

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING A COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH ECOSYSTEM



URBAN PEACE INSTITUTE BELIEVES PUBLIC SAFETY MUST BE REDEFINED TO EXTEND BEYOND THE ENFORCEMENT OF PUNITIVE LAWS THAT NEGATIVELY IMPACT COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

This traditional approach does not reduce violence or increase long-term safety and only reinforces systemic racism. The economy built around law enforcement and the criminal justice system needs to be dismantled to make way for systems of care centered on education, healing, health, and justice. The momentum generated by Black Lives Matter and protests around the country to defund the police and reimagine public safety has already sparked serious policy decisions designed to invest in non-law enforcement practitioners.

CITIES MUST BUILD AND INVEST IN COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURES FOCUSED ON NON-LAW ENFORCEMENT APPROACHES TO NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY

For example, gang intervention and street outreach efforts across the country have been recognized as essential to ensuring public safety in the most impacted communities. As credible messengers, community-based organizations have a deep understanding of community issues, trusted relationships with the individuals and communities involved, and specific knowledge surrounding neighborhoods crises.



The Urban Peace Institute's Safe Routes to School initiative ensures children can walk to and from school safely without fear of gang intimidation and violence.

VIOLENCE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS THAT DEMANDS PRIORITIZATION FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community-based organizations can more effectively address public safety issues, have greater impact, and save resources. These alternative approaches have strengthened the response to emergencies in places throughout the nation by preventing and reducing violence, providing care services, and decreasing unnecessary law enforcement contacts. Investments in community-based organizations can reduce the over-reliance on law enforcement to generate improved public safety and health.

We must build a robust, multi-sector public safety ecosystem that unites the interrelationship between health and safety. This will require a public policy shift to treat and fund community-based practitioners as essential rather than supplemental. Change will only come from a seismic shift in power away from government programs and policing approaches that harm communities of color and towards transformative investment in community-led safety solutions.



Detours Mentoring Group has pivoted from violence interrupters to virus interrupters to protect and save lives during COVID-19.



The H.E.L.P.E.R. Foundation unites Black and Brown community members to promote health and safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURES:

DIVEST & REINVEST

- Conduct an audit of all public safety and health spending in the state, county, and city to identify funds to be reinvested in a community-based ecosystem.
- Divest funding from state, county, and city agencies that further entrench systemic racism, reliance on incarceration, law enforcement surveillance, and ineffective programming to fund alternative community-based public safety strategies.
- Identify largest public health drivers of arrest and incarceration, and target investments and interventions to address root causes in local communities.
- Divest from and end over-policing or supervision violations and eliminate all practices that do not support overall community health and safety.
- Identify individuals with highest use of health and criminal justice systems, such as jails and emergency rooms, and prioritize these individuals for public health support strategies.
- Restructure existing public investments in community-based alternative safety strategies to develop a mission-focused, public-private partnership that uses public dollars to support core services and private dollars to build capacity and support innovation.



Southern California Crossroads works on the ground in underserved neighborhoods to transform the lives of youth.

CREATE A COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC SAFETY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Build a comprehensive, community-based public safety infrastructure focused on non-law enforcement approaches to neighborhood health and safety.
- Develop community-led crisis response protocols in coordination with local service providers for non-violent incidents as an alternative to law enforcement responses.
- Invest in the deployment of mental health counselors, homeless outreach specialists, gang intervention and outreach workers to respond to non-criminal calls for service, and to address issues with youth. This should include creating alternatives to 911 and training operators to divert calls to alternative responders via established protocols.
- Use social service, mental health, and crime data, and other metrics to prioritize funding in specific geographic areas based on an economic and racial equity index.
- Invest in nurses, psychologists, social workers, public health, and gang intervention workers in schools to support student and family safety.
- Increase investment and expand neighborhood-level leadership development to guide and lead public safety and health initiatives and ensure built-in system accountability.
- Invest in collaborative efforts to create safe streets, including safe routes to schools and parks.



The Urban Peace Institute's Leadership Institute participants are equipped with the skills to lead and direct community safety initiatives.

- Develop a comprehensive community-driven training and leadership development infrastructure that offers cross-training to address multiple community safety needs and issues.
- Develop clear protocols with public leaders to ensure community safety and quality of life issues are addressed with timely and effective responses.
- Expand community-based pre-arrest diversion, especially for youth, people with dependents, and those with behavioral health needs.
- Expand behavioral health and addiction infrastructure with harm reduction approaches.
- Ensure on-going job training and development for communities of color with connections to growing industries and living-wage jobs.
- Ensure all community-based safety personnel receive adequate salaries with benefits and hazard pay when appropriate to ensure sustainability and allow families to thrive.
- Expand workforce of formerly incarcerated youth and adults to act as trusted public health, public safety, and youth development workers.
- Implement ongoing community assessments and data evaluation to ensure the achievement of intended outcomes and accountability.
- Ensure equal rights and access to services for individuals and families facing immigration, domestic violence, homelessness, re-entry, probation, human trafficking, foster and other challenges.

CREATE & INVEST IN GANG INTERVENTION & COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

- Increase public and private investment in gang and street outreach in neighborhoods, schools, and hospitals to ensure health and safety.
- Expand the role of gang intervention and outreach workers to respond to and de-escalate violence as an alternative to law enforcement; Services may include rumor control, shuttle diplomacy, crisis response, mentoring, connecting families to services, etc.
- Create teams of peace ambassadors city-wide to support the work of gang intervention workers.
- Focused on healing-centered approaches that address trauma and support communities of color to thrive.



A Project of Community Partners

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Looking for more information on our programs or technical assistance services?

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Join us in our efforts to end violence and transform justice systems. Donations empower UPI to create safe, healthy, and thriving communities.