the Kitsap County Treatment Sales Tax and participating cities. Navigators are hired as police department employees. Officers in participating departments request navigators when they identify people in need of behavioral health treatment or services. Navigators are available in crisis situations but are primarily called in after police contact occurs to follow up with individuals, families, and caregivers. Navigators work with individuals to proactively identify treatment options, overcome obstacles to accessing services, and improve communication between the criminal justice and behavioral health systems. They work in partnership with officers in the field and/or independently.

Eugene, OR (pop. 176,654) The CAHOOTS team (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) is dispatched through the same 911 system as the Eugene Police Department; the goal was to create an alternative to police response for people experiencing social service and behavioral health needs whenever possible. The team has steadily increased its scale of operations, responding to more than 24,000 calls in 2019 – roughly one-fifth of total 911 dispatches – and only called for police back-up in 1% of those calls. The model has also proven cost-effective. According to estimates from the Eugene Police Department, it costs roughly $800 per call to dispatch the police. CAHOOTS has substantially cut back on the need for police response, saving an estimated $8.5 million in taxpayer dollars every year. Notably, the team operates out of a Federally Qualified Health Center, White Bird Clinic, under contract to the city.
Changes to 911 Dispatch

In order to ensure matching a broader array of responder options to any given situation, changes to 911 dispatch are often needed. Such changes allow for the action to begin at the time of the call as opposed to after the wrong responder has already been dispatched, thus reducing the likelihood of a confrontational encounter taking place. In 2020, the Federal Communications Corporation adopted rules to establish 988 as a new, nationwide, easy-to-remember three-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. Cities can look ahead to the rollout of the 988 line that can also serve to direct calls for service to the proper responder.

CASE STUDIES

Denver, CO (pop. 705,576) 

“In the first six months of Denver’s Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) program, mental health clinicians and paramedics have responded to 748 low-level incidents, like trespassing and welfare checks. None of those responses required police assistance or led to arrests or jail time. More than two-thirds of contacts were with people who were unhoused, and STAR staff were able to help connect them with shelter, food aid, counseling, and medical services. ‘We have more than enough work with regards to violent crime, property crime and traffic safety,’ said Chief of Police Paul Pazen, ‘and if something like STAR or any other support system can lighten the load on mental health calls for service, substance abuse calls for service, and low-level issues, that frees up law enforcement to address crime issues.’” (Excerpt, Coalition for Public Safety 2/12/21 newsletter)

Philadelphia, PA (pop. 1.58 million) 

The new 911 Triage and Co-Responder Program includes a behavioral health specialist from the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS) who was embedded into Police Radio for the first time in 2020. It will assist Philadelphians calling 911 through two ways: a) formation of a “triage desk” located at 911 Radio Control and Dispatch offices to better identify and triage behavioral health crisis calls to 911 and from patrol officers; and b) a planned expansion of the co-responder program to provide a unique and tailored response to 911 calls and requests from patrol officers.

Seattle, WA (pop. 737,015) 

In May of 2021, the City Council of Seattle voted to move 140 positions from the Police Department’s 911 dispatch center to the Community Safety and Communications Center (CSCC). While this center is still under construction, the move represents a culture shift and a step toward appropriate crisis response mechanisms.
Violence Interruption, Intervention, and the Use of Credible Messengers

Rather than utilizing city government, namely police, as the sole responder to violence, cities can embrace community violence interventions and support the advancement and development of these initiatives and programs. Often, these interventions are dependent on the deployment of credible messengers—people who are respected members of a community who work to aid and influence others in their communities. Utilizing and uplifting the lived expertise of those closest to a challenge or issue has proven to be effective in curbing violence in specific zip codes and neighborhoods.

The Federal Commitment to Community Violence Intervention

The Fund Peace Campaign, a coalition of black- and brown-led organizations, activists, and community leaders, took collective action that led to the Biden-Harris administration’s commitment to fund Community Violence Interventions via the American Jobs Plan. The Campaign has also been integral in pushing state and local officials to utilize American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds toward proven methods of gun violence reduction.

The Biden-Harris Administration is also convening and supporting a Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Collaborative of 15 jurisdictions that are committing to use a portion of their ARPA funding and other public funding to increase investment in their CVI infrastructure, including support for returning citizens/reentry.

Case Studies

Phoenix, AZ (pop. 1.63 million) In an example of public-private partnership, dispatchers in the Phoenix Police Department’s Communications Bureau may refer eligible 911 calls to the nonprofit Crisis Response Network (CRN). NLC colleagues at the Vera Institute of Justice created a thorough case study of the program, including attention to Medicaid payment mechanisms.

“We as cities are dealing with decades of disinvestment from our safety net, which leaves us in a tough situation to address the issues around violence and safety.”

NIKKI FORTUNATO-BAS, City Council President, Oakland, CA

Related, campaign co-convener Cities United released A Guide to Investing in Safe, Healthy, and Hopeful Communities.
CASE STUDIES

Newark, NJ (pop. 282,529) The Newark Community Street Team (NCST) draws upon an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach to violence reduction that has been implemented in several cities across the country. NCST services include a Safe-Passage Program; Public Safety Roundtables; wellness evaluation and therapeutic counseling in partnership with the Department of Health and Community Wellness; support through the application process for the Victims Compensation Fund connecting survivors of crimes with support services; and employment and education referrals in partnership with Newark Jobs Connect. An evaluation by UCLA’s Social Justice Research Partnership found that NCST enabled individuals and families to experience a deep sense of safety in their neighborhoods.

New York, NY (pop 8.4 million) Cure Violence is an evidence-informed public health approach that identifies and engages individuals most likely to be involved in gun violence – especially when at risk of engaging in retaliatory shootings – and deploys interventions aimed at curbing that behavior before it occurs, at the neighborhood (rather than city-wide) level. Interventions take place before escalation turns to gun violence by employing “violence interrupters” – typically individuals with lived experience and community ties – to quell street disputes and link potential shooters to case management and supportive services. In two New York City neighborhoods, a study by the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice showed a positive association between the use of violence interrupters and steep declines in shootings, as well as increased confidence in the police. Additionally, young men in neighborhoods with Cure Violence have shown increased trust in police.

Community Violence Interventions operate with similar missions, but their methods vary. Cities can support existing local programs by providing additional funding, structural support and means by which to professionalize and uplift the important role credible messengers play locally.

There are several Community Violence Intervention models:

STREET OUTREACH AND VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION

Street outreach models are centered in public health approaches to address violence. Highly trained credible messengers and street outreach workers utilize strong resident relationships and mediation tactics to address conflict in communities.
GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION (GVI)

GVI programs require a strong coordination effort between communities, social service providers and law enforcement to combat violence. The interventions focus on those at highest risk of violence as identified by law enforcement. A network of collaborative partners provides intervention efforts to support in connecting individuals to services to avoid further engagement in violence. GVI generally involves a strong message delivered through a face-to-face call-in with all parties – that if violence continues, harsh penalties will be imposed.

CASE STUDIES

Louisville, KY (pop. 615,924) Launched in 2020 by Mayor Greg Fisher alongside community leaders, police, members of the city’s business and non-profit community, Louisville’s GVI program focuses on the small number of people at extremely high risk for violent victimization and offending. Thus far, the work has involved local analysis that includes looking into homicide data while also auditing groups known to engage in violence. As the work moves toward implementation, the next steps will be direct engagement with these groups.

Boston, MA (pop. 675,647) Operation Ceasefire launched in 1996 as a citywide strategy to address juvenile and gang violence, particularly gun violence. Predating the GVI terminology, Operation Ceasefire was the first program of its kind and was responsible for a 63% reduction in youth homicide victimization.

“IT IS EASY FOR PEOPLE TO GO BACK TO THE NOTION THAT MORE POLICE EQUAL SAFETY. BUT WE NEED TO GET AT PREVENTION”
COUNCILMEMBER JANEESE LEWIS-GEORGE, Washington, DC

HOSPITAL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

Hospital-Based interventions focus their initial efforts within trauma centers and emergency rooms. When someone comes in with a violent injury, highly trained staff members engage with victims and their families and friends to avoid retaliation and further violence.

