CAP

americanprogress.org

Expanding the Public Safety Workforce

How Cities Can Create New Professional Roles in Public Safety Response

By Allie Preston, Rachael Eisenberg, and Kirby Gaherty September 2025

GETTY IMAGES/MELINA MARA

Contents

The positions of American Progress, and our policy experts, are independent, and the findings and conclusions presented are those of American Progress alone. A full list of supporters is available at https://www.americanprogress.org/c3-our-supporters. American Progress would like to acknowledge the many generous supporters who make our work possible.

Introduction and summary

Everyone, from government officials, first responders, community organizations, and residents, has a collective responsibility for public safety. Localities nationwide experience a range of public safety challenges depending on neighborhood dynamics, people's circumstances, and available resources. Residents seek support from their local government when a building catches on fire, a family member has a heart attack, a robbery occurs at a local store, or even when a verbal argument occurs between neighbors. Most often, people call 911 when they feel unsafe, and municipalities have an obligation to ensure that professionals with the right expertise are sent to respond. Moreover, to prevent public safety concerns from rising to the level of emergencies in the first place, local governments are increasingly working in collaboration with nongovernment community-based partners.

When someone dials 911 with a safety concern, a professional call taker is there to triage the call. When there is a fire or someone is experiencing a medical emergency, the expectation is that firefighters or emergency medical technicians (EMTs) will respond. Similarly, when a violent crime is committed, police are dispatched to the scene. These professionals undergo rigorous training and work tirelessly to hone specialized expertise that positions them to support community members through an emergency. However, a wide range of community concerns fall outside the core responsibilities and training of these traditional first responders.[1]

For too long, it has fallen on police to fill this gap in public safety services—to take on the work of nurses, mediators, counselors, and housing specialists. To address this gap and ensure police resources can be dedicated to their core job responsibilities, local governments are standing up innovative programs that expand the types of professionals available to respond emergencies. Cities are building and resourcing programs that hire civilian professionals with a range of expertise from conflict mediation, de-escalation, linking residents to community-based services, and providing residents basic sustenance, thereby addressing the underlying needs that are forerunners of public safety concerns. These professionals also have the potential to alleviate the current strains on local police, fire, emergency

medical services (EMS), and dispatch workforces that have faced recruitment and retention challenges since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.[2] These civilian professionals also make communities safer by meeting people's needs and preventing crime before it escalates.

Defining new public-safety workforce professionals

- **Community responder professionals:** Community responders are unarmed, multidisciplinary professionals who are specially trained to provide a first response to calls for behavioral health, quality-of-life, and other low-level community concerns.

- **Community violence intervention professionals:** Community violence intervention professionals directly engage with individuals who are closest to violence in their communities during a conflict or immediately after an incident to deliver trauma-informed responses that address conditions that drive violence, offer connections to local resources, and provide long-term case management support.

- **Reporting and investigation professionals:** Reporting and investigation professionals are trained to respond to emergency and nonemergency calls by conducting investigations of incidents, such as collisions or theft, and drafting reports.

Public safety professionals are the bedrock of public safety programs, and their contributions are vital. This report is a resource for any government or community stakeholder seeking to learn about expanding their local public safety workforce. While each new program type will require professionals with different skills and training, different safety protocols and governing structures, and different funding sources depending on availability, cities have learned important workforce development lessons through implementation that can be applied across program types. This report aims to uplift these lessons to help cities foster effective, healthy, citywide public safety workforces. The report starts by identifying the professionals who are traditionally viewed as part of the public safety workforce and the key roles they play in ensuring safety. The report then highlights different types of professionals who have more recently been integrated into public safety systems in jurisdictions across the country. Finally, the report lays out crucial decisions that jurisdictions must make when creating new public safety roles and discusses how cities and counties have navigated the decision-making process.

This report brings together lessons learned from multiple cities—collected through interviews with the authors and research available in the field—to illustrate the type of work underway in many places nationwide, answers frequently asked questions, and provides guidance to localities looking to adapt this work to their communities.

The traditional public safety workforce: 911 professionals, police, fire, and EMS

Most jurisdictions' public safety workforces currently include 911 professionals, police, fire, and emergency medical services personnel. The following section examines the critical role these professionals play in the local public safety system.

- **Police – law enforcement and crime response.** The primary responsibilities of police are responding to and solving crime. Police are trained primarily to respond to violations of the law, particularly violence.[3] Police proactively patrol and respond to incidents and emergencies in communities. In response to a crime, police conduct investigations, interview witnesses, collect evidence, make arrests, and issue citations when appropriate.[4] Police also have training in basic lifesaving medical skills such as administering CPR, defibrillation, tourniquets, or Naloxone.[5]

- **Fire – fire and rescue response.** Local fire departments are tasked with responding to calls for service that involve extinguishing a fire; protecting both life and property in the event of a fire; and responding to other local emergencies, including vehicle collision rescues, response to hazardous materials, and more. In addition to rescue services, many fire professionals are trained in EMS, allowing them to provide basic medical care if needed.

- **EMS – medical care and transportation.** Formalized as a new public safety branch as recently as 1973 with the passage of the Emergency Medical Services Systems Act, EMS teams now play a critical role in the public safety workforce.[6] Local EMS teams respond to various emergencies, with a primary focus of providing emergency medical care and transport. In addition to providing care to those facing a medical emergency, EMS teams assess and treat illnesses and injuries in nonemergency situations, transport individuals to area trauma centers and emergency departments, and work alongside law enforcement and firefighters to ensure that appropriate care is provided.

- **911 professionals – deploying the right responders.**[7] 911 professionals are often the first point of contact for people interacting with their local public safety system. 911 professionals are responsible for answering 911 calls, assessing the nature of calls, and determining which responders to send to calls. Call takers answer 911 calls and determine if an in-person response is needed and whether the call is appropriate for fire and EMS services, a police response,[8] or another public safety professional. Call takers pass the call and related notes to a dispatcher, who then connects to the person or team that will respond. Dispatchers remain on the line with the responder to provide real-time information and ensure that the responder arrives on the scene.[9] 911 professionals are trained to assess risk and problem solve.

Read more:
Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls

While each of these types of professionals has a critical role to play in creating safe communities, many people call 911 for a variety of low-level concerns, ranging from noise complaints, neighbor disputes, and domestic disturbances to traffic accidents that may not involve a breach of the law, a fire, or a medical emergency.[10] A 2022 study revealed that in most cities, less than 3 percent of all 911 calls were related to a violent crime.[11] In many communities, police have become the default response to these low-level[12] and most other calls that do not involve a fire or medical emergency. Unfortunately, police often lack the training, experience, and resources to respond appropriately. This is particularly true for Black communities and other communities of color, for whom an encounter with police is more likely to escalate rather than deescalate situations.

Expanded professional roles in public safety response

As cities nationwide look for solutions to common public safety concerns that fall outside the expertise of 911 professionals, police, fire, and EMS workforces, many have begun to hire additional, specially trained professionals to close the gap. These professionals address the immediate public safety emergency, prevent escalation to violence, and assess individuals' immediate and long-term service needs.[13]

It is important to note that programs vary from city to city based on the unique needs of communities, so new programs and the professionals they employ may not fit neatly into a single professional category. Below are some common types of new public safety professionals that cities are adding to their public safety workforces.

Community responder professionals

Cities large and small have begun setting up community responder programs that dispatch specially trained civilian teams directly to 911 calls for a range of behavioral health incidents, conflict interventions, and quality-of-life issues. Community responder programs often employ professionals to work in interdisciplinary teams, allowing them to provide multiple services through one program. Community responders can be deployed to the scene of an incident by dispatch or provide services over the phone. Unlike police, fire, and emergency medical services, whose interactions with people in need of services may be quick and one-off, community responders can provide a more extended initial response and support beyond the initial call by connecting people to resources and providing case management services if desired. Two common focus areas for community responder programs include behavioral health and quality-of-life concerns.

Behavioral health

Across the country, it is estimated that at least 20 percent of all 911 calls have a mental health or substance use component,[14] even though people are often afraid to call 911 on behalf of themselves or someone else when experiencing behavioral health symptoms. Police responses to these types of calls too frequently lead to unnecessary injury, arrest, or even death, with people with untreated mental health

symptoms being 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter.[15] Recognizing the need for better community responses to incidents related to mental health and substance use, including responses that can reduce the overincarceration of people with mental health disabilities,[16] cities are creating new professional roles to address people's behavioral health needs.

Backgrounds of behavioral health responder professionals

Behavioral health teams are often comprised of a combination of professionals who may be peer specialists,[17] social workers, behavioral health clinicians,[18] professionals trained in crisis intervention, nurses, or paramedics.[19] Cities decide the type of professionals to hire based on their different service offerings. For example, the Denver Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) program deploys teams staffed by an EMT/paramedic[20] and behavioral health clinician,[21] while the Antioch Care Team in California made the express decision to use well-trained nonclinicians to ensure it can staff the program with members who reflect the communities where they will work and to avoid recruiting and staff retention challenges.[22]

What behavioral health responder professionals do on the scene

Depending on the type of program and the professionals available, behavioral health responder professionals can provide different services when responding:

- De-escalation
- Overdose prevention and reversal
- Transportation to treatment
- Emotional support during crisis
- First aid and basic medical care
- Conflict mediation
- Meeting basic material needs
- Linkages to services or housing supports

CASE STUDY

HEART program, Durham, North Carolina

The Durham Community Safety Department (DCSD)[23] has taken a multiprong approach to responding to individuals experiencing mental and behavioral health crises and to other low-level calls.[24]

The Holistic Empathetic Assistance Response Team (HEART) program consists of four different teams, each with specific types of professionals who provide a range of services to meet people's needs:

- **Crisis call diversion (CCD).** Embedded license clinicians in 911 call centers "triage, assess, and respond" to behavioral health calls.[25]
- **Community response teams (CRT).** Teams of three that include clinicians, peer support specialists, and EMTs respond to behavioral health calls such as mental health crises or suicide risk, as well as to other calls in the community such as trespassing, nuisances, or welfare checks.[26] Sometimes a two-person team may be sent, but a clinician is always included.[27]
- **Co-response (COR).** Clinicians are paired with officers who have received crisis intervention team (CIT) training to respond to behavioral health and other calls.[28]
- **Care navigation.** Teams of peer support specialists and a licensed clinician work with community members in person or over the phone to connect them with services within 48 hours of the initial contact of one of the other HEART teams.[29]

HEART professionals in Durham are hired in full-time city staff positions, giving them access to full government benefits.[30] At the time of this report's publication, HEART professionals across the four teams included 20 behavioral health clinicians, 10 peer support specialists, seven administrative professionals, seven EMTs, six shift supervisors, two clinical managers, and two interns.[31]

Licensed behavioral health clinicians come to this work with a master's degree, 1,000 hours of supervised work, and at least three years of postgraduate experience.[32] Peer support specialists are certified through the North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist Program[33] and bring lived experience and an understanding of community dynamics and targeted training. EMTs possess credentials required under state law.[34] Once selected for their new role, professionals participate in a multiweek training academy to prepare them to respond to calls.[35] Training includes lessons on organizational structure, technology usage,[36] and skills including de-escalation, mental health first aid, confidentiality, situational awareness, and trauma-informed care, among many others.[37] Responders learn in a classroom setting and have many opportunities for in-field training with existing HEART responders.[38]

More than half of responders are Black,[39] which allows these teams to be more reflective of the community, which is more than 67 percent Black.[40] While two clinicians and one peer support specialist speak Spanish, responders can offer telephone and video interpreter services for more than 240 languages, including American Sign Language.[41]

Durham has noted that it started the program as a pilot to identify best practices that could be scaled before launching citywide 24/7 services.[42] HEART now operates citywide, seven days per week, with each team working different hours.[43]

HEART responders wear matching teal shirts and travel in vehicles marked with their logo so they can be easily identified by the community.[44]

Quality-of-life concerns

Many people who call 911 do so because of nuisance or quality-of-life complaints such as disputes between neighbors; disorderly calls; trespassing, parking, and noise complaints; and requests for a peace officer that do not require an armed response. These calls unnecessarily tax valuable police resources, and in some cases, they may not require an in-person response at all.

Backgrounds of professionals responding to quality-of-life concerns

Professionals responding to quality-of-life concerns can come from various backgrounds, with some having licenses or certifications in things such as mediation,[45] social work, or peer specialist work.[46] Others bring relevant skills such as strong communication, relationship-building or problem-solving abilities, and a passion for community work. These professionals are trained in de-escalation, situational awareness, self-care, mental-health, first aid,[47] and report-taking skills.

What professionals responding to quality-of-life concerns do on the scene

Professionals who respond to quality-of-life concerns can provide a variety of services, including de-escalating conflicts, mediating disputes, conducting welfare checks, connecting people to community resources, offering emotional support, and empowering individuals to find solutions to their problems. These responders may be dispatched to address noise complaints, neighbor disputes, trespassing, welfare checks, and more.[48] Much of the time, the role of these professionals is to help people feel heard and that their concerns are taken seriously.[49] In many cities, there is overlap between the work of behavioral health responder professionals and professionals responding to quality-of-life concerns, although some behavioral health team professionals may have additional credentials, training, or clinical experience to address specific acute situations.