CASE STUDIES

Hackensack, NJ (pop. 43,846) Project HEAL: Help, Empower, and Lead is a community-based program dedicated to supporting people affected by violence. The effort is collaborative and includes a partnership with the Jersey Shore University Medical Center and community groups. When individuals are seen in the emergency room for a violent injury and have become medically stable, a Violence Intervention Specialist meets with them to provide support, guidance, and connections to resources. Statistics show that those who are seen in hospitals for violence are likely to be seen again for another injury or even death; the Project HEAL team recognizes that healing from violence often requires things like counseling, educational opportunities, healthcare coordination and navigation, housing supports and relocation services, job training and placement, patient advocacy, safety planning, and more.

Philadelphia, PA (pop. 1.58 million) The Violence Intervention Program (VIP) at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia was established in 2012. Prior to VIP, many youths who came to the hospital for violent injury were discharged back into the community only to be re-admitted with similar violent injuries. The VIP program is comprised of a team that helps the youth, and their families navigate complex systems of care to meet their needs within the communities in which they live. Eighty percent of the goals created in collaboration with youth and their families are resolved through referrals, resources, education, and advocacy provided by VIP.

“It is easy for people to go back to the notion that more police equal safety. But we need to get at prevention”
COUNCILMEMBER JANEESE LEWIS-GEORGE, Washington, DC
The process of developing and strengthening credible messengers is about not only an investment in them, their training and importance, but about a shift from the current reliance on the public safety paradigm into an investment and reliance on community to play its rightful role in peace making.”

CLINTON LACEY, President and CEO, CM3
(The Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement)

YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT, SUPPORT, AND VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION

Chelsea, MA (pop. 40,787) and Baltimore, MD (pop. 585,708) Since its founding in 1988 in Chelsea, MA, Roca Inc. has focused on the mission to disrupt cycles of incarceration, poverty, and violence in young adults traditionally difficult to reach. Roca recognizes that 16- to 24-year-olds who have experienced extensive trauma are the primary victims of urban violence.

Trust with young adults is built over four years via credible messengers, with an intervention model that gives young people the tools to support to change the trajectory of their lives. The model is compromised by four focus areas: Create Safety and Stability; Teach Life-Saving Skills; Practice Skills, Relapse, and Repeat; and Engage Institutions and Systems.

Roca has seen immense success due to the intentional intervention model and strong reputation in the community as a safe haven for young adults. Built on the philosophy of relentless outreach, Roca continues to connect to young adults and provide services even after graduating from the model. While over 85% of young men who come to Roca have a violent record, four out of five stop engaging in crime after engaging with the program. Additionally, 95% of young men who complete the first two years of the ROCA program were not re-incarcerated. Roca has recently expanded to include similar work in Baltimore.

MAYORAL COMMITMENTS TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS VIA THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Baton Rouge, LA (pop. 224,149) Mayor-President Sharon Weston-Broome recognized a need to address local violence and utilized CARES act funding to provide mentorship opportunities, connect people to public benefits and improve youth program availability, all in attempt to increase safety in her city. Additionally, Baton Rouge – and specifically their police chief, Murphy Paul – is one of the communities recognized by the Biden administration for using some of the ARP funding for community violence intervention.

St Louis, MO (pop. 301,578) Mayor Tishaura O. Jones committed $11.5 million to improve public safety through increased funding for violence intervention programs and youth programming and jobs to keep youth engaged and safe. This is a part of a larger local initiative to reimagine public safety. St. Louis is also working alongside the Biden-Harris Administration in the use of community interventions to combat gun violence.
Reentry

Providing supports at the point of reentry from jail and prison for “returning citizens,” and thus building structures that reduce recidivism, remain important city responsibilities in the public safety realm. Some municipalities have established reentry offices, which a recent NLC landscape scan show fulfilling roles along a continuum: providing direct services, providing referral services, providing a combination of direct and referral services, and serving as a coordinating hub. In addition to any city services and roles, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education often serve as go-to providers of reentry supports – and constitute potential or existing partners for cities.

Building upon its landscape scan, the recent NLC Institute for Youth, Education and Families report The Challenge & Promise of Reentry in Municipalities lays out several case studies of promising city programs and outlines several areas of opportunity for city leaders to pursue. These include:

- Improving expungement and other record-sealing efforts;
- Connecting returning citizens to university-based credentialing and professional development programs;
- Focusing efforts to a greater degree on young adults ages 18-25;
- Closing service gaps and implementing measures to improve strategic coordination of the nonprofit-led efforts that dominate the field. Cities can take advantage of the infrastructure and network created by the organizations currently working on reentry and submit joint applications for federal funding that emphasize coordinating or other roles;
- Including returning citizens in planning and implementation of services and coordinating efforts;
- Creating more cross-program and cross-agency collaboration with corrections, probation offices, sheriffs, jails, and the courts to ensure that reentry supports begin “behind the wall” and to minimize re-arrest and re-incarceration, particularly for technical and process violations; and
- Promoting collaboration with business leaders and among city agencies, particularly for key reentry needs such as housing, employment, and physical and mental health care.

In addition, the report points out opportunities for city leaders to spark additional inquiry into what works in reentry, to develop better knowledge of programs and practices worth replicating across the field.

CASE STUDIES

New Orleans, LA (pop. 383,997) In response to Louisiana’s reinvestment reforms, which led to many returning citizens coming home to the city. New Orleans created a triage unit within the local probation office specifically meant to connect these residents to resources. While not originally meant to be a long-term investment, the triage center led to the creation of the Reentry Task Force, which allows the city to serve as an umbrella agency for over 60 nonprofit and city agencies.

Cities such as Philadelphia, Washington, DC, New York City, and more, have prioritized reentry services within their mayoral initiatives.
Additional Resources

**CO-RESPONDERS, COMMUNITY RESPONDERS, 911 DISPATCH**

*Addressing Mental Health, Substance Use, and Homelessness – Briefs and Case Studies*, National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families and Arnold Ventures

*The Community Responder Model*, Center for American Promise and Law Enforcement Action Partnership

*Field Notes: Law Enforcement – Developing and Implementing Your Co-Responder Program*, Council of State Governments Justice Center


*Transform911*, The University of Chicago Health Lab

**VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION**

*Group Violence Intervention Resources*, National Network for Safe Communities

*Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Resources*, The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention

*The Credible Messenger Justice Center*

*The Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement – CM3*

**REENTRY**

*Transition from Jail to Community Initiative Resources*, National Institute of Corrections/Urban Institute

*The Challenge & Promise of Reentry in Municipalities*, National League of Cities
OVERVIEW

In addition to their overriding responsibility to provide for public safety and well-being, local governments and elected officials are responsible for holding municipal employees with policing powers accountable for providing “equal protection under the law” – and for creating mechanisms to reinforce and demonstrate that commitment. In practice, local elected officials have frequently relegated these responsibilities to law enforcement executives and internal law enforcement procedures. Over time, city residents and leaders have consistently pointed out the flaws and shortcomings of existing accountability mechanisms and recommended a complete overhaul, particularly since 2020.

Incidents of misconduct, particularly those that involve Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and residents in neighborhoods of historic divestment, along with inadequate accountability mechanisms, raise questions about unequal protection of the law, and significantly erode the trust residents put in municipal government and law enforcement. Increased accountability and oversight of law enforcement improves police legitimacy, which can help to reduce crime by increasing the likelihood community members cooperate with police in addressing crime. It can also improve residents’ confidence in city government overall, given that police often serve as the most visible representatives of government in many neighborhoods.

“Just buying body cameras does not increase accountability, because often times it just records officers’ bad behavior and does not actually change it. Systems have to be put in place in the police department to have various levels of review and accountability. Body cameras are a part of that, but far from the answer.”

LEE DOUGLAS, Chief of Police, Newark, NJ

EMBRACE ACCOUNTABILITY

To increase trust and improve the relationship between all members of the community and local law enforcement, city leaders must address several key areas that fulfill their ultimate responsibility for public safety and well-being. This involves updating the structures for setting, publicizing, and evaluating progress of public safety and the related mechanisms for allocating resources to achieve outlined goals.

Exercising oversight to achieve accountability means evaluating and re-formulating investigative, standard-setting, and disciplinary processes within the executive branch, city council, and independent civilian review bodies where such exist. It also means working with labor unions to bring the next round of contracts reached through collective bargaining into conformance with accountability-driven oversight and updated public safety and well-being goals.