CASE STUDY

Mediation Response Unit (MRU), Dayton, Ohio

Dayton, Ohio, is home to one of the country's first Mediation Response Unit (MRU) pilot programs.[50] The MRU is housed within the Dayton Mediation Center and can respond to 19 different call types, including neighbor conflicts, noise complaints, roommate disputes, welfare checks, and more.[51] The MRU receives calls through 911 dispatch, its designated hotline, and referrals from law enforcement or community partners.[52]

Mediation response specialists come from various backgrounds, including mediation, social work, mental health, and youth services.[53] They have experience in conflict intervention; providing mediation services in the juvenile court system, workplaces, and training settings; and managing mediation programs.[54] Dayton's MRU is made up of one coordinator who is responsible for overseeing staff, training, and recordkeeping. At the same time, six response specialists rotate between call taking and responding to calls in teams of two.[55]

Specialists must have a relevant bachelor's degree and four years of experience or a relevant master's degree and two years of experience.[56] While the MRU does not require applicants to have certifications in advance, MRU professionals are required to receive certification from the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation Inc. or the Dayton Mediation Center within a year of employment. Specialists must obtain basic mental health first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) with automated external defibrillator (AED) certification within six months of employment.[57] MRU team members are also provided with field-based training in de-escalation, situational awareness, mental health first aid, defensive tactics, and more.[58]

Tips for ensuring that community responder professionals are successful in their role

- **Clearly define roles of community responders:** Cities should clearly define the roles of community responders and ensure that the entire public safety workforce understands what types of incidents they are trained to respond to. Programs should make sure that the public understands the services that community responders can provide; this will build trust and ensure that they are being engaged appropriately.

- **Think expansively about the types of professionals who can fill behavioral health responder roles rather than relying on rigid educational, licensure, or credentialing requirements.** While some services can only be offered by clinicians or licensed professionals, such as diagnosing behavioral health conditions or conducting lethality or hospitalization assessments, many programs have had success in employing other responders and training them to respond to behavioral health incidents that do not require these types of clinical services.

- **Ensure that professionals filling these roles can tap into the community's broader network of behavioral health resources.** To be effective, behavioral health response professionals must be able to connect people easily to community-based resources across the behavioral health continuum of care,[59] including treatment and family support programs, community mental health clinics, primary care

doctors, and therapists.[60] These professionals should also be able to connect clients with other supportive services that meet their basic needs, such as housing supports and benefits enrollment. It is critical that these linkages to treatment are made in real time to prevent delays in receiving care and other resources. Programs can also provide case management or follow-up support to ensure that people received what they needed or to address any new or ongoing needs.

Examples of community responder programs

- Canopy Roots[61]
- Denver STAR[62]
- Angelo Quinto Community Response Team (AQCRT)[63]
- Atlanta Policing Alternatives & Diversion (PAD) Initiative[64]

Community violence intervention professionals

Violence, particularly gun violence, remains a persistent public safety issue in many communities across the country. Although gun violence rates spiked across the country during the early years of the pandemic,[65] evidence suggests that this trend is declining.[66] Still, gun and other forms of violence remain high in many communities. Community violence intervention (CVI) programs target hard-to-reach populations that are closest to violence in their communities and provide resources and connections to community-based treatment, services, and economic supports that help meet their needs and prevent escalations to violence. These programs have been particularly successful at reducing violence among young people[67] and have reduced shootings by as much as 60 percent when implemented.[68] CVI programs successfully transform lives by combining relentless outreach with case management, trauma recovery, and culturally competent social and legal services. Depending on the city and specific program design, cities can use different types of CVI strategies to engage hard-to-reach populations that are closest to community violence. CVI professionals are key staff included in the following types of programs:

- **Violence interruption and street outreach.** This strategy relies on deploying credible messengers into communities with high rates of gun violence, often after a violent event has occurred, to build relationships, support violence survivors, and make connections to services[69] and mentorship.

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).** Based in a practice of challenging negative thoughts as a means to alter behaviors, CVI programs that offer CBT aim to give people the skills to make better decisions in moments that could escalate to violence.[70] Roca, a CVI program offering services in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Baltimore,[71] developed its own nonclinical version of CBT that front-line workers can implement[72] and provides technical assistance to CVI groups.

In addition to working in CVI programs, CVI professionals are often hired as staff for other types of gun violence programs, such as group violence intervention and hospital-based violence intervention programs, that have greater ties to law enforcement and hospitals, respectively. Group violence intervention strategies are law enforcement-led and use a focused deterrence approach to bring together law enforcement, community stakeholders, and service providers, as well as those closest to violence in their communities, to provide a path away from violence.[73] Hospital-based violence intervention programs focus on preventing retaliatory violence by connecting survivors with trauma-informed care and community-based partners to provide lifesaving services while they are in trauma centers and emergency rooms.[74] Both of these strategies typically engage CVI professionals, who are able to use their lived experience to connect to target populations and expand the impact of the work.

Backgrounds of community violence intervention professionals

CVI professionals are often credible messengers within their community, meaning they have lived experiences and hyperlocal community knowledge that enable them to reach individuals and operate in places that police and other public safety professionals generally cannot. Many people who staff CVI programs have been incarcerated in the past and/or have prior involvement with a street organization.[75] This shared experience builds credibility and trust between communities and CVI professionals and is key to breaking cycles of violence. Because of the sensitive nature of their work, CVI professionals also should be skilled in communication, relationship building, and assessing risk. Professionals providing case management services should know available community resources, while those providing services such as CBT should possess necessary credentials or training.[76] CVI professionals' lived experiences, coupled with technical training in skills such as de-escalation and providing trauma-informed services, makes them uniquely capable of responding to incidents where escalation to violence has occurred or is likely to occur.

What community violence intervention professionals do on the scene

Depending on the type of program and particular role, CVI professionals provide different services, including:

- **Street outreach workers.** Conflict de-escalation, relationship building, and trauma support.
- **Case managers.** Making connections to community resources, following up, and providing long-term case management support.
- **CBT specialists.** Providing cognitive behavioral supports and trauma recovery support.
- **Community health workers.**[77] Providing health education, cultural mediation, and outreach and conducting research to inform program development and evaluate program effectiveness.

Tips for ensuring that community violence intervention professionals are successful in their role

- **Ensure that professionals have community credibility and understand local dynamics.** Credibility with individuals at the highest risk of gun violence fades over time, as does the ability to relate to this unique and difficult-to-reach population. As a result, who will be considered a credible messenger will also change over time. It is important for CVI programs to continually assess whether credible messengers still have credibility in the field to ensure the safety of professionals who will be providing street outreach services.

- **Provide access to mental health resources and supports.** Because of the nature of their work, CVI professionals are exposed to high rates of trauma and violence, so cities must ensure that they are provided with accessible behavioral health resources. Programs can implement scheduled debriefing periods, confidential counseling services, and paid leave after critical incidents to support the emotional and mental well-being of CVI professionals.

- **Develop a broader public safety ecosystem to support these programs.** Violence does not occur in a vacuum, and delivering only individualized responses limits the effectiveness of CVI. By embracing an ecosystem approach, cities can better coordinate among public and community-based partners to deliver more targeted and effective services. A comprehensive public safety ecosystem approach brings together city leadership, CVI professionals, community-based organizations, philanthropy, and public health departments "to coordinate a comprehensive, community-based strategy" that utilizes and builds "links" among various public health approaches and support services.[78]

Example CVI programs

- Advance Peace[79]
- Chicago CRED[80]
- Roca[81]
- Cure Violence Global[82]

CASE STUDY

Chicago Create Real Economic Destiny (CRED)

Chicago CRED was founded in 2016 and works to provide participants who are the closest to gun violence in Chicago communities with the resources they need to choose a different path. Chicago CRED's approach is based on five pillars: street outreach, therapy, life coaching, education, and job training. It recognizes that a holistic approach is needed to reduce gun violence and succeed at "disrupting the dynamics" driving shootings.[83] Chicago CRED has an annual budget of $25 million that is sourced exclusively through private funding sources.[84]

Chicago CRED professionals are split into three teams—a clinical team, a program team, and an outreach team[85]—each fulfilling a unique role in the program. The clinical team offers counseling services, facilitates trauma and stress management groups, and gives workshops.[86] The program team is responsible for implementing a variety of programs, including for women and youth.[87] The CRED outreach team is deployed to and engages with communities that are most at risk of violence.[88] Like other CVI programs, CRED relies on credible messengers with experiences similar to those they serve.

With a heavy emphasis on providing wraparound support, each program participant is teamed with five professionals who are available to provide participants with necessities, counseling, education, and employment supports, among other things, and help de-escalate conflicts to avoid violence. Recognizing that people have complex life issues that often center on money, CRED provides participants with small stipends that can increase over time to meet specific needs.[89]

Since its inception, Chicago CRED has made a significant mark on Chicago communities. Chicago CRED has served more than 2,000 participants; provided 1,710 therapeutic services, 620 job placements, and 191 housing placements; and helped 349 participants graduate from high school.[90] Early evaluations of the program's impact on safety are likewise promising, with participants who complete the program experiencing a significantly reduced likelihood of arrest for a violent crime.[91]

Reporting and investigation professionals

Law enforcement spends a substantial amount of time responding to low-priority, nonviolent incidents such as theft or traffic crashes with no injuries, which involves primarily reporting and investigatory duties.[92] Police departments nationwide have begun creating internal civilian roles to assume these responsibilities, allowing them to focus their officer resources on responding to more serious crimes.[93] According to a police officer in the Matthews Police Department in North Carolina, having civilian roles within the department strengthens community engagement and helps bridge the gap between officers and the civilians who they serve.[94] Unlike community responders or CVI professionals who operate outside of police departments, reporting and investigatory professionals, as stated above, tend to work within departments.

Backgrounds of reporting and investigation professionals

While there are no standardized education requirements for reporting and investigation professionals, it is important for them to possess and be trained in the following skills:

- Communication skills[95]
- Customer service[96]
- Computer skills[97]
- Data collection and reporting[98]
- Document and records management[99]
- Knowledge of city services[100]

What reporting and investigation professionals do on the scene or over the phone

Many reporting and investigation professionals are employed as part of a telephone or online reporting unit. These units are critical to reducing strain on 911 professionals and quickly resolving low-priority calls that short-staffed police departments may not be able to respond to consistently. Key responsibilities of these professionals include:

- Interviewing callers or reviewing online reports to collect information and evidence.
- Locating and interviewing victims or witnesses.[101]
- Collecting reports,[102] often using police communication systems such as a computer- aided dispatch (CAD) system.[103]
- Coordinating follow-up[104] or connecting to other government or community-based services[105] when necessary.

Because police spend a substantial amount of time responding to accidents and other traffic-related calls,[106] often resulting only in property damage, some states and localities have begun to dispatch civilian traffic investigation units.[107] In the towns of Gastonia and Charlotte, North Carolina, data show that the majority of traffic crashes, 85.75 percent[108] and 71 percent, respectively,[109] involve no or minor injuries. Civilian crash investigators primarily respond to minor crashes and disabled vehicle calls where they take reports and occasionally help with traffic control.[110]

Civilian crash investigators are unarmed and do not have the authority to arrest people. However, some may issue citations,[111] and the reports they make on the scene have the same authority as a report filed by sworn officers.[112] Investigators in some cities may also assist drivers with other emergencies such as a flat tire or running out of gas.[113] While their role is to respond to crashes and incidents resulting in no injuries, civilian crash investigators are nonetheless trained in basic first aid, CPR, and de-escalation, in case those skills are necessary when they are deployed to a call.[114] In addition to the responsibilities and skills of other reporting and investigation professionals, civilian crash investigators may be responsible for traffic control, collision investigation, and collecting and preserving evidence.[115] Some programs require or prioritize professionals with law enforcement experience for these roles.[116]

Example reporting and investigation professionals

- **Telephone and online reporting units.** Baltimore and Washington, D.C., created civilian telephone reporting units where community members can easily report incidents such as animal bites, car crashes, lost property, or nuisance complaints.[117] Jurisdictions including Minneapolis[118] and New Orleans[119] have developed online reporting units that civilian professionals are responsible for processing. In Denver, civilian report technicians are trained to investigate traffic crashes and property crimes and may go to the scene to compile reports.[120]
- **Crash investigation units.** North Carolina[121] and Denver[122] established civilian crash investigation teams that can be deployed to support drivers and passengers who have been in a vehicle crash or need roadside assistance.