A PATH TOWARD SAFE AND EQUITABLE CITIES

NLC Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report, October 2021
LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP THE PUBLIC SAFE

The federalist system of government embodied in the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives the states the power of policing to establish and enforce laws protecting the public’s welfare, safety, and health. As a political subdivision of a state, municipalities have varying degrees of authority to govern policing services. Local governments are responsible for establishing and enforcing laws to protect, serve, and ensure the safety of their residents. The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution require the states and local governments to provide due process and equal protection, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, when enforcing their laws.

CITY POLICY ACTION ON ACCOUNTABILITY IN 2020

To act upon the need for greater accountability, numerous cities have recently passed or updated a wide range of ordinances and procedures. Key city legislative and regulatory actions have focused on police use of force and weapons; reporting and review of use of force incidents and officer misconduct complaints; officer hiring, recruitment, and training; and use of body camera footage. See the Appendix to this section for a list of sample actions, by category.
CASE STUDIES

Fresno, CA (pop. 537,100) Fresno City College led the creation of a Police Academy Task Force in 2020. This body will recommend curriculum changes concentrating more on community policing, anti-racism, and implicit bias. Currently, cadets go through 1,030 hours of training before graduating from the academy. Of those hours, 664 are mandated from the state Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) program. The rest are Fresno City College requirements. The Task Force could lead to additional hours of training or improved/modified curriculum for the current hours.

Youngstown, OH (pop. 64,783) The Youngstown Police Department has written a new policy to emphasize the Youngstown Police Department’s commitment to fair and bias-free treatment of all people. The department already had multiple rules that prohibited biased policing, but the new policy takes that another step. The effort is part of the certification process through the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board, which works in partnership with the Ohio Department of Public Safety to certify police departments in policing standards.

Four Areas for City Action

SET STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE, NON-BIASED OPERATIONS

Setting standards for effective public safety operations free of bias involves several components. (See also Section 1 recommendations on setting and measuring goals and the Recommendation Two section on resident engagement). Policy options for city leaders to consider include:

- Mandate adherence to nationwide standards for policies and training, for instance by requiring accreditation through a body such as The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). CALEA has operated since 1979 as a joint credentialing authority of law enforcement’s major executive associations.
- Establish standards and policies confirming law enforcement’s commitment to unbiased policing, processes for police-community racial reconciliation, and implementing effective racial bias training.
- Set goals for diversity in recruitment and hiring.
PROVIDE READY ACCESS TO RACIALLY DISAGREGGED DATA

In this digital age – and to maximize government transparency, racial equity, and opportunities for civic engagement – it’s a high priority to make public safety data readily available for residents. To help identify possible profiling or bias in the pattern of enforcement and conduct, cities need to such data available disaggregated by demographics (race, gender, and ethnicity) as well as by neighborhood or precinct. In addition to enforcement data, local governments should also look to disaggregate all data about interactions with the public, including interactions with persons experiencing homelessness or behavioral health crises, to understand the challenges communities face as well as how interactions resolve. More than 140 agencies participate in the Police Data Initiative of the National Police Foundation, providing a substantial experience base with open data.

Key areas for city action include:

- Establishing accessible, regularly updated “go to” sources for data online, such as dashboards;
- Displaying disaggregated data relevant to the ways that residents commonly interact with law enforcement and public safety programs, such as traffic stops, citations, arrests, behavioral health incidents, substance use, truancy, calls for service, and response times on calls for service; and
- Displaying data regarding use of force incidents and civilian complaints.

CASE STUDY

Chattanooga, TN (pop. 179,690) The Chattanooga police department has established a mechanism to track crimes and arrests by creating a Policing and Racial Equity Dashboard. The dashboard displays closed investigations, as well as citations, arrests, use of force, and citizen complaints by race from the last two and a half years. The dashboard shows some disparities. Black, indigenous, and other people of color in Chattanooga have a higher probability of being arrested than white residents, but the number of non-arrest citations issued is almost proportionate to the population.

CASE STUDY

Columbus, OH (pop. 878,553) In 2021, the City of Columbus invited the Department of Justice to review the Columbus Division of Police and provide assistance. “This is an important day for the future of policing in Columbus,” said Mayor Andrew J. Ginther in announcing the invitation. “This is not about one particular officer, policy, or incident; rather, this is about reforming the entire institution of policing in Columbus. I am confident in the partnership and the additional tools the DOJ’s COPS Office will bring to our city.”

THE COPS OFFICE AS A SOURCE OF SUPPORT

The US Department of Justice Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office maintains the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) to help local law enforcement agencies address concerns. CRI-TAC provides agencies with expert and peer advice on a host of issues, including training, use of force, recruitment and retention, officer safety and wellness, analysis, de-escalation, crises intervention and violent crime reduction. CRI-TAC is a federally funded program offered at no-cost to the law enforcement agency.
ENFORCE ACCOUNTABILITY-DRIVEN OVERSIGHT – INCLUDING IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

In many cities, collective bargaining agreements with public safety employees set significant parameters on matters of accountability, oversight, and transparency. For city leaders, approaching the next and future rounds of collective bargaining with the intent to reimagine public safety accountability can result in a shift in those parameters as well as procedures and structures. Areas for attention include:

- Shifting the locus of responsibility for discipline and termination, to ensure that this falls squarely within the scope of city administration. For instance, Washington, DC (pop. 692,683) recently passed an ordinance that requires all matters on the discipline of sworn law enforcement personnel to be retained by management and not be negotiable in collective bargaining agreements.
- Reconfiguring internal procedures for handling misconduct. As an example, in a July 2020 move that affected nearly 10% of the city’s sworn officers, the Chicago, IL (pop. 2.7 million) City Council approved changes to police supervisors’ contracts that would allow anonymous misconduct allegations against high-ranking police officials.

“There are a lot of police unions that are listening and want to be on the right side of history. They cannot continue to resist every single call for accountability.”

RON DELORD, Labor Consultant

ESTABLISH OR FURTHER EMPOWER CIVILIAN-LED OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS

In addition to attending to procedures and practices for handling issues and complaints within city government agencies and departments, enlisting residents for direct roles in oversight represents an important option for cities. Two complementary structural options are worth considering:

A NEW OR REPURPOSED OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY.

CASE STUDIES

Seattle, WA (pop. 753,675) The Office of Police Accountability has authority over allegations of misconduct involving Seattle Police Department (SPD) employees relating to SPD policy and federal, state, and local law. OPA investigates complaints and recommends findings to the Chief of Police. OPA is led by a civilian director and supervisors, while its investigations are carried out by a mix of SPD sergeants and civilian investigators.

Grand Rapids, MI (pop. 198,401) The Office of Oversight and Public Accountability, created in August 2019, serves as the liaison between public safety departments and the community. OPA works to create mutual trust and respect between public safety departments and the community they serve.
FULLY INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT BODIES, SUCH AS CIVILIAN REVIEW BOARDS

The key national membership organization in this field describes four basic models: review-focused; investigation-focused; auditor/monitor focused; and hybrid.

CASE STUDIES

Chicago, IL (pop. 2.7 million) The Chicago City Council, through an ordinance, established the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) to replace the Independent Police Review Authority as the civilian oversight agency of the Chicago Police Department. The mission of COPA is to:

- provide a just and efficient means to fairly and timely conduct investigations within its jurisdiction;
- determine whether allegations of police misconduct are well-founded;
- identify and address patterns of police misconduct; and
- make policy recommendations to improve the Chicago Police Department, thereby reducing incidents of police misconduct.

As additional examples to consider, the cities of Boston, Houston, and Boise have also established Offices of Police Accountability. Rochester, NY, recently approved the establishment of a Police Accountability Board.

CASE STUDIES

New Orleans, LA (pop. 388,424) The Civilian Review Board in New Orleans operates in conjunction with the Office of the Independent Police Monitor (OIPM), which is an independent, civilian police oversight agency created in August of 2009. A peer review of OIPM by the Police Assessment Resource Center in 2016 found promise in the work of the agency. Additionally, in 2019 a review panel provided a strong rating and suggested additional funding.

Cedar Rapids, IA (pop. 132,301) The City of Cedar Rapids worked closely with Advocates for Social Justice to develop recommendations that were then folded into an ordinance. The recently appointed Citizen Review Board has the ability to review data, make recommendations, and link to the community and other reform-oriented authorities.

Madison, WI (pop. 254,977) Madison recently implemented a civilian oversight model that allows for increased community involvement and additional elements designed to make the model more proactive. This includes the addition of an independent monitor with the authority to review and analyze data as well as make policy recommendations. The monitor can request further review of misconduct investigations or initiate its own independent investigation.
**The State Legislative Context for Accountability and Oversight**

In parallel with extensive accountability actions at the city level, state legislatures took a proactive role in public safety accountability and oversight during legislative sessions in 2020 and 2021. Indeed, since May 2020, 47 states have passed 348 laws on policing reform. The National Council of State Legislatures’ (NCSL) policing database has tracked more than 3,000 bills in state legislatures across the nation on topics ranging from use of force, mandatory body cameras, training, investigations and discipline, police officer well-being, and policing alternatives.

States enacted laws that addressed use-of-force standards, legal duties and liabilities of law enforcement officers, certification requirements of law enforcement officers and agencies, oversight, use-of-force investigation, qualified immunity, decertification of officers, collective bargaining, training requirements, use of force data collections requirements, traffic stop data collections, and changes to police bill of rights laws. Several states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Mexico, have banned or limited qualified immunity as part of their police reforms. In New Mexico, Rep. Georgene Louis (D) led the effort to pass the New Mexico Civil Rights Act, which bans qualified immunity and allows citizens to sue in state court over civil rights violations.

Importantly, such laws at minimum set a framework, and at times require or proscribe accountability actions by cities – including the scope of city-initiated offices of accountability and oversight. City leaders need a mechanism to stay current on the implications of state statutes for local accountability and oversight, and to flag times to get involved in advocacy to ensure alignment between state requirements and local desires. Going forward, the legislative tracking and advocacy provided by the 49 state municipal leagues provides an essential resource for cities.

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**CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT AT ITS BEST**

The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) recommends that independent oversight bodies have several characteristics. They should be proactive, independent, community-driven, empowered with subpoena power and final decision-making authority for discipline, transparent, financially, and operationally sound, adaptable, and individualized to local goals. According to NACOLE, localities should provide these bodies with subpoena power to compel the production of documents and witnesses, allowing them to investigate, gather, analyze, and review information, produce public reports, and make informed recommendations related to policing issues of significant public interest. Localities should also be able to empower these bodies to make the final decisions on disciplining officers, adjudicating use of force, recruiting practices, and creating policies.

“Civilian oversight gives a voice to community members, bringing transparency to a traditionally opaque process, and works to build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.”

SUSAN HUTSON, Board President, The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement
The Council on Criminal Justice Task Force on Policing, in partnership with the Crime Lab at the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy, has to date conducted 16 assessments of proposed policing reforms. Each policy assessment provides an overview of the state and extent of the evidence on each topic and the expected impact of each reform on public safety, misuse of force, police-community relations, racial disparities, and officer safety.
Seek Guidance and Support

NLC RPS TF RECOMMENDATION FIVE

SEEK GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FROM PEERS AND EXPERTS WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF NLC

Beginning and pursuing a local effort to transform a city’s approach to achieving public safety represents a daunting and often thankless task for any leader. This is especially true as cities also seek to recover and rebuild from the pandemic and address multiple challenges requiring elected officials’ attention.

As part of the local decision-making process, the health and well-being of local elected leaders should also be prioritized. NLC has a strong commitment to protecting the well-being of city leaders, in part through providing structured and informal connections to peers and quick access to policy expertise and the most promising practices.

In this light, city leaders undertaking the steps described in the first four recommendations can count on NLC, as well as partners such as Vera Institute of Justice, Urban Institute, Cities United and John Jay College of Criminal Justice for support.

A Path Toward Safe and Equitable Cities
NLC Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report, October 2021

OVERVIEW

Elected officials face many challenges and opportunities in their roles every day. The year 2020 brought on the unexpected additional challenge of a global pandemic, alongside reinvigorated demands to transform systems of public safety. The weight of these compounding issues rests heavily on local leaders and their communities. For elected officials in municipalities to serve their constituents most effectively, they themselves must practice self-care as well as seeking out resources and support for the work ahead. Leaders can take strength from the knowledge that they are not alone. The conversations of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force reinforced the need for elected officials to have access to peer and expert support, particularly in efforts to make transformational change with the full participation of communities of color and neighborhoods of historic divestment. The work is difficult and complex, and leaders have access to a wide range of support and information to do it well.

The National League of Cities’ centers, constituency groups, technical assistance projects, and federal advocacy efforts provide many and varied spaces for local elected officials and their teams to find resources, camaraderie, and support. In particular, the Justice Initiatives team within the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, and the Public Safety and Crime Prevention Federal Advocacy Committee provide ongoing venues for learning and discussion. Building upon the 2021 Task Force Recommendations and Toolkit, NLC will continue to provide resources on its Reimagining Public Safety web page.
Reimagining Public Safety Resources Available from Key Partners

In order to facilitate city leaders’ access to thought leadership and additional resources, NLC recruited several partner organizations to inform the Task Force process – and recommends all four of those organizations as expert sources of support and guidance going forward. Each has areas of specialization and substantial resources for cities to consult; these partners may also make technical assistance available to cohorts of cities or generate new tools and resources. This section outlines each organization and some of its capacity to support cities and towns.

Cities United (CU) aims to build and support safe, healthy and hopeful communities for young Black men and boys and their families. CU supports a national network of mayors who have committed to reducing the epidemic of homicide and shootings among young Black men and boys between the ages of 14 and 24 by 50%. In addition, CU consistently uplifts, centers, and amplifies the voices of young leaders and community organizations and activists.

CU supports its national network through dynamic programming that includes:

- Roadmap Academy - a week-long immersion for teams from partner cities to support building out their comprehensive public safety roadmap;
- Youth Leader Fellowship - an intensive six-month experience designed for 18-24-year-old young leaders in CU partner cities; and
- Reimagining Peace Challenge - a project focused on increasing the number of cities implementing community homicide and shooting response strategies.

Several CU resources provide relevant content and context for local leaders:

- **Reimagining Public Safety: Moving to Safe, Healthy & Hopeful Communities** (2020)
- **A Strategic Resource for Mayors on Disrupting Community Violence and Preventing Homicides** (2018)
- **Roadmap to Safe, Healthy & Hopeful Communities** (2017)
- **A Strategic Resource for Mayors on Police-Involved Shootings & In-Custody Deaths** (2017)
- **Interventions for Reducing Violence and its Consequences for Young Black Males in America** (2017)

John Jay College of Criminal Justice: John Jay is a majority-minority institution of higher education that reflects the diversity of voices that must be heard in reimagining public safety. John Jay educates the future leaders for justice, safety, and peace — whether they go on to run advocacy campaigns, wear a uniform, serve their communities, conduct research to evaluate policy or uncover bias, or all of these. As a research institution, John Jay has an internationally recognized reputation and decades of experience working with law enforcement to design, implement, evaluate, and assess criminal justice reforms. Under the leadership of President Karol Mason, who brings a track record from the Justice Department of designing and implementing initiatives to build community trust with law enforcement, John Jay has continued to expand longstanding institutional partnerships with advocates, community leaders, and police chiefs across the country. John Jay has a number of centers and projects that can support municipal leaders in their work to re-imagine public safety:

- **The Future of Public Safety Report**
- **National Network for Safe Communities**
- **Institute for Justice and Opportunity**
- **Data Collaborative for Justice**
- **From Punishment to Public Health**
**Urban Institute**: The Urban Institute is a nonprofit research organization whose mission is to open minds, shape decisions and help craft solutions through economic and social policy research. Much of Urban’s research and policy work specific to public safety takes place through the Justice Policy Center, which promotes justice, dignity and well-being for all through research, evaluation and policy analysis. The Institute’s State and Local Finance Initiative conducts complementary inquiry into public safety finance and budgeting. Additional Institute research, development of data-driven recommendations and training, and technical assistance touches on issues of relevance throughout the Toolkit, including housing, health, education, and the social safety net. Specific current projects and resources within the Urban Institute that can support local leaders in their efforts to reimagine public safety include:

- Boosting Upward Mobility from Poverty
- National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership
- Racial Equity Analytics Lab

Publications:
- Federal Investment in Community-Driven Public Safety
- Promoting a New Direction for Youth Justice
- A Guide to Community Strategies for Improving Emerging Adults’ Safety and Well-Being
- Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative

Using Medicaid to Connect Justice-Involved People to Coverage and Care
- Medicaid Areas of Flexibility to Provide Coverage and Care to Justice-Involved Populations
- Connecting Criminal Justice with Health Care
- Criminal Justice Expenditures: Police, Corrections, and Courts
- Youth gun and gang/group violence practice guide (forthcoming)