CASE STUDY

Civilian crash investigators, North Carolina

In 2023, the North Carolina legislature passed a law allowing civilians to investigate traffic incidents that involve property damage and no physical injury.[123] The North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police has been a champion of this bill, understanding that it would reduce officer workload,[124] reduce response rate times,[125] and make it easier to fill open department positions.[126]

Civilian crash investigators in North Carolina are hired as nonsworn members of the police department.[127] The authorizing legislation directed cities to develop minimum standards for investigators and tasked the North Carolina Justice Academy with training investigators to learn position protocol.[128] After completing training, each crash investigator must participate in at least four weeks of field training with sworn law enforcement officers[129] to gain firsthand experience responding to crashes.[130] Once this training is completed, civilian traffic investigators will have experienced more training in crash investigation than basic patrol officers.[131] In some cases, cities in North Carolina have opted to hire retired law enforcement for these roles, creating new employment opportunities for retired officers.[132]

Crash investigator services are provided five days per week, and though the hours may vary city to city, they tend to cover the hours when the most crashes occur.[133] Investigators are given official credentials and a uniform and a vehicle that identifies them that are different from those of law enforcement to prevent misidentification.[134] In Charlotte, investigators are required to wear body cameras.[135]

Other public safety professionals

In addition to specially trained professionals who respond during or after an incident, cities have also begun hiring public safety professionals to maintain a consistent presence in communities and provide proactive outreach services in key community locations.

Proactive community outreach and safety ambassadors

Several cities have begun hiring public safety professionals who provide proactive outreach services in key community locations. These outreach professionals or safety ambassadors are often deployed to high-traffic areas such as transit hubs or commercial corridors and areas with large populations with unmet needs, such as areas with homeless encampments. Cities have found that the consistent, visible presence of a uniformed, nonpolice professional can create a deterrent effect that prevents crime, makes communities safer, and frees up police resources.[136] In

addition to this deterrent effect, safety ambassadors, with appropriate training, can provide services[137] such as navigation assistance, de-escalation, outreach to unhoused community members, and first aid.

For many people who need services, it will take multiple interactions—in some cases, as many as 15 interactions[138]—with an outreach professional before they feel comfortable accepting help. By having a consistent community presence, safety ambassadors can build trust and help make service connections more quickly than a responder who only comes during a crisis.

Homeless-outreach professionals

Access to safe, affordable housing is a fundamental component of personal and community safety, yet in 2024, more than 771,000 people in the United States—the highest number ever recorded[139]—were unhoused. Rising rent and housing costs alongside no comparable increase in wages and a shortage of safe, affordable housing in U.S. cities and towns of all sizes are driving homelessness. Many unhoused individuals are reasonably reluctant to go to shelters because of poor conditions that pose health and safety risks[140] and past experiences of crime, violence, or abuse. As a result, many of these individuals are vulnerable to criminalization and displacement as states and localities ramp up efforts to clear out homeless encampments.[141] While encampments can pose challenges for communities,[142] broad sweeps do little to address people's underlying needs and often result in relocation rather than disbandment of the encampment. In addition, people frequently lose material goods that they need, such as blankets, clothes, and accessibility devices, as well as critical documents, including electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards, hospital paperwork,[143] and Social Security cards required to access services and disrupt cycles of homelessness.[144]

Ambassadors to the homeless, as well as outreach professionals, often travel to where people experiencing homelessness are[145] and can proactively provide connections to community resources rather than responding after a crisis occurs. These professionals often work in interdisciplinary teams, and many have personal experience with homelessness, which helps them build trust with community members.[146] Still others have a clinical or social work background that allows them to deliver tailored physical or behavioral health services. Homeless-outreach professionals can provide people with material goods such as food, water, or blankets,[147] as well as help people access essential documents such as IDs and medical records. They also connect people to services such as health care, behavioral health treatment, or temporary housing, and they assess and help people overcome existing barriers to permanent housing.[148] For example, Washington,

D.C.'s, Pathways to Housing program fields street outreach teams to conduct housing assessments, provide resources to meet individual needs, and connect people to community resources. It also has a nurse and a psychiatrist on staff who conduct street outreach to address people's more complex health needs.[149]

Public transit ambassadors

Across the country, it is estimated that people board public transportation 34 million times each weekday.[150] Ensuring the safety of riders as they navigate the public transit system is critical to ensuring that this vital community resource remains accessible to those who need or wish to use it. There has been increased attention paid to incidents on public transportation that threaten the safety[151] of riders and transit workers alike.[152] Assaults on transit professionals nearly tripled between 2008 and 2022.[153]

Rather than continuing to rely on armed police, unarmed civilian transit ambassadors can play a role in keeping people safe while taking public transportation and providing them with information and support to navigate the transit system. Ambassadors often have lived experience with the criminal legal system and come from and are reflective of the communities they serve, allowing them to connect more easily with passengers and meet their needs.[154] Ambassadors are trained through classroom and field training exercises[155] in customer service, CPR, de-escalation, writing reports,[156] defensive tactics, first aid or naloxone delivery, and human trafficking awareness.[157] Ambassadors can help passengers navigate transit stations, respond to and help de-escalate conflicts, report incidents that occur throughout the transit system,[158] connect unhoused riders to services, and call for additional assistance when needed.

In Cleveland, ambassadors are often paired with licensed social workers who can provide additional assistance in a behavioral health emergency.[159] In Los Angeles, transit ambassadors are making a significant impact: They filed 3,700 incident reports, called in additional first responders 1,000 times, and administered naloxone, CPR, and suicide prevention measures to save the lives of 215 riders between October 2022 and April 2024.[160] A survey of riders revealed that 63 percent felt safer when seeing a transit ambassador.[161] In addition, transit ambassadors can help increase ridership, which can have positive effects beyond safety, including creating job opportunities, increasing traffic to local businesses, and reducing harmful car emissions.[162]

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

When working to ensure that there are adequate resources to meet communities' diverse safety needs, local governments often take steps such as standing up new programs or creating new agencies to coordinate among public safety professionals. It is critical to ensure that any new public safety roles complement existing professional functions such as police, fire, EMS, and 911. While this process of expanding the public safety workforce will look different from city to city, governments often grapple with similar questions.

What types of responders do cities need to address communities' public safety concerns?

Cities should collect quantitative and qualitative data and pursue other community engagement activities to determine the public safety gap they are trying to fill. This is an ongoing process, and cities should reevaluate programs over time to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of those most affected by crime and violence. This information can help cities determine the best locations to implement services and the populations to target, in addition to identifying the types of professionals who should be added to the workforce.

- **Quantitative data** helps paint a broad picture of needs and service usage in different communities. Depending on the type of program, cities may rely on different quantitative data sources to inform program design, implementation, and evaluation:
  - **911, 311, 211, and 988 call data.** Cities can use data from 911, nonemergency calls for service to information lines such as 311 and 211,[163] and behavioral health calls to 988[164] to identify things such as the most frequent call types, the geographic areas experiencing the highest call volumes, and the type of calls with the longest response times. Call narratives, notes taken during 911 calls, can provide deeper insight that can inform predictions of the type of

responder and skills needed or the number of responders needed to handle the call volume.[165] Assessing call types can also help cities identify a range of calls that can be rerouted to other responders.

- **Health care data.** Data gathered from health care facilities and treatment programs can be particularly beneficial when creating new behavioral health responder or CVI roles. This information can provide a better understanding of the mental health and substance use conditions that are most prevalent in communities, information about which populations are experiencing these conditions, and the likely resource needs that new program staff would encounter. CVI programs can use hospital data to gain a better understanding of gun-related incidents in communities. Some hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) rely on hospitals as the touchpoint with hard-to-reach populations. Hospital data can be invaluable to developing HVIPs that can effectively deliver services.

- **Local crime data.** Local crime data can provide helpful information related to the frequency, location, and context surrounding gun violence or other incidents to better understand the dynamics driving gun violence and to inform the type of CVI programs and strategies to employ.[166] Cities can also use crime data to identify the public safety response services that are most needed in a given area or to establish the types of calls most appropriate for newly established teams. Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, convened a data collaborative that brought together city and county entities, law enforcement, and universities to collect and share violent crime data. The city uses these data to inform decision-making and policies related to its CVI and Peacekeepers Academy.[167]

- **Other types of data.** Cities also rely on other data sources to inform their program design, including employment, housing, and education data.

- **Qualitative data and information gathering** provides information that cannot be represented through numbers or statistics, such as people's experiences attempting to access services. Cities can use a variety of strategies—for example, surveys, community interviews,[168] and focus groups—to engage community members, including those whose safety needs often are not reflected in quantitative data.[169] Qualitative information is an essential complement to quantitative data to help cities better understand the context surrounding their public safety response systems:

- Efforts to gather qualitative data on individuals' experiences should focus on communities most affected by crime and violence, and those who utilize existing public safety systems the most. Local governments should use a range of tactics to ensure that diverse community perspectives are included in the process.[170]

- Police, fire, and EMS professionals, because they respond to 911 calls, possess invaluable information about how the workforce operates and what gaps currently exist. Cities should engage current public safety professionals and utilize their knowledge and experiences to inform program design. Cities have successfully engaged existing responders throughout the planning and implementation of new programs by creating regular communication touchpoints with these professionals, seeking input on protocols and gaps in existing services, creating opportunities for cross-training, and more.

- Community-based organizations and providers already offering services in the most-affected communities also have a valuable perspective to contribute.[171] To ensure that new professionals and programs complement rather than duplicate existing programs and resources, it is critical to gather information about how existing community-based resources operate, the services that they provide, how they are perceived in the community, and the gaps that exist when developing new programs.[172]

What essential skills are common across the public safety workforce, and how can cities train new professionals to ensure competency?

When building and implementing new public safety responder programs, jurisdictions will have to decide the types of professionals required to meet the service needs of their target population. When building teams, thinking holistically about the qualifications needed for new roles is crucial. Jurisdictions often seek to create interdisciplinary teams that employ multiple types of professionals with skills that complement one another and mesh well with existing police, fire, and EMS resources. Depending on the program type and the services to be offered, professionals will need to possess distinct skills to successfully deliver services. Still, there are some commonalities in skills that cities can look for that will be helpful across public safety roles. The Appendix provides job descriptions from programs across the country that shed light on the desired skills and experiences required for these new public safety responder roles.

While there are some public safety responder services that can only be performed by licensed or certified behavioral health professionals, most services provided by new public safety responders do not require traditional professional credentials. While some cities believe it is critical to have only licensed behavioral health professionals, others have opted to build interdisciplinary teams or programs that include professionals with clinical and nonclinical backgrounds rather than requiring that all professionals possess those credentials.[173] For example, in accordance with state law, Canopy Roots, a Minnesota program providing mental health and other resources to people in crisis, requires all supervisors to be licensed mental health professionals and relies on mental health practitioners to respond directly to 911 calls related to community members experiencing a behavioral or mental health crisis.[174] In many cases, lived experience coupled with tailored technical training can properly prepare professionals without specific academic credentials for this work.

When filling new public safety professional positions, cities should look first to hire people who genuinely want to be engaged in this work. Additionally, while having some base-level skills related to public safety is essential, many core skills can be acquired during training. Cities should seek to create roles that emphasize skills and lived experiences that, when combined with specialized training, will allow professionals to meet community needs.

Although there are specific skills or qualifications that public safety professionals must possess to ensure that they can provide tailored responses in their communities, some traits are common across public safety professional roles:

- **Lived experience.** Lived experience within different communities, such as communities of color and LGBTQI+ communities,[175] or shared experiences of behavioral health symptoms, homelessness, or violence, can be an invaluable asset to responder teams and allow professionals to connect with their clients in ways that others without that experience cannot.[176] For example, most CVI professionals are considered "credible messengers," meaning that they have deep ties to the community and lived experience with violence or incarceration that positions them to be effective in connecting with individuals who may not otherwise engage with service providers. When hiring those with lived experience, cities can demonstrate the value that these professionals provide by listening to their expertise and ensuring that their compensation and benefits reflect the value of their unique work.[177]

- **Crisis intervention, mediation, and de-escalation.** Depending on the professional team and the types of calls professionals respond to, they may be exposed to different levels of crisis or conflict. To ensure the safety of teams and community members, public safety professionals should be skilled at assessing risk, remaining calm under pressure, displaying patience and empathy,[178] and offering solutions to de-escalate crisis situations.

- **Report taking and data collection.** Information collection and documentation are important parts of many public safety roles. Proper reporting is essential to capturing and reporting timely and accurate crime data, and proper reports may help people recover losses if, for example, they experience a burglary. In other cases, information collected on the scene will be necessary to ensure that people are connected to the right community-based resources. While filling out reports may seem less urgent than providing direct services, collecting this information is critical to understanding the scope of services provided by programs and the effectiveness and impact of new public safety professionals and programs. Some cities have developed data dashboards to ensure quality data are collected and reported.

- **Community connections.** Public safety responders should understand the community context, as well as the cultural and racial dynamics, in which they are working and have a base of knowledge about the available resources to make their clients feel comfortable and build trust. Connections to and understanding of community-based resources can also be beneficial when connecting people to services.

In addition to the people directly providing services, many of these programs have directors or supervisors with experience in program and people management.

How should cities train and provide professional development opportunities for new public safety roles?