**Vera Institute of Justice** is powered by hundreds of advocates, researchers, and activists working to transform the criminal legal and immigration systems until they’re fair for all. Vera’s mission is to end the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty. The team at Vera has four strategic priorities:

- End the criminalization of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty
- Drastically reduce the use of jails, prisons, and detention centers
- Center dignity and minimize the harms of criminal legal and immigration system involvement
- Support safe and thriving communities with comprehensive strategies that ensure accountability and are rooted in public health

Vera encourages city leaders and staff to explore its projects and research, particularly in the topic areas highlighted in this list:

- Community Violence Intervention Programs, Explained
- How to Use Budgets to understand Criminal Justice Fines and Fees
- Investing in Evidence-Based Alternatives to Policing
- Arrest Trends Live Resource
- What Jails Cost: A Look at Spending in America’s Large Cities
- How the American Rescue Plan Can Foster an Equitable Recovery
- Out of Sight: The Growth of Jails in Rural America

**Urban Institute** is a nonprofit research organization whose mission is to open minds, shape decisions and help craft solutions through public safety finance and budgeting. Additional Institute research, development of data-driven recommendations and training, and technical assistance touches on issues of relevance throughout the Toolkit, including housing, health, education, and the social safety net. Specific current projects and resources within the Urban Institute that can support local leaders in their efforts to reimagine public safety include:

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- Federal Investment in Community-Driven Public Safety
- Promoting a New Direction for Youth Justice
- A Guide to Community Strategies for Improving Emerging Adults’ Safety and Well-Being
- Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative

Using Medicaid to Connect Justice-Involved People to Coverage and Care
- Medicaid Areas of Flexibility to Provide Coverage and Care to Justice-Involved Populations
- Connecting Criminal Justice with Health Care
- Criminal Justice Expenditures: Police, Corrections, and Courts
- Youth gun and gang/group violence practice guide (forthcoming)
Appendix: City Policy Action On Oversight And Accountability, 2020–21

A POINT-IN-TIME SNAPSHOT AS OF SEPTEMBER 2021

BANNING CHOKEHOLDS
Cities of Birmingham, AL, Dallas, TX, Denver, CO, Detroit, MI, Houston, TX, Omaha, NE, Philadelphia, PA, Raleigh, NC, San Diego, Seattle, WA, Tampa, FL, and Washington, DC

BANNING NO-KNOCK WARRANTS
Houston, TX and Louisville, KY (The Louisville Metro Council voted unanimously to pass ban Breonna’s Law, which banned no-knock warrants.)

REQUIRING OFFICERS TO INTERVENE WHEN THERE IS UNREASONABLE USE OF FORCE
Atlanta, GA, Baltimore, MD, Birmingham, AL, Dallas, TX, Detroit, MI, Omaha, NE, Tampa, FL, and Wichita, KS

REQUIRING REPORTING OF USE OF FORCE OR DEADLY USE OF FORCE INCIDENTS
Atlanta, GA, Denver, CO (requires officers to report any instances of pointing a gun at a person), Detroit, MI, El Paso, TX, and New York, NY (NYPD will publish all trial decisions or settlements reached going forward, effective immediately.)

LIMITING THE USE OF RIOT CONTROL WEAPONS
Austin, TX (prohibits the use of weapons like rubber bullets, bean bag rounds, tear gas, and pepper spray during protests), Kansas City, MO, Portland, OR, Seattle, WA, and Washington, DC

REQUIRING FATAL USE OF FORCE CASES TO BE REVIEWED BY AN OUTSIDE AGENCY
Columbus, OH (requires all fatal use of force cases and cases of death in police custody to be referred to the Ohio Attorney General’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation), Kansas City, MO, Sacramento, CA, San Jose, CA, and Tampa, FL (requires Florida Department of Law Enforcement to investigate all police-involved shootings)

BANNING HIGH-SPEED POLICE CHASES OR POLICE SHOOTING AT MOVING VEHICLES
Norfolk, VA (high-speed police chases are banned in all cases except those involving felonies that have resulted in serious injury or death) and Raleigh, NC (officers are prohibited from shooting at moving vehicles)

REQUIRING OFFICER TRAINING ON DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES
Atlanta, GA, Baltimore, MD, Detroit, MI, Houston, TX, Louisville, KY, Milwaukee, WI, Oklahoma, OK, and Raleigh, NC

REQUIRING TRAINING ON IMPLICIT BIAS
Baltimore, MD, and Louisville, KY

REVISING POLICIES ON WHEN OFFICERS USE BODY CAMERAS
Atlanta, GA, Denver, CO (body cameras are required to be recording when executing tactical operations), Louisville, KY (requires police officers to wear and use body cameras while executing search warrants), Seattle, WA (requires officers to activate body cameras during protests and demonstrations), and Washington, DC

ESTABLISHING OR REVISING POLICIES ON WHEN POLICE DEPARTMENTS RELEASE OF BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE
Atlanta, GA, Dallas, TX, and New York City, NY (NY Police Department is required to release all video and audio footage taken by police body cameras within 30 days in the following circumstance: officer discharges a firearm that hits or could hit someone; officer discharges a taser in a way that results in death or substantial bodily harm; or officer’s use of force results in death or great bodily harm.)
Acknowledgements and Toolkit Details

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INCREASING TRANSPARENCY ON OFFICER MISCONDUCT COMPLAINTS

Baltimore, MD (building public dashboards displaying data on the number and disposition of complaints against police officers, instances of uses of force, and traffic stop data broken down by race), and New York City, NY (The NYPD will make comprehensive disciplinary records fully transparent online.)

REVIEWING HIRING AND RECRUITMENT PRACTICES FOR OFFICERS

Baltimore, MD (hire an independent third-party organization to conduct a comprehensive review of hiring and recruitment practices, including a review of data for discriminatory impacts or practices in our testing and background investigations), Louisville, KY, San Francisco, CA, San Jose, CA, and Washington, DC (banned the hiring of officers with previous misconduct on the job.)

REVISING DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Dallas, TX (requires monthly reporting of officer contact data on all traffic stops and citations), and El Paso, TX (requires police department “to provide reports on racial profiling to encourage the elimination of racial disparities in arrests and other law enforcement actions”)

ESTABLISHING OFFICER RISK ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Dallas, TX (identify officers who might require more training), and San Francisco, CA (screen officers for indicators of bias and strengthen the SFPD’s Early Intervention System for the use of force violations)

IMPROVING WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS

Kansas City, MO (requires whistleblowers seeing misconduct within Kansas City Police Department to have a codified process through which they can report complaints about officers to the Office of Community Complaints and the Board of Police Commissioners)
City efforts to support effective return from jails and prisons—the process known as reentry—exist in a complex landscape shaped by direct service and coordination. Based on a landscape analysis, NLC offers several recommendations about next steps and new directions that cities can take to leverage additional partners, resources and achieve greater impact. Understanding the reentry landscape is the first step in developing effective programming and ultimately eliminating the over reliance on the criminal justice system.

Definition of Returning Citizen: the term ‘returning citizen’ replaces the stigmatized terms ‘ex-con’, ‘ex-felon’, etc., and refers to an individual who is returning home after being in prison or jail.

Acknowledgement: Andrew Moore, Kirby Gaherty, Tyrone Walker and representatives from reentry offices across the country provided insight and expertise in crafting this report.
The Challenge & Promise of Reentry

Almost 600,000 people return home from state and federal prisons yearly—that’s 10,000 residents returning to municipalities weekly. Nine million cycle through local jails, most for less than a month. In the face of these numbers, many jurisdictions across the country lack the capacity or services to ensure that returning citizens are positioned to make a successful transition back to their communities. These shortcomings are exacerbated when a jurisdiction bears more of the brunt than their neighbors. For example, 50% of all people released from Illinois state prisons return to Chicago.

Over two thirds of people released from incarceration are arrested within three years and almost half are re-incarcerated. By contrast, viewed through a local level public safety lens, strong reentry programs lead to reduced crime, reduced victimization, reduced strain on municipal budgets, and stronger communities and families.

In order to support returning citizens in their reintegration—cities, counties, states and the federal government have developed policy and devoted resources to address complex reentry issues. Cities, often using state and federal grants, have sought to build coordinating and direct service capacity. However, reentry programs fall into a policy gap with no clear designated level or responsible government agency. This leads to service fragmentation and lack of resources, likely contributing to the high rate of recidivism which in turn drains local taxpayer dollars and further destabilizes communities.

Federal Investments

The US Department of Labor, under both the Trump and Biden administrations, has awarded over $175.5 million in grants over the last two years to improve the employment outcomes for returning residents. Most of these funds are directed to nonprofit service provider organizations and intermediaries and only rarely to city government. Whereas grantees operate in some 45 cities, the degree of coordination or involvement with municipalities is difficult to trace.

- Forty-two organizations that provide reentry services received funding from the Pathway Home grant which also support their efforts to provide training, education, case management, needs assessment, legal assistance and other services.

- Twelve organizations received awards under the Young Adult Reentry Partnership grant (YARP). These grants aid organizations in establishing relationships with community colleges in order to partner with young adults ages 18-24 who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. The funds will also help in developing educational programs and apprenticeships that focus on growing fields such as energy, IT, and healthcare.

The rollout of $65.1 billion in local funding through the American Rescue Plan (ARP)—and President Biden’s summer 2021 announcement of the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) initiative—points to opportunities extending from 2021-24 to invest ARP funds to develop and strengthen reentry efforts. As a learning laboratory worth watching, the Administration has convened 15 jurisdictions that have already committed to using a portion of their ARP funds towards CVI initiatives.
Landscape Scan, Findings, and Recommendations for the Field

The NLC YEF Institute undertook a nationwide scan of the city reentry landscape over a six-month period in 2021. The principal methods consisted of internet research supplemented with virtual interviews and emails. Understanding the reentry landscape is the first step in developing effective programming and ultimately eliminating the over reliance on the criminal justice system.

Key findings of the scan regarding scale, scope, and emphasis of city efforts included identification of over 30 reentry offices or programs playing a variety of roles across the four categories listed below, and as displayed in the chart in the appendix.

City Approaches To Reentry

The landscape scan found that city approaches to supporting reentry fall into four categories:

1. Direct – the city reentry office manages all services provided to the client
2. Indirect – the city provides referrals, directing clients to services that are provided by private and non-profit organizations
3. Combination of direct and indirect – city office provides some services in house and refers clients to others
4. Hub – the city acts as an umbrella, coordinating city agencies and community organizations. Here the goal is to combine resources and increase efficiency by having all city, private, and non-profits work together

The landscape scan also identified seven key emerging opportunities for the city reentry field. These include:

- Improving expungement and other record sealing efforts.
- Connecting returning citizens to university-based credentialing and professional development programs.
- Focusing efforts, to a greater degree, on young adults ages 18-25.
- Closing service and “handoff” gaps and similar measures to improve strategic coordination of the nonprofit-led efforts that dominate the field. Cities can take advantage of the infrastructure and network created by the organizations currently in the reentry space and submit joint applications for federal funding that emphasize coordinating or other roles.
- Including returning citizens in planning and implementation of services and coordinating efforts.
- Creating more cross-program and cross-agency collaboration with corrections, probation, sheriffs, jails, and the courts, to ensure that reentry supports begin “behind the wall” and to minimize re-arrest and re-incarceration, particularly for technical and process violations.
- Collaborate with business leaders and other city agencies to identify housing, employment, and pathways to other opportunities.

The landscape scan also produced two other findings, stated here as recommendations:

- Cities and their reentry offices should pursue options to improve operations, demonstrate their impact, and describe their cost-effectiveness by placing a greater emphasis on tracking and sharing results. In addition, the reentry field needs concerted investment in evaluation and replicability of promising practices, to understand more deeply what works best.
- City reentry offices should consider joining cross-city efforts to heighten visibility, momentum, and connections across the field. They can do so by forming and participating actively in a national network of city reentry offices focused on sharing high-quality practices and policies, informed by persons with lived experience.

Hierarchy of Reentry Needs

**BASIC/IMMEDIATE**
- Employment, Housing,
- Physical & Mental Health Services, Social Services,
- Food & Clothing Assistance,
- Transportation

**SUPPLEMENTAL**
- Legal Assistance, Education,
- ID and other Documents,
- Fines & Fees Assistance,
- Child Care

**TERTIARY**
- Financial Literacy, Tech Training, Gender ID services
Promising Examples of Local Leadership for Reentry

San Francisco, CA (pop. 874,000) Takes A Therapeutic Approach Based on Evidence: Some municipalities have drawn upon an evaluation of promising practices to make changes to their reentry approach. San Francisco’s Community Assessment & Services Center (CASC) reflects this evidence and behavioral science-based approach in a therapeutic program. As a strategic way of coordinating multiple services, the city’s Adult Probation Department teamed up with an array of community partners to provide comprehensive reentry support through CASC. The center operates as a one-stop shop in which services put returning citizens on a pathway to self-sufficiency. In addition to transitional housing and vocational training opportunities, clients have access to numerous services including peer mentoring, one-on-one therapy, parenting and life skills, and a wide range of clinical support and case management services.

Albuquerque, NM (pop. 564,000) Uses A Center-Based Approach: In Albuquerque, the Resource Reentry Center (RRC), which operates as a program of Bernalillo County’s Metropolitan Detention Center, reflects a reassessment and transformation undertaken in 2015. Prior to that, people released were dropped off at a random street corner with no resources or assistance. That changed after administrators attended a conference where they were introduced to behavioral health and other alternative treatments geared towards developing safer communities. The RRC now partners with local hospitals, science centers, and research institutes and implements programming based on evidence-based best practices in behavioral health care. The center is open 24 hours a day and ready to provide access to housing, employment, and health services for approximately 20,000 individuals.

New Orleans, LA (pop. 390,000) and its Triage Task Force: In 2017, New Orleans took a very unique approach to enhancing its reentry program. In preparation for the release of hundreds of inmates expected to return to the city as part of Louisiana’s Justice Reinvestment Reforms, the probation office created a ‘triage’ unit. The city later deemed the value of the services provided as essential. With time, the triage unit evolved into a permanent task force where the city serves as an umbrella to coordinate more than 60 non-profit and city agencies that have volunteered to donate manpower to manage the reentry process. This reconstructed system has come with no impact on the municipal budget. Citizens returning to New Orleans need to only go to one office to have all their needs assessed and then be connected to public and private agencies that provide specific services.

Philadelphia, PA (pop. 1.6 million) Office of Reentry Partnerships: Prior to 2019, Philadelphia’s reentry office provided direct services to its clients. As part of the Kenney Administration’s goals for criminal justice reform and violence prevention, the city switched to a hub role and created the Office of Reentry Partnerships (ORP). The ORP coordinates efforts involving city government agencies and more than one hundred training, education, service, and community partners. As part of its mission the ORP states that it seeks to ensure that initiatives are research and data driven.

Other cities that have efforts underway to prioritize reentry include New York, Boston, and Baltimore.
Emerging Reentry Partnership Opportunities For Cities

Building upon several of the most promising trends and developments in reentry, city leaders have opportunities to expand their range of partnerships for greater effectiveness. Institutions of higher education, jail and corrections administrators, judges and prosecutors, nonprofit direct-service organizations and intermediaries, as well as returning citizens themselves are among the groups of partners with which cities can engage more deeply. In addition, adopting a focus on young adults, and developing programming and support for this group – whose data show get arrested and jailed at twice their incidence in the general population-- can pay off in the long term.

Build upon and coordinate with nonprofit leadership in the reentry field

A close look at reentry supports and services in most cities will find nonprofit and faith-based organizations in leading roles. Indeed, given the policy ownership gap referenced above, if not for the efforts of nonprofits, in many cities returning residents would have nowhere to turn for resources. Local leaders seeking to get the city more involved in reentry should seek to understand the roles and contributions of nonprofits, in parallel with a current analysis of the role of city agencies and resources.

Other key steps involve exploring ways that the city can leverage and build upon momentum in the nonprofit sector, including by leading an effort to set goals and objectives, and playing an expanded leadership role in coordination. Several of the examples in this brief demonstrate the nonprofit leadership in the field and may suggest opportunities for greater city involvement.

Approach Institutions of higher education as partners for reentry

One of the most promising opportunities for cities to engage with partners who can broaden the services and support available at reentry, and improve long-term life outcomes, involves institutions of higher education. In many locations, colleges and universities provide postsecondary educational opportunities in prisons -- even offering programs that lead to degrees. In recent years, colleges and universities have also charted out roles in reentry. In addition to offering education, workforce development, physical and mental health services, housing, and food assistance to returning citizens, these programs present participants with opportunities to build a strong professional network that otherwise would not be accessible, leading to increased economic opportunities. City leaders can fold colleges and universities into broader efforts to coordinate and expand reentry services.