Because professionals for new public safety roles may come from various backgrounds and lived experiences, they must receive robust training for this specific field before beginning work. After an initial training period, ongoing training opportunities are needed to keep professionals up to date on best practices and knowledgeable about networks they can tap into.[179] Through ongoing training and professional development, cities can allow professionals to transition to other first-response, public safety, behavioral health, or social services roles within other

offices, agencies, or organizations. This is critical because front-line roles experience a great deal of stress and diminishing community credibility over time, so staying in the same role long term can be challenging.[180] The city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, has one of the most robust training infrastructures for its public safety responder workforce. Albuquerque developed a training academy for new responders, bringing together teachers, social workers, nurses, and former law enforcement to help new professionals complete 400 hours of classroom and four weeks of on-the-job training.[181]

Trainings that cities provide public safety response professionals

- **Skills-based training.** Because new public safety professionals may be coming to work with different skills and experiences, many cities have found success in training new responders in core public safety skills, including:

  - Crisis intervention.
  - De-escalation and mediation.
  - Trauma-informed care.
  - First aid/nonemergency medical care.
  - Implicit bias.
  - Data entry and collection.
  - Mental health and trauma management.
  - Scene safety and situational awareness.
  - Motivational interviewing.

- **Protocol training.** Cities need to offer training to help professionals coordinate across various parts of the public safety ecosystem. Public safety responders need to be trained on all program protocols, and it is essential that subsequent training be provided as protocols change over time. These trainings should outline clearly defined roles for new staff so they know how they will work with other types of responders, as well as who oversees which decisions on the scene. Professionals must also be trained on the technology that will allow them to communicate across teams and complete necessary reporting requirements. Some examples of protocol training include:

  - Training new responders to use communication, report, and data collecting technologies.[182]
  - Training new community responders and CVI professionals to work with police and other agencies.[183]

- **Scenario-based training.** Scenario-based training involves hypothetical scenarios allowing new responders to test their skills and receive coaching and feedback. The ultimate goal is to promote habit-forming learning to ensure that professionals can respond "consistently and effectively" in the field.[184]

- **Field-based training.** Across the board, cities emphasize the importance of field-based training, which allows professionals to practice delivering services in the field to ensure that they can do so safely and effectively. In the case of CVI, where professionals are responding in instances where there may be violence, training is essential to ensure safety on the job. Field training provides opportunities for responders to experience navigating protocols and providing services in real-life scenarios with others who are already trained and providing services in the community.

Keys to successful training

- Robust and ongoing training is a key part of ensuring that new professionals are equipped to respond to community needs, with sufficient time built into the training schedule to cover all the necessary components. Cities could consider an academy model, combining diverse professionals and training strategies to prepare new professionals.

- It is critical that people in new public safety roles receive training to ensure that they are culturally competent and do not replicate or perpetuate harmful practices, such as racial biases that persist within existing safety systems.[185]

- Training should also include information about local community-based resources[186] so that professionals can connect with and help community members meet their short- and long-term needs.

- Because the success of public safety responders requires collaboration across the public safety workforce, cities should incorporate opportunities to cross-train responders. For example, cities could develop training to teach 911 professionals about the services new professionals provide while also training new public safety responders on the dispatch process and best practices for communicating with 911 professionals.[187]

- Cities should include training costs in their budgets to ensure that they have the resources to dedicate to ongoing professional development, robust curriculum development, and cross-disciplinary approaches.

- Training should prepare staff for professional advancement by creating opportunities for professionals to learn transferable skills and creating pathways for career transitions. The University of Chicago Health Lab emphasizes creating opportunities for progression or lateral movement between different public safety workforce positions.[188] Albuquerque created a pipeline for pre-EMTs to become behavioral health responders.[189] Cities should also explore opportunities for first responders to transition to managerial and supportive roles within programs.

How can new city infrastructure support and coordinate among an expanded public safety workforce?

Whether a city is piloting a new public safety response program or already has multiple different programs in operation, creating dedicated offices within local government can be vital to integrating the new professionals into the broader public safety workforce. Dedicated civilian-led offices can break down silos between government agencies and either directly oversee program staff or resource community-based organizations that hire public safety professionals. These local government offices can take many forms, and decisions about where to house these offices, what functions they hold, and how to staff them are crucial to their success.[190]

More than 60 cities have established an office of violence prevention (OVP), typically housed within the mayor's office, the health department, or an administrative office.[191] These offices take a public health approach to gun violence but have also been known to focus on other public safety concerns such as domestic violence and youth violence. OVPs often have operational responsibility for community violence intervention programs, either by directly staffing programs or by contracting with community-based service providers to administer programs. They also hire staff on the city's behalf and/or provide grants to organizations that are operating independently from the city.[192]

In recent years, some OVPs have also taken responsibility for community responder programs, which has increased coordination across the various professionals providing critical public safety services in the same neighborhoods. Other cities such as Durham, North Carolina, or Cambridge, Massachusetts, have established dedicated offices specifically for their community responder programs, which either hire city staff or contract directly with service providers and coordinate between public health, housing, emergency medical, and police services.[193]

Albuquerque[194] has developed a model for local government infrastructure by establishing a dedicated department within city government that is co-equal to the city's other public safety departments.[195] Albuquerque Community Safety (ACS) is responsible for overseeing and coordinating across community responder professionals, CVI professionals, outreach professionals, and more to address a wide range of public safety concerns in the community.

These dedicated offices and departments work well when they have strong support from the mayor and other local decision-makers and when they can operate with autonomy and authority to make program and staffing decisions and implement changes when needed. While it is important to have political buy-in, being too closely tied to any administration may subject an office to unnecessary political polarization that can jeopardize its longevity.

Cities can increase these offices' effectiveness by ensuring that they have the appropriate staffing to meet their various coordination, administrative, financial, and evaluative needs.[196] In selecting people to run these new offices, finding people who have established relationships with the community, knowledge of government systems, and experience with community-based public safety models is helpful. This will ensure that less time is spent establishing new relationships and there is less of a learning curve in the early stages of the offices' development.[197]

If establishing a new office or department is not feasible, some cities have opted to incorporate new public safety programs and professionals into existing city offices or departments. If taking this approach, it is recommended that professionals and programs be housed in an agency outside the police department. Many of the people who can best be served by these new programs may have mistrust of the police. Trust in CVI programs can be eroded when they are located within police-controlled structures. CVI programs are best housed in a public safety department, mayor's office, or independent community-based organization where there are strong memos of understanding between agencies, defined scene-safety protocols, and limits on information sharing with law enforcement.

Key workforce functions of city offices and departments

When properly funded and supported by a municipality and given sufficient power within government to be able to coordinate, convene, and staff public safety response programs,[198] dedicated departments or offices have the potential to build out a robust and thriving workforce that can support the various public safety needs of the city's residents. These offices can support the public safety workforce in a variety of ways, including:

- Directly hiring, contracting, and overseeing the specially trained professionals and programs within the public safety workforce.
- Developing and delivering new-hire training programs as well as ongoing training opportunities.
- Support staff engagement and wellness.
- Building capacity among partner organizations to enhance workforce development.
- Creating workforce pipelines to other city roles.
- Collecting and disseminating quantitative and qualitative data about safety and the effects of interventions.

Should cities hire new professionals directly or contract with community-based organizations?

Different local governments have taken different approaches to hiring new professionals to fill public safety response roles. Some cities hire staff directly as city employees, while others enter contracts with community-based organizations. Cities can also opt for a hybrid approach that incorporates both directly hiring some staff and contracting. Ultimately, cities should strive to ensure that newly hired employees have access to the most favorable compensation and benefits terms, as well as opportunities for professional growth and advancement. When deciding which hiring approach to take, cities should consider how the decision can affect the following aspects of program design and implementation:

- **Compensation and benefits.** Whether cities hire directly or contract, ensuring fair pay and benefits is crucial to ensuring a thriving and sustainable workforce. Local governments tend to be able to provide higher wages and more benefits than community-based organizations. Ensuring that all staff are hired as city employees may be challenging in the early stages of a program for various reasons, so it may be necessary to work toward the goal over time.

    - The Canopy Roots program in Minnesota has acknowledged that as a community-based organization, it finds it hard to compete with the salary and benefits of city employees and has lost some public safety professionals who have transitioned to the local government in pursuit of better salary and benefits.[199]
    - Although Olympia, Washington's, Crisis Responder Unit initially hired staff through a contract with a local behavioral health provider, it went on to hire staff directly as city employees to ensure that they received a city pension and access to benefits comparable to those of other public safety professionals.[200]

- **Hiring speed.** Some local governments have long, bureaucratic processes that can slow hiring, making it hard or impossible to get new programs off the ground. Cities should actively work to ensure that they can find ways to streamline and strengthen their hiring processes. This could entail reviewing hiring protocols and identifying policies acting as barriers to hiring new workers, particularly those directly affected by the criminal legal system, and meeting with local human resources (HR) professionals to implement changes. In some cities, local HR offices are responsible for the initial review of applications. In these instances, it can be helpful to meet directly with HR professionals to highlight key skills and experiences they should focus on while reviewing applications to ensure that qualified candidates are not screened out.

  - The St. Louis Office of Violence Prevention decided to contract with community-based organizations to hire professionals for its crisis response and violence interruption programs because the process for creating city staff positions was too arduous for its timeline. Contracting allowed St. Louis to hire professionals and start its programs faster.[201]
  - The city of Baltimore[202] used American Rescue Plan Act funding to quickly create new roles within city government.

- **Position eligibility and hiring requirements.** Cities may have universal hiring and eligibility requirements for direct hires that are out of sync with the needs of these new professional roles. Having lived experience, and a record, can be a critical asset to many of these professional responder teams. However, some cities have policies that make it difficult or impossible for people with records to be hired in government positions. In these cases, cities may need to work with their HR departments to rewrite their policies. In others where this barrier may be too challenging, it may make sense for cities to explore contracting new employees through community-based organizations.

- **Job stability and future employment pathways.** Unlike creating positions within community-based organizations, hiring city employees creates more permanent positions and can create more career pathways for people to advance within the public safety workforce. In some cases, city employees may be more protected from political changes at the local level than contractors, whose work can be more easily changed by budget cuts or shifts. Additionally, city employment can offer economic stability through pension vesting.

- **Stakeholder buy-in.** Contracting with community-based organizations can help bridge the gap between government and the community. Many of these organizations already have credibility in the community because of the resources and services they provide on an ongoing basis. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the decision to contract with a community-based organization to run the CVI programs was a way to get buy-in from skeptics as a pilot and then scale if successful.[203]

Who are the key governmental stakeholders and leaders to engage in developing and implementing programs with new professionals?

Ensuring robust stakeholder engagement throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of new public safety programs is essential to ensuring that newly hired professionals succeed. Expanding the public safety workforce beyond police, fire, EMS, and 911 professionals requires significant buy-in from and coordination among many system actors, including:

- **Mayors.** In efforts to build a comprehensive public safety workforce, mayoral leadership and investment are critical as a city works to create new public safety roles and coordinate among city agencies and community organizations. Mayors can create new city infrastructure and sometimes appoint leadership, help provide a vision for public safety programs,[204] enhance messaging and communication, bring parties to the table,[205] identify necessary resources to hire workers, and uplift the importance of the workforce both publicly and privately. Cities such as Newark, New Jersey;[206] Baltimore;[207] Saint Paul, Minnesota;[208] and others have leaned into mayoral leadership and the development of comprehensive public safety plans to expand their public safety workforces.

- **City councils.** Many cities have described how champions within the legislature or city council were critical to generating the political will necessary to implement new approaches. City councils can pass legislation to create new programs, direct funding, and help spread awareness of and build momentum for new professional roles and public safety programs.

- **Police and fire chiefs.** Champions within the police and fire departments can play a critical role in building momentum around new roles and programs and ensuring their smooth implementation. Having high-ranking leaders within these professions act as champions for new roles and programs can

help people feel more comfortable with changes. Police and fire chiefs can encourage support for new professionals across their departments and create opportunities for cross-training and collaboration across the workforce. In addition to chiefs and people in leadership, it is important to gain the support of other leaders within these departments who have operational responsibilities over functions needed to support the new programs.[209]

Cities have taken different approaches to engaging these key stakeholders. Some cities have developed targeted communications strategies that use data-sharing and constituent outreach to drum up support and cultivate new champions. Cities can also share memos with state and local legislators or other elected officials, present at meetings and public hearings, or host site visits that allow decision-makers to see the impact of programs.[210]

- Courtney Scott, former assistant chief administrative officer of the Parish of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, explained that the parish regularly shares information on an ongoing basis with the state legislature to maintain buy-in.[211]

- In Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, hearing from constituents, including crime survivors, about the need for an expanded public safety workforce and having access to data demonstrating the impact of new programs have been the most persuasive tactics in gaining support from elected officials.[212]

How can meaningful community engagement be ensured when expanding a city's public safety workforce?

Community safety priorities are hyper-local and should inform the foundation for developing new responder programs. In many cases, the development of new public safety approaches has been the direct result of community advocacy, so it is important that community engagement is meaningful and ongoing rather than made up of one-off interactions. Diverse community members provide invaluable historical context for community dynamics, insight into community safety priorities, and the effectiveness and accessibility of existing community-based resources.