Washington, DC – Georgetown University Pivot Program: As an extension of its Prison Justice Initiative (PJI), Georgetown University assembled the first cohort of its Pivot Program in 2018. Pivot provides a full-time, ten-month program that combines academics, entrepreneurship courses, internships, and other reentry programming. Georgetown’s principal partner is the District’s Department of Employee Services which provides funding as well as workforce development training.

Recognizing that more than 5,000 residents return to the District each year with less than half finding gainful employment, earlier this year Georgetown expanded outreach by hiring Tyrone Walker as its first director of Reentry Services. Walker, a former Prison Scholar and Pivot Fellow, will lead PJI’s efforts to provide direct support to D.C. residents navigating reentry.

“It is important that we care for the whole person by connecting our students with resources while they are incarcerated and helping them with their transition when they are released. Returning citizens face so many challenges during the reentry process and we want to make sure they have the information and guidance to succeed.”

TYRONE WALKER, Director of Reentry Services, Georgetown Pivot

John Jay College Prisoner Reentry Institute, New York City, NY: Building on the precept that “successful reentry begins on the first day of incarceration,” John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s Prisoner Reentry Institute initiated its college-in-prison reentry program. John Jay provides education and reentry services to incarcerated people while receiving technical assistance from the City Manhattan DA’s Office. The program operates as a collaborative effort of several entities, including state government, the City University of New York college system, the department of corrections, and the district attorney’s office.

Eastern Michigan University Returning Citizens Fellows Program, Ypsilanti, MI: A recent entrant into the reentry realm, Eastern Michigan University launched its Returning Citizens Fellows Program (RCF) at the beginning of 2021. In conjunction with the Michigan Department of Corrections Offender Success program, and A Brighter Way, a local non-profit organization, RCF focuses on removing barriers to a college education for returning citizens.

Once admitted, fellows must maintain a 2.5 grade point average and in return they receive free tuition, technology training, mentorship, success coaching, and employment support. The first group had the extra challenge of taking classes virtually; however, the administration plans to meet in person with subsequent cohorts.

California State University Project Rebound, multiple locations: The California State University (CSU) system Project Rebound is another program that supports the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated people. What stands out here is that it operates in 14 cities on the state college’s campuses, and that CSU is the first higher education institution in the nation to provide housing for its returning citizen students. At the Irvin house formerly incarcerated students receive academic, employment, and other holistic services. CSU’s Project Rebound boasts a 0% recidivism rate compared to 50% for all returning citizens in California.

These are just a few of the higher education institutions across the country providing academic opportunities along with key services and support for returning residents to upgrade credentials and otherwise take steps to rejoin the labor market. While post-incarceration data is scarce, there is a direct correlation between education and recidivism. According to Vera Institute of Justice, citizens who took adult education courses while incarcerated are half as likely...
to return to jail/prison. With Congress reinstating Pell Grants in prisons last year and the passage of the FAFSA Simplification ACT, hundreds of thousands of confined citizens are now eligible to take college courses.

Coordinate Structures so that Reentry Truly Begins before Release

To ensure that the statement that “reentry begins on the first day of incarceration” holds true, city leaders can partner with a range of city, county, and state agencies and officials such as sheriffs, jail administrators, corrections departments and facilities, probation departments, prosecutors, public defenders, and the courts. To work effectively within this extended view of the reentry process, cities need actionable information such as the number of returning citizens to expect and when, as well as distinguishing factors such as length of stay and conditions of release. In addition, for truly well-supported transitions to occur, cities must understand the range of needs of returning citizens across the hierarchy. Whether a city directly takes on a coordinating role or seeks to set up local organizations for reentry success (or both), city leaders can utilize such information to right-size services and resource allocations and pass along information to partners.

Best Practices For Reentry

In 2017 the U.S. Department of Justice proposed five best practices for reentry

- Once incarcerated, people should be provided with an individualized plan for reentry based upon their risk of recidivism and their needs.
- During incarceration, people should be provided services that assist with mental health, substance use, education, employment, life skills, and other programming that targets criminogenic needs to increase their likelihood of success once released.
- Incarcerated people should be provided with the opportunity, as well as the resources, needed to maintain and strengthen family relationships and other social support before release.
- During the transition back into the community, returning persons should have access to halfway houses or supervised release programs that provide individualized continuity of care before and after release.
- Comprehensive reentry information and resources should be provided to people before leaving custody.

WHY FOCUS ON YOUNG ADULTS?

The NLC Young Adult Justice Advisory Board and Community of Practice informed the development of this continuum to describe the range of approaches for adapting justice systems and responses to the developmental needs of young adults, ages 18-25. The continuum illustrates multiple options to prevent system involvement, and to position systems and reentry efforts in ways that are developmentally appropriate. The nationwide movement for a new approach to young adult justice stems from neuroscience findings indicating that brain development extends beyond the teen years up to age 25. In particular, executive function—decision-making with a full appreciation of consequences—is slow to develop. Nevertheless, state laws generally consider adulthood to begin at 17 or 18 years old.
Expand Supports for the Reentry of Young Adults

Neuroscience indicates that brain development extends beyond the teen years up to age 25. In other words, young adult brains do not reach full maturity until the mid 20s. However, state laws generally define adulthood as starting at 17 or 18 years old with many prosecutors seeking to charge much younger teenagers and children as adults. Juvenile jurisdiction is a front-end issue on the continuum and impacts reentry. When released, these young people who have spent their formative years behind bars, emerge into a system where justice impacted juveniles receive wrap around support. Many adult returning citizens have skills, education, and/or life experiences that assist them in the transition back to society. However, emerging adults often lack the credentials, skills and supports that are needed to help than transition from jail or prison.

While some juveniles are incarcerated as teenagers and released as young adults, young men and women ages 18-25 are also arrested at a higher rate than any other age group. High rates of arrest and recidivism for young adults combine to create increased reentry needs for this age group. For instance, the United States Sentencing Commission’s study ‘The Effects of Aging on Recidivism Among Federal Offenders’ found that the 20-24-year-old age group had the highest recidivism rate, and that young adults 21 and younger had a rearrest rate of 67%. Rearrest and recidivism rates declined dramatically as age increased. (See Chart on page 13)

It is important that city leaders account for reentry needs of young adults both as they are released from juvenile systems and from adult systems. The extent and quality of reentry supports for those released from jails and prisons varies widely, creating a need for cities to work with partners to ensure a range of supports and services that include education reengagement, job training and access to jobs, as well as other supports tailored to emerging adult status.

It is promising to see a handful of states address these unique needs of young adults by doing things like raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction. However, we need more efforts across the country at the local level to ensure those who entered the criminal justice system as juveniles as well as those who entered as young adults are not abandoned when they emerge.

Key options for city leaders regarding young adults include:

- Encourage, support, or implement reentry programs that include specialized services for young adults (18-25); and
- Explore and pursue ways to align city services and support with those provided by the local probation agency, for specialized probation/parole.

REARREST RATES FOR RECIDIVISM STUDY OFFENDERS BY AGE AT RELEASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Rearrest Rate (% of 100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger than 21</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 24 Years</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 29 Years</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 34 Years</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 39 Years</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 44 Years</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 49 Years</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 54 Years</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 Years</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 Years</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 Years or Older</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: U.S. Sentencing Commission’s 2005 Recidivism Release Cohort Datafile, RECID05_OFFUPDT. The Commission excluded cases from this analysis that were missing information necessary to perform the analysis.
Local Young Adult Reentry Initiatives

While none of the cities with reentry operations identified through the landscape scan had specific services focused on young adults, several non-profit organizations have provided thought and program leadership – at times in partnership with city governments. Earlier this year Philadelphia's PowerCorpsPHL launched its T.R.U.S.T. pilot program, an initiative for young adult returning residents ages 18-28 that provides opportunities for immediate engagement, income, group work, and community building in preparation for entering work-readiness and job training. After a successful pilot, the T.R.U.S.T. program was renewed and now a permanent part of PowerCorpsPHL’s programming.

In Baltimore, MD and Chelsea, MA, ROCA, inc. took its cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) to the streets, working with 16-24 year old individuals – many of whom are justice involved and specifically those who are impacted by or drivers of urban violence. ROCA identifies and seeks out the highest risk young adults – knocking on their doors to introduce the young people to give ROCA’s life skills, education, and employment programs. The same relentless outreach effort is applied to building relationships with the public systems that these young men and women encounter the most in hopes of building the trust that’s needed to improve interactions between them. The result for participants in Boston is a recidivism rate that is 20% lower than the state average with 95% of young men who completed the two-year program steering clear of re-incarceration. In only its second year, the Baltimore ROCA program is still compiling data but has already seen measurable results in 70% of its participants who practiced CBT.

Create Pathways to Expungement and Full Citizenship

In fulfillment of their roles promoting workforce participation and citizen engagement, city leaders can also collaborate with the judiciary, probation and similar agencies to expunge or seal records related to incarceration and justice system involvement. Research conducted by the Oklahoma Council on Public Affairs shows that expungement and vacating records leads to increased public safety; however, one estimate suggests that only 6% of those eligible complete the expungement process.

Progress in most areas of expungement and record sealing will necessitate coalition-building and advocacy to change state law and policy or develop partnerships. Priorities for city leaders to explore include:

- Implement an automatic expungement process that considers the offense type and the length of time that has passed since sentencing.
- Eliminate hurdles to Jury Duty, Community Review Boards, voting in local elections, running for local office, and applying successfully for local government jobs.
- Remove barriers to public housing.
- Implement procedures and lead a campaign to do away with labels and adopt person-first language when discussing individuals with incarceration histories.
Include returning citizens during planning and implementation

Returning citizens are the experts in the reentry space. Their experiences should drive all practices and policy that is developed in cities, states and on a national level. Some recommendations to do this:

- Utilize lived expertise as a resource in the process of developing policies and practices.
- Leverage credibility in the community.
- Additionally, their expertise plays a role in validating and legitimizing local reentry programs. If returning citizens can vouch for a program’s efficacy— it will be far more successful. Including impacted voices at all levels, hiring returning citizens and implementing their suggestions into the work are all key aspects to success.

RETURNING CITIZENS IN ACTION:

In 2016, JustLeadershipUSA launched the #CLOSErikers campaign, centering the leadership of people harmed by Rikers to demand the closure of the notorious jail complex which sits on a toxic landfill and is a site of cultural violence by jail guards.

In 2019, the New York City Council voted to close Rikers and replace it with four smaller jails. Their hard work has resulted in New York being the most decarcerated city in the country. JustLeadership has a strong voice in various platforms and is a key partner with the MacArthur Foundation’s Safety and Justice Challenge. If deployed within local reentry initiatives, returning citizens could make similarly powerful impacts.

Convene City Agencies and Key Partners to Collaborate for Reentry

Cities should collaborate across agencies and with other key partners to best support the reentry of formerly incarcerated residents and their transition back into society. Among the needs that could be met through such collaboration are housing, employment and health.

HOUSING

Whether planning to live independently, with family, or in supportive housing/shelters, safe and secure housing is a key step for successful reentry. Collaborative efforts, like those highlighted below, with local housing authorities make this process less challenging.

- The Tacoma Housing Authority’s Housing for All proposal includes several recommendations to make public housing more accessible to the formerly incarcerated, including getting rid of some of the automatic denials previously enacted.
- The Housing Authority of New Orleans passed a new policy in March 2021 that eliminates a ban on providing housing assistance to people with criminal records.

EMPLOYMENT

Through partnerships with local workforce boards, direct hiring by city agencies and social enterprises, municipalities can ensure stronger reentry employment options.

- In August 2021, Newport News Public Works began collaborating with the Sheriff’s Office to hire those returning from the local jail and participating in the post-release reentry program.
- Many social enterprise businesses have taken a role to attempt to break the cycle of recidivism. Companies such as Homeboy Recycling, Rubicon Bakery and more center their hiring around providing opportunities for returning citizens. Cities can do a local scan for similar mission-driven companies and look to build referral relationships or establish supportive policy for social enterprises.
Mental, behavioral, and physical health remain important reentry priorities, as untreated conditions can derail reentry. Ensuring your local reentry landscape provides health access is critical.

Based on a focus on health, healing & hope, Transitions Clinics support reentry through access to healthcare. The Clinics hire formerly incarcerated health workers to serve as credible messengers and center addressing health disparities related to incarceration. The clinics can be found in cities across the country.

Where to from here?

Returning citizens face immediate challenges related to employment, housing, mental and physical health and social support. Unfortunately, they often return to under resourced communities with limited options to fulfill their transitional needs. Without assistance, individuals reentering their communities find themselves at an increased risk of recidivism and return to jails. Improving, expanding, and developing best practices for reentry programs is essential in reducing the rate of recidivism and increasing the chances for a successful transition and quality-of-life for formerly incarcerated citizens.

In addition to the practical steps listed above, the local reentry field will benefit from increased attention to developing knowledge about what works and what practices most warrant replicating among cities. City leaders can play important roles through collaborating across agencies and partnering with higher education institutions to commission them for deeper research and evaluation.

To assist with the development and spread of knowledge and strong practices, the National League of Cities Institute for Youth Education and Families Institute will establish a new national network of municipally led reentry offices along with their key partners including local non-profit organizations, returning citizens, colleges and universities, and community thought leaders. The network will provide a means to share promising practices, flatten learning curves, and more effectively utilize existing resources to enhance the quality of life for returning citizens and improve public safety.

Selected Resources and References

Resource Organizations

Council of State Governments Justice Center - Reentry Program works with communities across the country to provide people with the reentry supports they need.

JustLeadershipUSA invests in the advancement of formerly incarcerated leaders working nationwide to decarcerate the U.S.

National Reentry Resource Center is the nation’s primary source of information and guidance in reentry.

US Department of Justice Reentry Resource Center provides guidance on federal funding for crime prevention and improved reentry.

US Department of Labor Reentry Employment Opportunities Program provides funding for justice-involved youth and young adults who were formerly incarcerated.

Urban Institute Transition from Jails to the Community Initiative offers extensive materials on the development, implementation, and evaluation of a model for jail-to-community transition.

References


A description of the self-identified needs, service expenditures, and social outcomes of participants of a prisoner-reentry program. Nicole M. Morani et al., The Prison Journal, 2011.


Investing in Futures: Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Postsecondary Education in Prison. Patrick Oakford et al., Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality / Vera Institute of Justice, 2019.


Second Chance Cities: Local Efforts to Promote Reentry Success. Betsy Pearl and Lea Hunter, Center for American Progress, 2018.

Young Adult Development Project. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2018.
Appendix: City Reentry Offices – State of Maine Services and Supports

Local reentry offices directly provide or make referrals to a range of important services and supports for returning citizens. The chart below outlines the number of offices offering the most commonly available services, out of 16 offices profiled in depth. (As mentioned in the brief, NLC identified no offices that provided reentry services tailored for Young Adults).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service or Support</th>
<th># of offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Development/Job Training</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Support</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Wellness</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management/Social Work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expungement Services/Legal Support</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Access</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledgements

NLC appreciates receiving insight, information and context regarding reentry offices and local initiatives from the following cities:

- Albuquerque, NM
- Houston, TX
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- Little Rock, AR
- Baltimore, MD
- Los Angeles, CA
- Baton Rouge, LA
- Louisville, KY
- Birmingham, AL
- Montgomery, AL
- Boston, MA
- New Orleans, LA
- Camden, NJ
- Newark, NJ
- Charlotte, NC
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Chicago, IL
- Overland Park, KS
- Dallas, TX
- Philadelphia, PA
- Washington, DC
- Rochester, NY
- Fresno, CA
- San Francisco, CA
- Hartford, CT
- Seattle, WA
- Walton, NC

Additionally, NLC acknowledges the helpful information provided by the higher education institutions below:

- Bard College Prisoner Initiative
- Bellevue College Post Prison Program
- Eastern Michigan University Citizen Fellow Program
- Georgetown University Pivot Program
- Greenville (S.C.) Tech Returning Citizens Program,
- Howard University Law School Reentry Clinic
Acknowledgements (con’t)

This is the first in a series of resources created to support municipal leaders as they align local policies and practices to ensure that people returning home from incarceration have the tools they need to transition back to their neighborhoods and help strengthen their communities.

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Want to join our reentry network or learn more about how to improve your municipality’s reentry program? Please reach out to us at: justiceinitiatives@nlc.org