What practices do cities use to engage community members?

Cities can use various tactics, including focus groups, advisory committees, surveys, town hall meetings, interviews, and listening sessions, to directly engage community members in designing and implementing new programs.[213]

Through these conversations, cities should aim to collect information about current perceptions of and experiences accessing public safety resources to better understand what is working; what barriers to access may exist; and what changes, additions, or improvements can be made to the public safety workforce.

Some jurisdictions have succeeded in developing advisory bodies made up of community members to provide long-term guidance for the direction of programs. These bodies tend to be both time and staff intensive, but cities have found that they help center the work and ensure community needs drive it.[214] It is important that advisory boards are more than symbolic gestures and that findings or recommendations inform decision-making.

It is important for new responders to have opportunities to engage with the community outside of crisis moments to build trust. City offices such as OVPs can also be great resources for community engagement. For example, Los Angeles County's OVP has dedicated staff coordinating community education and engagement activities.[215] In St. Louis, the OVP embraces this idea by hosting events that bring together community members for an afternoon of music, food, art, and services in places where crime often happens.[216]

Cities must ensure their community engagement reflects the demographics of their communities and focus on communities that are the most affected by violence or are the highest utilizers of public safety services. In Mecklenburg County, community engagement included people who were incarcerated.[217] Providing supportive resources such as child care makes it easier for people, particularly people from communities most affected by violence, to participate in engagement activities.[218] When individuals are participating in long-term engagement roles, cities need to seek out opportunities to compensate people for their work to ensure that engagement is accessible to all.[219]

Engaging organizations will allow cities to form meaningful partnerships, learn from the successes and challenges of past efforts, and ensure that new programs complement existing resources. Early and continuous engagement of community partners will ensure an ecosystem of support that responders can tap into to meet their diverse needs. Partnerships with research organizations and educational institutions can also play a critical role in creating pipelines for professionals and supporting the evaluation of programs once implemented by collecting and analyzing data on program outcomes.[220] Many cities have found that building capacity for data collection and reporting, through data dashboards and other information-sharing techniques, has played a key role in their ability to market the plans and successful outcomes of programs.

How can new programs and roles be ensured to be financially sustainable?

Ensuring sustainable funding is critical to building up and maintaining expanded public safety roles and programs.[221] Even before a program is ready to deliver services, cities must have identified program funding and invested in planning, training, and purchasing of necessary equipment.[222] Available funding for public safety initiatives changes over time as grant programs expire, cities face changes in local leadership, and private and public investment levels fluctuate. By developing long-term financial plans that rely on diverse funding streams from federal, state, local, and private sources,[223] cites can anticipate and prepare for future gaps in funding[224] while planting the seeds for expansion.

Sustainable local funding streams

To prioritize local investments in the public safety workforce, cities have developed strategies to direct resources within their local budgets to these programs or to generate new tax revenue for that purpose:

- **General fund allocations.** General funds, which consist mainly of money from taxes and fees, can serve as a source of funding for new programs and public safety roles. For example, the Albuquerque Community Safety Department started with $1.2 million in funding from the city's general fund and continues to rely on it for part of its funding.[225] Mayors can use their executive budgeting power to make these allocations, often approved by a local legislative body. Programs in Providence, Rhode Island, are also funded partially by general fund allocations.[226]

- **Tax revenue.** Jurisdictions may fund new public safety programs by earmarking specific tax revenue for public safety purposes. Some jurisdictions have created new taxes via a ballot measure, while others have redirected existing taxes.[227] California has passed legislation to, and seven other states have introduced legislation that would, create a new tax on firearms and ammunition that could be used to support violence prevention and intervention strategies.[228] In other jurisdictions, money from property or sales taxes has been diverted to support investments in behavioral health services.[229] In Denver, 10 percent of the revenue raised by a voter-approved 0.25 percent increase in sales and use taxes is used to support jail alternatives such as co-responder programs.[230] The mobile crisis response services in Sonoma County, California,[231] are funded from a 1 percent income tax on annual incomes greater than $1 million.[232]

While there may be barriers to leveraging tax revenue since the ability and effort needed to change tax policies vary from city to city, this approach can provide sustainable funding that will not diminish based on budget or political leadership changes. This helps guard against lapses in funding that may jeopardize program sustainability.[233] New taxes are most supported when they are simple and people can understand their benefits.[234] In 2023, King County, Washington, passed a property tax levy that is expected to raise $1.25 billion over the next nine years to support behavioral health services, including investing in the behavioral health workforce.[235]

When possible, jurisdictions should seek funding for new public safety programs within local government through budget appropriations or designated tax sources, as this is often the most consistent and sustainable source of funding.[236] New responder programs depend on consistent funding to be successful and sustainable in the long term. Even when dedicated funding is available within city or county budgets for programs or city structures, it is often inadequate to meet the diverse needs of communities. To address funding limitations, jurisdictions should look to a variety of federal, state, local, and private grant funding sources for additional and sustainable support.

Grants

Federal, state, local, and private grants can serve as an important source of funding for jurisdictions. Historically, federal grants have played a critical role in supporting the creation and expansion of new programs and public safety workforce roles, particularly in the form of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants, which have supported the development of civilian-led public safety programs across the country.[237] While the U.S. Department of Justice has been a source of funding for public safety initiatives, other agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education also offer grants that can be used to start or expand programs.[238] However, the availability of federal grant resources is subject to change with new administrations. For example, the Trump administration has departed significantly from previous federal funding practices, going as far as to terminate some previously awarded grants midcycle.[239] The future of many other federal grant programs remains uncertain.

Read more:
A Guide to the Application Process for U.S. Department of Justice Grants

Without these critical federal grants, it will be even more important for states and localities to develop their own grant opportunities that can support the creation of pilot programs and sustain public safety response programs. Jurisdictions should develop multiyear grants to ensure that there is enough time for grantees to demonstrate the positive impacts of investment and to create opportunities for

stable employment for new professionals. These grants can help quell any anxiety caused by short-term funding, and they give programs more years to demonstrate impact in the community. Below are examples of these efforts in practice:

- **Anti-Violence Community Expansion Grant program.** Launched in 2019 in the city of Philadelphia, the Anti-Violence Community Expansion Grant program provides funding through three different grants: 1) the Targeted Community Investment Grant; 2) the Community Capacity Grant; and 3) the Community Expansion Grant (CEG).[240] These grants support organizations' work to reduce gun violence in the city "through trauma-informed healing and restorative practices and safe havens and mentorship."[241] CEG funds were unrestricted, which supported staff training and mental health resources, and grantees were also provided with technical assistance to support their ability to collect data. Importantly, investments in this grant program are complemented by the millions of dollars in other investments the city of Philadelphia made to support a "multi-disciplinary approach" to gun violence.[242]

- In 2023, Michigan's approved budget included CVI program funding. In response, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services allocated $12.6 million in grant funding to support organizations doing this important work. The funding could be used to provide direct services and support employment and job training.[243]

Private grants from individual donors or philanthropic organizations can also be used to invest in new programs and test new program models without relying on local funds. There is growing interest among philanthropic organizations, some based locally, to provide funding to communities nationwide. Private funding may be more flexible than other types of grants,[244] which can be helpful to get programs off the ground but should not be relied upon for long-term funding. If these new programs are found to be effective, they can be scaled with the support of public dollars.

The availability of federal and private funds may change over time, and the capacity needed to continuously apply for grants or meet grant requirements may be too burdensome for some jurisdictions. Because of this, it is best to use this type of funding to cover one-time costs rather than relying on a funding stream that may not be available long term for general operation costs. Because the goal of this process is to expand the workforce over the long term, cities and programs must have a clear understanding of their budgets to ensure that they can appropriately compensate professionals and sustain new programs.

Tips for developing financially sustainable programs

- **Develop long-term financial plans to ensure the most efficient and effective use of funds.** Long-term plans can help cities plan for the most efficient use of resources, such as using the most restrictive funding first or allocating one-time funds for startup costs or one-off expenses to avoid creating dependence on a limited funding stream.[245]

- **Build the capacity of local organizations to apply for and accept grants.** Many cities have found that while there are often many organizations providing critical services for their communities, these organizations lack the capacity to apply for grants and complete the necessary evaluation requirements. In response, some cities have launched new programs to ensure that organizations have greater capacity to accept grant funding. In St. Louis, the OVP developed a training program to help community organizations build that capacity.[246] In Mecklenburg County, the Peacekeepers Academy helps organizations with tasks such as mission honing, budget development, or the creation of an elevator pitch for their programs.[247]

- **Use data from program evaluations to garner support for new programs.** In many cases, cities have leveraged outcome data to support the creation or expansion of public safety programs.[248] In Houston, Champions translated program outcomes into a "digestible report" that allowed the positive effects to be easily understood.[249]

- **Create roles for professionals who are dedicated to financial sustainability.** Applying for grants takes a great deal of time and organizational capacity. For this reason, it is recommended that jurisdictions dedicate sufficient staffing resources to grant seeking and ensure there is capacity to meet grant requirements. In jurisdictions where there are city offices that coordinate among the public safety workforce, it can be helpful to have at least one financial or grant specialist role to map out a long-term budget and focus on acquiring grant funding.[250]

Conclusion

Expanding the public safety workforce to include a more diverse range of specially trained professionals will help cities better meet the needs of communities and reduce the strain on police, fire, EMS, and dispatch professionals. By creating new professional roles and programs, cities can deliver public safety responses that complement and fill the gaps of existing workforces. While each city's approach to expanding its public safety workforce will look different, keeping the above considerations in mind during the design of new programs and city offices will help ensure that implemented strategies effectively deliver on safety outcomes and are sustainable. Specifically, cities can use data to design and implement new public safety roles; identify key experiences, skills, and training needed to create a prepared workforce; build new city infrastructure and diverse funding streams to support the workforce; and engage government and community stakeholders to ensure that the workforce can deliver on public safety outcomes.

Acknowledgments

The authors of this report would like to thank and express our gratitude to the many reviewers whose invaluable feedback helped strengthen this report: Mariela Ruiz-Angel from the Center for Innovations in Community Safety at Georgetown Law; Erica Atwood from Cities United; Jordan Costa from Giffords Center for Violence Prevention; Amos Irwin from Law Enforcement Action Partnership; Scarlet Neath from Policing Project at NYU Law; Jason Lerner and Rebecca Neusteter from the University of Chicago Health Labs; Jackson Beck from the Vera Institute of Justice; and Chandler Hall, Veronica Goodman, Jill Rosenthal, Mia Ives-Rublee, Karla Walter, and Nick Wilson from the Center for American Progress.

Appendix

TABLE 1

Interviews with jurisdiction leaders and subject matter experts

Interview date	Jurisdiction	Interviewee name	Interviewee role and organization
May 28, 2024	N/A	Arnitta Holliman	Formerly Director Gun Violence Prevention, Center for American Progress
June 28, 2024	Mecklenburg County, North Carolina	Tracie Campbell	Formerly Senior Health Manager, Mecklenburg County Office of Violence Prevention
June 20, 2024	St. Louis, Missouri	Wilford Pinkney	Formerly Director, Saint Louis Office of Violence Prevention
April 3, 2024	Houston, Texas	Latosha Selexman	Bureau Chief, City of Houston
April 3, 2024		Deborah A. Moore	Chief of Staff, City of Houston
March 8, 2024	St. Paul, Minnesota	Brittney Baker	Captain, Saint Paul Fire Department
March 8, 2024		Brooke Blakey	Director, Saint Paul Office of Neighborhood safety
March 8, 2024		Stacy Hohertz	District Chief, Saint Paul
March 8, 2024		Rachael Holzemer	Deputy Director, Saint Paul Office of Neighborhood Safety
March 8, 2024		Steven Sampson	Fire Safety Officer, Saint Paul Fire Department
October 10, 2023	N/A	Rebecca Neusteter	Executive Director, University of Chicago Health Lab
October 10, 2023		Jason Lerner	Director of Programs, University of Chicago Health Lab
October 3, 2023	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Mariela Ruiz-Angel	Formerly Director, Albuquerque Community Safety Department
October 3, 2023	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Taylor Crouch-Dodson	Director of External Affairs, Canopy Roots
October 3, 2023		Candace Hanson	Executive Director, Canopy Mental Health & Consulting
September 25, 2023	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Courtney M. Scott	Senior Director of Impact, Cities United; Formerly Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Mayor Sharon Weston Broome

Endnotes

1 While “first responder” has a technical, statutory definition, the authors of this report use this term broadly to refer to the professionals who have traditionally provided first responses in communities: police, fire, EMS, and dispatch. The phrase “public safety workforce” is meant to include both traditional first responders and professionals in new responder roles, who may end up functioning as a first response in some cities.

2 Jacob Gottlieb and Julia Baur, “The Municipal Workforce Through the Pandemic: Where Are We Now?” (Washington: National League of Cities, 2022), available at https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Municipal-Workforce-Through-the-Pandemic-Brief.pdf.

3 Justin D. Levinson and Dawn Milan, “Building Community-Based Emergency Response Systems” (San Francisco and Landers, CA: Data for Progress and The Justice Collaborative Institute, 2020), available at https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/emergency-first-responders.pdf.

4 Alexandria Police, “Inside the World of Law Enforcement: Primary Duties, Public Safety, Community Policing and More,” available at https://joinapdla.org/inside-the-world-of-law-enforcement-primary-duties-public-safety-community-policing-and-more/#:~:text=The%20primary%20duties%20of%20a%20police%20officer%20include%20protecting%20the,and%20issuing%20citations%20or%20warnings (last accessed June 2025).

5 International Association of Chiefs of Police, “Naloxone: Concepts and Issues Paper” (Alexandria, VA: 2017), available at https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/NaloxonePaper2017.pdf.

6 Joshua Bucher and Hashim Q. Zaidi, “A Brief History of Emergency Medical Services in the United States,” Emergency Medicine Residents’ Association, available at https://www.emra.org/about-emra/history/ems-history (last accessed July 2025); Emergency Medical Services Systems Act, S. 2410, 93 Cong., 1 sess. (September 13, 1973), available at https://www.congress.gov/bill/93rd-congress/senate-bill/2410#:~:text=Emergency%20Medical%20Services%20Systems%20Act%20%2D%20Provides%2C%20under%20the%20Public%20Health,and%20operating%20an%20emergency%20medical.

7 In recent years, there has been a growing movement for 911 professionals to be reclassified at the national level as “protective service” rather than their current classification, “administrative support.” This reclassification will ensure that these professionals have access to “high quality, consistent minimum training, wellbeing support, compensation, and career paths.” While the push for national reclassification continues, some states, such as California and Washington, have opted to reclassify on their own. Regardless of their classification, dispatchers play a critical role in delivering first responses. As such, when the authors of this report use the term “first responder,” 911 professionals are included. UChicago Health Lab, “Transform911 Blueprint For Change” (Chicago: 2022), available at https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/voices.uchicago.edu/dist/e/2911/files/2022/08/Transform911-Blueprint-for-Change.pdf.

8 Amos Irwin and Rachael Eisenberg, “Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2023), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/dispatching-community-responders-to-911-calls/.

9 Ibid.

10 Amos Irwin and Betsy Pearl, “The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call” (Washington: Center for American Progress and Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2020), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/community-responder-model/.

11 Vera Institute of Justice, “911 Analysis: Call Data Shows We Can Rely Less On Police” (New York: 2022), available at https://vera-institute.files.svdcdn.com/production/downloads/publications/911-analysis-we-can-rely-less-on-police.pdf.

12 Nazish Dholakia, “Most 911 Calls Have Nothing To Do With Crime. Why Are We Still Sending Police?”, Vera Institute of Justice, April 22, 2022, available at https://www.vera.org/news/most-911-calls-have-nothing-to-do-with-crime-why-are-we-still-sending-police.

13 Brian Rinker, “Can Peers Power the Mental Health Workforce of the Future?”, MindSiteNews, October 22, 2022, available at https://mindsitenews.org/2022/10/22/can-peers-power-the-mental-health-workforce-of-the-future/.

14 Ashley Abramson, “Building mental health into emergency response,” American Psychological Association, July 1, 2021, available at https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/07/emergency-responses#:~:text=It’s%20estimated%20that%20at%20least,departments%2C%20that%20demand%20is%20growing.

15 Doris A. Fuller and others, “Overlooked in the Undercounted: The Role of Mental Illness in Fatal Law Enforcement Encounters” (Alexandria, VA: Treatment Advocacy Center, 2015), available at https://www.tac.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Overlooked-in-the-Undercounted.pdf.

16 Mia Ives-Rublee and Christina Stafford, “Long-Term Solutions to the Overincarceration of People With Mental Health Disabilities” (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2024), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/long-term-solutions-to-the-overincarceration-of-people-with-mental-health-disabilities/.

17 Peer specialists, individuals who come from the same communities and often have lived experience with behavioral health symptoms or crisis, are valued parts of community responder teams. Because of their shared background, peers can connect with clients in unique ways that other professionals typically cannot. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “Peer Support Services Across the Crisis Continuum” (Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022), available at https://988crisissystemshelp.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/tacc-peer-support-services-pep24-01-019.pdf.

18 Irwin and Eisenberg, “Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls.”

19 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, “Community Responder Program Staffing,” available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/expanding-first-response/the-toolkit/staffing/ (last accessed August 2024).

20 Indeed.com, “Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) EMT-B,” available at https://www.indeed.com/viewjob?jk=6545aa0e972294a0&tk=1i7m9rsoti97m88g&from=serp&vjs=3 (last accessed August 2025).

21 Indeed.com, "Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) – Licensed Clinician or on licensure track," available at https://www.indeed.com/viewjob?jk=a3567414cf9d88f2&tk=1i7m9pe17k3fr898&from=serp&vjs=3 (last accessed August 2025).

22 Urban Strategies Council, "Antioch Care Team (ACT) Program Development Report" (Oakland, CA: 2021), available at https://www.antiochca.gov/fc/community/announcements/Antioch-Care-Team.pdf.

23 City of Durham, "Community Safety," available at https://www.durhamnc.gov/4576/Community-Safety (last accessed June 2025).

24 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Holistic Empathetic Assistance Response Team (HEART) - Durham, NC," September 18, 2024, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/expanding-first-response/program-highlights/durham-nc/.

25 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Our Programs," available at https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiMWQ1YzViMGYtYmI1MC00NWM3LTg1NWUtMjdjNzk3NWNlYzU0IiwidCI6IjI5N2RlZjgyLTk0MzktNDM4OC1hODA4LTM1NDhhNGVjZjQ3ZCJ9&pageName=ReportSection7606ef27f6ee056e6f9f (last accessed July 2025).

26 Ibid.

27 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Holistic Empathetic Assistance Response Team (HEART) - Durham, NC."

28 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Our Programs."

29 Ibid.

30 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Holistic Empathetic Assistance Response Team (HEART) - Durham, NC."

31 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Staff," available at https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiMWQ1YzViMGYtYmI1MC00NWM3LTg1NWUtMjdjNzk3NWNlYzU0IiwidCI6IjI5N2RlZjgyLTk0MzktNDM4OC1hODA4LTM1NDhhNGVjZjQ3ZCJ9&pageName=ReportSection7606ef27f6ee056e6f9f (last accessed July 2025).

32 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Community Safety Crisis Response Pilots," available at https://www.durhamnc.gov/Faq.aspx?QID=755 (last accessed June 2025).

33 University of North Carolina School of Social Work, "Welcome to the North Carolina Certified Peer Support Specialist Program," available at https://pss.unc.edu/ (last accessed July 2025).

34 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Community Safety Crisis Response Pilots."

35 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Sample Heart Academy Schedule," available at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LqVpon-eFi_woLsmb812PGYZogfV3H4w/edit?gid=2103860746#gid=2103860746 (last accessed June 2025).

36 Ibid.

37 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Community Safety Crisis Response Pilots."

38 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Sample Heart Academy Schedule."

39 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Staff."

40 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Neighbors," available at https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiMWQ1YzViMGYtYmI1MC00NWM3LTg1NWUtMjdjNzk3NWNlYzU0IiwidCI6IjI5N2RlZjgyLTk0MzktNDM4OC1hODA4LTM1NDhhNGVjZjQ3ZCJ9&pageName=ReportSection7606ef27f6ee056e6f9f (last accessed July 2025).

41 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Community Safety," available at https://www.durhamnc.gov/4576/Community-Safety (last accessed June 2025).

42 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Community Safety Crisis Response Pilots."

43 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Community Safety."

44 Ibid.

45 Dayton Mediation Center, "Our Team," available at https://www.daytonmediationcenter.org/staff (last accessed November 2024); Cornelius Fink, "Dayton mediation unit de-escalates disputes that used to go to police," *Dayton Daily News*, August 19, 2024, available at https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/dayton-mediation-unit-de-escalates-disputes-that-used-to-go-to-police/E4ARZ5Q5UREZFHQVFD5EYEMZKE/.

46 Ashtan Grace Towles, "Explainer: A Breakdown of Community Responder Program Staff Models and Structures," The Council of State Governments Justice Center, September 7, 2021, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/2021/09/07/explainer-a-breakdown-of-community-responder-program-staff-models-and-structures/.

47 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Mediation Response Unit – Dayton, Ohio," December 2022, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/expanding-first-response/program-highlights/dayton-oh/.

48 Ibid.

49 Frolik, "Dayton mediation unit de-escalates disputes that used to go to police."

50 Dayton Mediation Center, "Mediation Response Unit"; ibid.

51 Dayton Mediation Center, "Mediation Response Unit."

52 Law & Mental Health Conference, "Dayton Mediation Response Unit: Conflict to Conversation in the Community," August 7, 2023, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6UcRGzSTq4.

53 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Mediation Response Unit – Dayton, Ohio"; Dayton Mediation Center, "Our Team."

54 Ibid.

55 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Mediation Response Unit – Dayton, Ohio."

56 City of Dayton, "Mediation Response Specialist II," available at https://www.jobapscloud.com/DaytonOhio/sup/bulpreview.asp?R1=23&R2=7210&R3=002 (last accessed June 2025).

57 Ibid.

58 The Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Mediation Response Unit – Dayton, Ohio."

59 Hadley Fitzgerald and Risë Haneberg, "Building a Comprehensive and Coordinated Crisis System" (New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2021), available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/building-a-comprehensive-and-coordinated-crisis-system/.

60 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care: Best Practice Toolkit" (Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020), available at https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/national-guidelines-for-behavioral-health-crisis-services-executive-summary-02242020.pdf; Jessica Gillooly, Tamara Leech, and Brenda Bond-Fortier, "Transforming Denver's First Response Model: Lessons in Multi-level Systems Change" (New York: NYU School of Law Policing Project, 2023), available at https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/622ba34c0b752e795eb9334b/6508ac471a0f4d1d8b8d93ab_T.

61 Canopy Roots, "Mobile Mental Health Crisis Response," available at https://www.canopyrootsmn.com/crisis-response (last accessed July 2025).

62 City and County of Denver, "Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) Program," available at https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directory/Public-Health-Environment/Community-Behavioral-Health/Behavioral-Health-Strategies/Support-Team-Assisted-Response-STAR-Program?lang_update=638728022880528243 (last accessed June 2025).

63 City of Antioch, California, "Public Safety and Community Resources," available at https://www.antiochca.gov/pscr/angelo-quinto-community-response-team-aqcrt/ (last accessed July 2025).

64 Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative, "A new approach to community safety and wellness," available at https://www.atlantapad.org/ (last accessed July 2025).

65 Chandler Hall, "COVID-19's Impact on Gun Violence in America" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2025), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/covid-19s-impact-on-gun-violence-in-america/.

66 Chandler Hall, "2024 Sees Smallest Summer Surge in Gun Violence Rates in 6 Years" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2024), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/2024-sees-smallest-summer-surge-in-gun-violence-rates-in-6-years/.

67 Rachael Eisenberg and Terell Thomas, "Centering Youth in Community Violence Interventions as Part of a Comprehensive Approach to Countering Gun Violence" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2022), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/centering-youth-in-community-violence-interventions-as-part-of-a-comprehensive-approach-to-countering-gun-violence/.

68 Allison Jordan, "6 Ways Cities and Counties Can Reduce Gun Violence" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2024), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/6-ways-cities-and-counties-can-reduce-gun-violence/.

69 Akua Amaning and Hassen Bashir, "Community-Based Violence Interventions: Proven Strategies To Reduce Violent Crime," Center for American Progress, June 15, 2022, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/community-based-violence-interventions-proven-strategies-to-reduce-violent-crime/.

70 Nick Wilson and Chandler Hall, "Community Violence Intervention: James Timpson and Roca's Use of CBT," Center for American Progress, March 21, 2024, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/community-violence-intervention-james-timpson-and-rocas-use-of-cbt/.

71 Roca, "Who We Are," available at https://rocainc.org/who-we-are/overview/ (last accessed June 2025).

72 Wilson and Hall, "Community Violence Intervention: James Timpson and Roca's Use of CBT."

73 National Network For Safe Communities at John Jay College, "Group Violence Intervention."

74 Amaning and Bashir, "Community-Based Violence Interventions" Proven Strategies To Reduce Violent Crime."

75 Chandler Hall, Nick Wilson, and Arnitta R. Holliman, "Debunking CVI Myths: Frontline Workers Are Not Professionals," Center for American Progress, December 21, 2023, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/debunking-cvi-myths-frontline-workers-are-not-professionals/.

76 Wilson and Hall, "Community Violence Intervention: James Timpson and Roca's Use of CBT."

77 Colleen Barbero and others, "Community Health Worker Activities in Public Health Programs to Prevent Violence: Coding Roles and Scope," *American Journal of Public Health* 112 (8) (2022): 1191–1201, available at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9342815/#tbl2.

78 Health Alliance for Violence Intervention and others, "CVI Ecosystem," available at https://www.cviecosystem.org/ (last accessed June 2025).

79 Advance Peace, "Home," available at https://www.advancepeace.org/ (last accessed January 2025).

80 Chicago CRED, "A Holistic Approach To Gun Violence Prevention," available at https://www.chicagocred.org/our-approach/ (last accessed June 2025).

81 Roca, "How We Do It," available at https://rocainc.org/how-we-do-it/our-intervention-model/ (last accessed June 2025).

82 Cure Violence Global, "Proven Strategies for Safer Communities," available at https://cvg.org/ (last accessed January 2025).

83 Chicago CRED, "A Holistic Approach To Gun Violence Prevention."

84 Arne Duncan, "We Know How To Prevent Gun Violence. Now We Need to Scale It.", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, July 14, 2022, available at https://ssir.org/articles/entry/we_know_how_to_prevent_gun_violence_now_we_need_to_scale_it#:~:text=Chicago%20CRED's%20%2425%20million%20annual,violence%20prevention%20organizations%20in%20Chicago.

85 Chicago CRED, "CRED Team," available at https://www.chicagocred.org/team/ (last accessed January 2025).

86 Chicago CRED, "CRED Clinical Team," available at https://www.chicagocred.org/cred-clinical-team/ (last accessed January 2025).

87 Chicago CRED, "CRED Program Team," available at https://www.chicagocred.org/cred-program-team/ (last accessed January 2025).

88 Chicago CRED, "CRED Outreach Team," available at https://www.chicagocred.org/cred-outreach-team/ (last accessed January 2025).

89 Duncan, "We Know How to Prevent Gun Violence. Now We Need to Scale It."

90 Chicago CRED, "Reducing Gun Violence in Chicago," available at https://www.chicagocred.org/ (last accessed January 2025.

91 Jordan, "6 Ways Cities and Counties Can Reduce Gun Violence."

92 Irwin and Pearl, "The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call."

93 Police Executive Research Forum, "Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff to Advance Modern Policing" (Washington: 2024), available at https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Civilianization.pdf.

94 Reems Landreth, "Civilian crash investigator program launched in Gastonia," WCNC, August 30, 2024, available at https://www.wcnc.com/article/traffic/gastonia-civilian-crash-investigator-program/275-f908f040-d4ce-4737-8b1c-918d23aa2aa9.

95 Montgomery County, Maryland, "Office Services Coordinator," available at https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/montgomerycountymd/jobs/newprint/4720359 (last accessed June 2025).

96 County of Henrico Police Division, "Telephone Reporting Unit Specialist," available at https://www.tealhq.com/job/telephone-reporting-unit-specialist_6f34360b-5a8d-45e6-bf32-caa2e29a5289 (last accessed June 2025).

97 District of Columbia Department of Human Resources, "Customer Service Representative," available at https://careerpaths.dc.gov/page/customer-service-representative (last accessed June 2025).

98 Ibid.

99 County of Henrico Police Division, "Telephone Reporting Unit Specialist."

100 District of Columbia Department of Human Resources, "Customer Service Representative."

101 City of Denver, "Office of Human Resources Civilian Report Technician Lead," available at https://denver.prelive.opencities.com/files/assets/public/v/1/job-center/documents/jobspecifications/civilian_report_technician_lead_cn3357.pdf (last accessed July 2025).

102 Washington, D.C., Office of Unified Communications, "Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU)," available at https://ouc.dc.gov/page/telephone-reporting-unit-tru (last accessed June 2025).

103 District of Columbia Department of Human Resources, "Customer Service Representative."

104 Washington, D.C., Office of Unified Communications, "Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU)."

105 City of Denver, "Office of Human Resources Civilian Report Technician Lead."

106 Jeff Asher and Ben Horowitz, "How Do the Police Actually Spend Their Time?", *The New York Times*, June 19, 2020, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/upshot/unrest-police-time-violent-crime.html.

107 Police Executive Research Forum, "Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff To Advance Modern Policing."

108 Landreth, "Civilian crash investigator program launched in Gastonia."

109 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, "Civilian Crash Investigation Unit - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)," available at https://www.charlottenc.gov/files/assets/police/v/1/documents/civilian-crash-investigation-unit-faq.pdf (last accessed July 2025).

110 FOX8 WGHP, "Greensboro civilian traffic investigators help respond to crashes," YouTube, December 17, 2024, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=mTpjsLedoQA.

111 Kenwyn Caranna, "N.C. bill to free up officers by implementing civilian traffic investigators," Police 1, June 27, 2023, available at https://www.police1.com/traffic-enforcement/articles/nc-bill-to-free-up-officers-by-implementing-civilian-traffic-investigators-OPTY6EZW34GfdvKv/.

112 WFMY News 2, "Greensboro Police Department deploys new crash investigation team," YouTube, April 4, 2024, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=hm803hUPkEs.

113 FOX8 WGHP, "Greensboro civilian traffic investigators help respond to crashes."

114 WFMY News 2, "Greensboro Police Department deploys new crash investigation team."

115 City of Raleigh, "Civilian Traffic Investigator," available at https://www.tealhq.com/job/civilian-traffic-investigator_a6166e9e-799f-4efe-95fb-8db131e13e97?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic (last accessed July 2025).

116 CBS News Colorado, "Civilian Crash Investigators Added To Denver Police Force," May 31, 2017, available at https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/civilian-crash-investigators-denver-police/.

117 Baltimore Police Department, "Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU)," available at https://www.baltimorepolice.org/transparency/bpd-policies/506-telephone-reporting-unit-tru (last accessed August 2024); Washington, D.C., Office of Unified Communications, "Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU)."

118 City of Minneapolis, "Online Police Report," available at https://www.minneapolismn.gov/report-an-issue/online-police-report/ (last accessed June 2025).

119 City of New Orleans, "File a Police Report: Report Non-Emergency Incidents Online," available at https://nola.gov/file-a-police-report/ (last accessed June 2025).

120 City of Denver, "Office of Human Resources Civilian Report Technician Lead."

121 Jennifer Roberts, "New N.C. law allows trained civilians to investigate traffic crashes," Spectrum News 1, July 21, 2023, available at https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2023/07/21/new-law-permitting-trained-civilians-to-investigate-traffic-collisions-.

122 CBS News Colorado, "Civilian Crash Investigators Added To Denver Police Force."

123 Caranna, "N.C. bill to free up officers by implementing civilian traffic investigators."

124 Ibid.

125 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, "Civilian Crash Investigation Unit - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)."

126 Roberts, "New N.C. law allows trained civilians to investigate traffic crashes."

127 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police, "Civilian Crash Investigations," YouTube, December 12, 2024, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&si=RozcbGkFCJhu9j4T&v=cnBhgC8WPFc&feature=youtu.be.

128 General Assembly of North Carolina, H.B. 140 (2023), available at https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2023/Bills/House/PDF/H140v5.pdf.

129 Caranna, "N.C. bill to free up officers by implementing civilian traffic investigators."

130 General Assembly of North Carolina, H.B. 140.

131 Kevin Griffin, "N.C. city to create civilian traffic investigation unit," Police 1, April 22, 2024, available at https://www.police1.com/traffic-enforcement/n-c-city-to-create-civilian-traffic-investigation-unit.

132 Landreth, "Civilian crash investigator program launched in Gastonia."

133 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, "Civilian Crash Investigation Unit - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)"; WFMY News 2, "Greensboro Police Department deploys new crash investigation team."

134 General Assembly of North Carolina, H.B. 140.

135 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, "New Unit to Reduce Patrol Time Spent on Minor Crashes," Press release, December 11, 2024, available at http://charlottenc.gov/cmpd/News-Information/Newsroom/New-Unit-to-Reduce-Patrol-Time-Spent-on-Minor-Crashes.

136 Matt Ferner, "Three Things to Read This Week," Safer Cities, November 5, 2024, available at https://safercities-research.com/the-latest/7kkmf22w3nmsnl75w5zh2nxpmd3j65.

137 John Gerding, "Downtown Public Safety Ambassadors to provide St. Louis additional layer of security," Spectrum News, October 1, 2024, available at https://spectrumlocalnews.com/mo/st-louis/news/2024/10/01/gsl-ambassadors-downtown-st-louis-public-safety.

138 Midtown Atlanta, "Untangling Homelessness: Midtown Blue and PAD Partnership Accelerates Supportive Housing Efforts," October 7, 2021, available at https://www.midtownatl.com/news-center/post/untangling-homelessness-midtown-blue-and-pad-partnership-accelerates-supportive-housing-efforts.

139 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "The 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress" (Washington: 2024), available at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf.

140 Victoria Vantol, "Why Don't Homeless People in LA Stay in Shelters?", Invisible People, January 24, 2022, available at https://invisiblepeople.tv/why-dont-homeless-people-in-la-stay-in-shelters/.

141 *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson et al.* (2023), available at https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/23pdf/23-175_19m2.pdf.

142 Rafael Alemán, "Addressing the Risks and Concerns of Homeless Encampments," Pittsburgh Bio-One, available at https://www.pittsburghbioone.com/addressing-the-risks-and-concerns-of-homeless-encampments/#:~:text=Physical%20Hazards,significant%20threat%20to%20public%20safety (last accessed June 2025).

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Joy Moses, "Working with Unsheltered People: Findings from the Alliance's Workforce Survey," Homeless Research Institute, April 25, 2024, available at https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UnshelteredWorkforceReport-4-25-24_finalupdated.pdf.

146 Allie Preston, "5 Ways Cash Bail Systems Undermine Community Safety," Center for American Progress, November 3, 2022, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/5-ways-cash-bail-systems-undermine-community-safety/#:~:text=This%20issue%20brief%20highlights%20five,relationships%2C%20and%205)%20housing.

147 DC Department of Human Services, "Comprehensive Street Outreach Network," available at https://dhs.dc.gov/page/comprehensive-street-outreach-network (last accessed July 2024).

148 Pathways to Housing DC, "What We Do: Homeless Street Outreach," available at https://pathwaystohousingdc.org/what-we-do/homeless-street-outreach/ (last accessed July 2024).

149 Ibid.

150 Public Transportation Gets Us Here, "Transit Facts," available at https://www.publictransportation.org/transit-facts/#:~:text=QUICK%20FACTS&text=34%20million%20times%20each%20weekday,transportation%20in%20the%20United%20States (last accessed December 2024).

151 Dan Zukowski, "With attacks on public transit up, cities struggle to make riders feel safer," Smart Cities Dive, September 14, 2022, available at https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/us-leads-violent-transit-crimes-nyc-los-angeles-san-francisco-philadelphia/631738/.

152 Cathy Bussewitz, "Yoga, meditation and prayer: Urban transit professionals cope with violence and fear on the job," Associated Press, July 19, 2024, available at https://apnews.com/article/transit-professionals-crime-urban-violence-fear-meditation-244297c38b71e0a5a802328d-4825be44.

153 Lindiwe Rennert, "Assaults on Transit Workers Have Tripled in the Past 15 Years. Income Inequality and Societal Tensions Have Contributed.", Urban Institute, November 28, 2023, available at https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/assaults-transit-workers-have-tripled-past-15-years-income-inequality-and-societal.

154 Strive, "What is a Transit Ambassador?", available at https://strive2bfit.com/resources/what-is-a-transit-ambassador/ (last accessed December 2024).

155 Eman Abu-Khaled, "GCRTA transit ambassador program; how it's going," Mass Transit, November 19, 2024, available at https://www.masstransitmag.com/safety-security/article/55243079/greater-cleveland-regional-transit-authority-rta-gcrta-transit-ambassador-program-update.

156 Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, "About us," available at https://www.wmata.com/service/Metro-Ambassadors.cfm (last accessed December 2024).

157 Abu-Khaled, "GCRTA transit ambassador program; how it's going."

158 Strive, "What is a Transit Ambassador?"

159 Abu-Khaled, "GCRTA transit ambassador program; how it's going."

160 Steve Scauzillo, "Saving riders from ODs or aiding tourists, LA Metro Ambassadors take 'good with the bad'," *Los Angeles Daily News*, June 10, 2024, available at https://www.dailynews.com/2024/06/07/saving-riders-from-ods-or-aiding-tourists-la-metro-ambassadors-take-good-with-bad/?noamp=mobile.

161 Dani Anguiano, "'We give them second chances': the frontline workers guiding riders through LA's transit system," *The Guardian*, June 17, 2024, available at https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/jun/17/los-angeles-metro-ambassador-program-ridership-crime.

162 Strive, "What is a Transit Ambassador?"

163 Mary C. Norris, "Alternative Non-Emergency Numbers — 988, 311, and 211," Code for America, April 2022, available at https://discourse.codeforamerica.org/t/alternative-non-emergency-numbers-988-311-and-211/1315.

164 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, "If you need to talk, the 988 Lifeline is here," available at https://988lifeline.org/ (last accessed September 2025).

165 Irwin and Eisenberg, "Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls."

166 Lindsey McLendon, Rachael Eisenberg, and Nick Wilson, "Improving Public Safety Through Better Accountability and Prevention" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2024), available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/improving-public-safety-through-better-accountability-and-prevention/.

167 Mecklenburg County, "Office of Violence Prevention," available at https://health.mecknc.gov/population-health/ovp (last accessed January 2025).

168 Irwin and Pearl, "The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call."

169 Amos Irwin, "Three Ways to Conduct a Needs Assessment for a Community Responder Program," The Council of State Governments Justice Center, September 7, 2021, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/2021/09/07/three-ways-to-conduct-a-needs-assessment-for-a-community-responder-program/.

170 Ibid.

171 Ibid.

172 Clifford Courvoiser, "How Community Responder Programs Can Conduct Needs Assessments: A Q&A with the CAHOOTS Program in Eugene, OR," The Council for State Governments Justice Center, December 7, 2021, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/2021/12/07/how-community-responder-programs-can-conduct-needs-assessments-a-qa-with-the-cahoots-program-in-eugene-or/.

173 Mari Bayer, Melissa McKee, and Ashtan Towles, "Emerging Practices to Elevate and Replicate Community Responder Programs Nationwide" (Expanding First Response National Commission, 2024), available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Expanding-First-Response-National-Commission-Report_May2024corrected.pdf.

174 Taylor Crouch-Dodson and Candace Hanson, director of external affairs and executive director, Canopy Roots and Canopy Mental Health & Counseling, interview with author via Zoom, October 3, 2023, on file with author.

175 Jennifer J. Carroll and others, "The Workforce For Non-Police Behavioral Health Crisis Response Doesn't Exist—We Need To Create It," *Health Affairs*, September 8, 2021, available at https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/workforce-non-police-behavioral-health-crisis-response-doesn-t-exist-we-need-create.

176 Vanessa Finisse, "Making the Case for Engaging People with Lived Experience and Expertise in State Behavioral Health Reforms" (Hamilton, NJ: Center for Healthcare Strategies, 2024), available at https://www.chcs.org/resource/making-the-case-for-engaging-people-with-lived-experience-and-expertise-in-state-behavioral-health-reforms/#:~:text=This%20experience%20provides%20valuable%20insights,the%20behavioral%20health%20delivery%20system.

177 Courvoiser, "How Community Responder Programs Can Conduct Needs Assessments: A Q&A with the CAHOOTS Program in Eugene, OR."

178 Regis College, "Master of Social Work: De-escalation Skills and Tips for Mental Health in the Community," May 3, 2023, available at https://online.regiscollege.edu/blog/de-escalation-skills-in-mental-health/.

179 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care."

180 Pearl, "Beyond Policing: Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety."

181 Mariela Ruiz-Angel, director, Albuquerque Community Safety Department, interview with author via Zoom, October 3, 2023, on file with author.

182 City of Durham, North Carolina, "Sample Heart Academy Schedule."

183 Betsy Pearl, "Beyond Policing: Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety," Center for American Progress, October 15, 2020, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/beyond-policing-investing-offices-neighborhood-safety/.

184 Dignity Best Practices, "Field Mediation Launch Toolkit" (Washington: 2025), available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QfJhmIwCpCEvJ9cVbhLwtTe_h06zXz1w/view.

185 Irwin and Eisenberg, "Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls."

186 Bayer, McKee, and Towles, "Emerging Practices to Elevate and Replicate Community Responder Programs Nationwide."

187 Ibid.

188 Rebecca Neusteter and Jason Lerner, executive director and director of programs, University of Chicago Health Lab, interview with authors via Zoom, October 10, 2023, on file with author.

189 Ruiz-Angel, interview with author.

190 Jason Tan de Bibiana and others, "Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety" (New York and Oakland, CA: Vera Institute of Justice and National OVP Network, 2023), available at https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/2023-OVPNS-Report.pdf.

191 National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, "National OVP Network Strategic Plan" (Oakland, CA: 2024), available at https://ovpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/NOVPN-Strategic-Plan-Final.pdf.

192 McLendon, Eisenberg, and Wilson, "Improving Public Safety Through Better Accountability and Prevention."

193 Ibid.

194 City of Albuquerque, "Albuquerque Community Safety," available at https://www.cabq.gov/acs/services/overview (last accessed January 2025).

195 McLendon, Eisenberg, and Wilson, "Improving Public Safety Through Better Accountability and Prevention."

196 Tan de Bibiana and others, "Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety."

197 Tracie Campbell, senior health manager, Mecklenburg County Office of Violence Prevention, interview with authors via Zoom, June 28, 2024, on file with authors; Wilford Pinkney, director, St. Louis Office of Violence Prevention, interview with authors via Zoom, June 20, 2024, on file with authors.

198 Tan de Bibiana and others, "Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety."

199 Crouch-Dodson and Hanson, interview with author.

200 Elizabeth Fleming, "Staffing Community Responder Programs: Q&A with the Olympia (WA) Crisis Response Unit," The Council of State Governments, October 7, 2021, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/2021/10/07/staffing-community-responder-programs-qa-with-the-olympia-wa-crisis-response-unit/.

201 Pinkney, interview with authors.

202 Brooke Conrad, "Baltimore gave $61M – 10% – of its COVID funds to public safety. Where did it go?", *The Baltimore Sun*, November 4, 2024, available at https://www.baltimoresun.com/2024/11/04/baltimore-gave-61-million-of-its-covid-funds-to-public-safety-where-did-it-all-go/.

203 Courtney Scott, assistant chief administrative officer for Mayor Sharon Weston Broome, interview with authors via Zoom, September 25, 2023, on file with authors.

204 Pinkney, interview with authors.

205 Scott, interview with authors.

206 City of Newark, "The Future of Public Safety: Exploring the Power & Possibility of Newark's Reimagined Public Safety Ecosystem" (Newark, NJ: 2023), available at https://newarksafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/TheFutureOfPublicSafety.pdf.

207 Mayor Brandon Scott, "Mayor Brandon M. Scott Building a Better Baltimore" (Baltimore: 2021), available at https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/ActionPlan.pdf.

208 Estelle Timar-Wilcox, "St. Paul leaders announce new public safety initiatives," MPR News, July 15, 2022, available at https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/07/15/st-paul-leaders-announce-new-public-safety-initiatives; Saint Paul, Minnesota, "Community-First Public Safety," available at https://information.stpaul.gov/pages/public-safety (last accessed December 2024).

209 Scott, interview with authors.

210 Safety + Justice Challenge and National Association of Counties, "Five Ways to Engage County Elected Officials In Your Justice Initiatives" (Chicago and Washington: 2021), available at https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/Five%20Ways%20to%20Engage%20County%20Elected%20Officials%20in%20Your%20Justice%20Initiatives.pdf.

211 Scott, interview with authors.

212 Campbell, interview with authors.

213 Irwin and Eisenberg, "Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls."

214 Local Progress Impact Lab, "Reform/Transform: Creating a Community Responder Program" (Washington: 2022), available at https://localprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Reform-Transform-Creating-a-Community-Responder-Program.pdf.

215 Tan de Bibiana and others, "Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety."

216 Pinkney, interview with authors.

217 Chip Brownlee, "Community Input Is Driving This North Carolina County's Approach to Violence Prevention," The Trace, August 29, 2023, available at https://www.thetrace.org/2023/08/gun-violence-mecklenberg-county-nc/.

218 Sarah Wurzburg and Amelia Vorpal, "Funding Community Responder Programs: A Q&A with the CAHOOTS Program in Oregon," The Council of State Governments Justice Center, August 19, 2022, available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/2022/08/19/funding-community-responder-programs-a-qa-with-the-cahoots-program-in-oregon/.

219 Irwin and Eisenberg, "Dispatching Community Responders to 911 Calls."

220 Hernán Flom with Alfredo Malaret Baldo, "Lessons from Effective Offices of Violence Prevention" (Peace in Our Cities, 2024), available at https://stanleycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/OVP-English-Report.pdf.

221 Chandler Hall and Nick Wilson, "Community Violence Intervention: Sustainable Funding for Generational Work," Center for American Progress, May 23, 2024, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/community-violence-intervention-sustainable-funding-for-generational-work/.

222 The Council for State Governments Justice Center, "Financial Sustainability for Community Responder Programs," available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/expanding-first-response/the-toolkit/financial-sustainability-for-community-responder-programs/ (last accessed August 2024).

223 National Association of Counties, "County Funding Opportunities to Support Community Members Experiencing a Behavioral Health Crisis," June 8, 2023, available at https://www.naco.org/resources/county-funding-opportunities-support-community-members-experiencing-behavioral-health.

224 Demetrius Thomas, "Financially Sustaining Behavioral Health-Criminal Justice Programs" (New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2021), available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/financially-sustaining-behavioral-health-criminal-justice-programs/.

225 The Council of State Governments, "Albuquerque Community Safety Department - Albuquerque, NM," available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/expanding-first-response/program-highlights/albuquerque-nm/#:~:text=In%20 Fiscal%20 Year%202021%2C%20 Albuquerque,is%20%247%2C730%2C000%20for%20 61%20positions (last accessed June 2025).

226 Policing Project, "Financing Alternative Response," available at https://www.safetyreimagined.org/designing-a-reimagined-system/financing-alternative-response (last accessed June 2025).

227 Ibid.

228 Chip Brownlee, "Seven States Move to Tax Guns and Ammo," The Trace, March 4, 2024, available at https://www.thetrace.org/2024/03/maryland-tax-bill-guns-ammo/.

229 Jonathan Purtle and others, "Earmarked Taxes for Mental Health Services in the United States: A Local and State Legal Mapping Study," *The Milbank Quarterly*, April 18, 2023, available at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-0009.12643.

230 Policing Project, "Financing Alternative Response."

231 County of Sonoma Behavioral Health Division, "Mobile Crisis Services," available at https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/behavioral-health/services/crisis-services/mobile-crisis-services (last accessed August 2024).

232 National Association of Counties, "County Funding Opportunities to Support Community Members Experiencing a Behavioral Health Crisis," June 8, 2023, available at https://www.naco.org/resources/county-funding-opportunities-support-community-members-experiencing-behavioral-health.

233 Pearl, "Beyond Policing: Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety."

234 Shayne C. Kavanagh, "New Taxes That Work: How Local Governments Can Raise New Revenues" (Chicago: Government Finance Officers Association, 2019), available at https://gfoaorg.cdn.prismic.io/gfoaorg/4067aa0e-c6f1-4bee-a9a1-2b5722b089b7_NewTaxesThatWork2019.pdf.

235 Taylor Blatchford, "King County chooses location for its first levy-funded crisis care center," *Seattle Times*, February 12, 2025, available at https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/king-county-chooses-location-for-its-first-levy-funded-crisis-care-center/.

236 Arnitta Holliman, director of Gun Violence Prevention, Center for American Progress, interview with authors, Washington, D.C., May 28, 2024, on file with author.

237 Ed Lazere, "Using Federal Relief Funds to Invest in Non-Police Approaches to Public Safety" (Washington: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2021), available at https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/using-federal-relief-funds-to-invest-in-non-police-approaches-to.

238 National Association of Counties, "County Funding Opportunities to Support Community Members Experiencing a Behavioral Health Crisis."

239 Akua Amaning and Allie Preston, "The Trump Administration's Unprecedented Cuts to DOJ Grants Undermine Public Safety," Center for American Progress, May 5, 2025, available at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-unprecedented-cuts-to-doj-grants-undermine-public-safety/.

240 City of Philadelphia Office of Public Safety, "Office of Public Safety's Anti-Violence Community Partnership Grants Open Application with $30 million in Funds Available," Press release, October 22, 2024, available at https://www.phila.gov/2024-10-22-office-of-public-safetys-anti-violence-community-partnership-grants-open-application-with-30-million-in-funds-available/.

241 Amaury Avalos, "City of Philadelphia relaunches Community Expansion Grant Program," City of Philadelphia, April 10, 2023, available at https://www.phila.gov/2023-04-10-city-of-philadelphia-relaunches-community-expansion-grant-program/.

242 City of Philadelphia, "2022 Violence Prevention Investments Update" (2022), available at https://www.phila.gov/media/20220331094753/2022-Violence-Prevention-Investments-Update.pdf.

243 Vivian Barrett, "Community violence prevention is a priority in this year's state budget," State News Inc., September 28, 2023, available at https://statenews.com/article/2023/09/mdhhs-allocates-126-million-for-community-violence-prevention?ct=content_open&cv=cbox_featured.

244 Betsy Pearl, "Financing Community Responder Programs" (New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2021), available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Financing-Community-Responder-Programs_FINAL.pdf.

245 The Policing Project, "Financing Alternative Response."

246 Pinkney, interview with authors.

247 Campbell, interview with authors via Zoom.

248 Fitzgerald and Haneberg, "Building a Comprehensive and Coordinated Crisis System."

249 LaTosha Selexman and Deborah Moore, bureau chief, city of Houston, interview with authors via Zoom, April 3, 2024, on file with authors.

250 Holliman, interview with authors.

americanprogress.org

1333 H Street, NW, 10th Floor, Washington, DC 20005 • Tel: 202-682-1611 • Fax: 202-682-1867