



PLANK 14: Invest in violence prevention and non-carceral crisis responses.

Communities will be safest when harms are prevented *before* they arise. The United States balances spending so that dollars disproportionately go to incarceration, surveillance, and other carceral approaches that often undermine safety goals. This prioritization must change; there must be investment in violence interruption, non-911 crisis response, safe passage to school programs, mentorship, streetlights, and the many other non-carceral, non-punitive programs that actually keep families and communities safe. And safety must be redefined so that it includes all aspects of holistic health and wellbeing — school safety, environmental safety, physical and mental health, and workplace safety and labor conditions.

Instead of a system where police are the default response to all emergencies, the norm should be non-carceral, health-centered first responders who can offer assistance without further endangering community members or the person who is experiencing crisis. We must advocate for the investment in the non-carceral, community-based services and supports that prevent harm in the first place: well-paying employment, mental and physical health care, and affordable housing, to name a few.

Only then can the overall incidence of harm be reduced, and genuine safety of all people be embraced.

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State Policy Priorities

Build a new state infrastructure for non-carceral safety

- Create a new entity within the state Department of Health and Human Services^[th41] or its equivalent to oversee and coordinate: (1) research and recommendations on non-carceral, non-punitive interventions, policies, and other practices to bolster community safety; (2) technical assistance on non-carceral, non-punitive approaches to community safety; and (3) grants to fund state governments, local governments, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to implement prevention-oriented, non-carceral, non-punitive approaches to community safety.
- Set up a new youth safety office within the state Department of Health and Human Services or its equivalent, which focuses on holistically supporting youth and on ensuring that every community statewide has a community-led, non-carceral office to holistically support youth, including youth who are involved with the criminal-legal system. Funded programming may include, but is not limited to:
 - Needs assessments of the local population, including attention to the frequency, causes, and underlying drivers of youth criminal-legal involvement;
 - Interagency coordination to support youth safety and facilitate service access;
 - Provision of voluntary trauma-informed health services, counseling, and healing supports;
 - Programs that specifically address bullying, sexual assault, and school-based violence, including violence based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, or any other protected characteristic;
 - Establishment of holistic co-housing, therapeutic foster care, and community centers that include supports for youth experiencing homelessness, youth historically underserved, youth in foster care or otherwise removed from their homes, and system-involved youth;
 - Afterschool, tutoring, enrichment, art, drama, music, poetry, athletics, and other programs that holistically support youth development and success;
 - Employment, apprenticeship, career, scholarship, entrepreneurship, and other programs that provide emergency safety-net assistance, including housing, food, and cash stipends;
 - Programming related to abuse interruption and violence intervention;
 - Intensive care coordination and in-home supports; and

- School-based supports that include counselors, psychologists, social-emotional learning programs, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, wraparound services, alteration of the school's appearance to support rather than antagonize students (*i.e.*, crime prevention through environmental design), and education surrounding healthy relationships and techniques for recognizing and/or appropriately responding to abuse.

Fund local infrastructure for non-carceral safety

- Create a new grant that funds local governments to create community-led entities that (1) conduct safety-related needs assessments of the local community, including mechanisms that explicitly incorporate and center the voices of people who have been directly impacted by criminal-legal harm, violence, and other threats to individual and community safety; (2) make re-grants to address these needs; (3) coordinate with other stakeholders, including government agencies, to ensure that these agencies are coordinating their action and addressing infrastructure gaps to address safety needs; (4) monitor the effectiveness of this safety planning and plan implementation; and (5) create a process for continuous improvement to ensure capacity, sustainability, and expansion of efforts.
- Support statutory, funding, and administrative reforms that invest in communities harmed by mass incarceration and incentivize shifts at the local level to reallocate resources to programs devoted to decarceration, health care, and well-being rather than those that encourage mass criminalization and incarceration.
- Increase spending on programs that prevent violence and harm holistically, including harms related to workplace safety, labor conditions, school, and environmental safety — all of which can and should be encompassed as part of how “community safety” is defined.
- Create a new grant that explicitly funds alternative, non-carceral approaches to crisis response, including the creation of dedicated Offices of Violence Prevention and Crisis Response — whether freestanding or part of a Community Safety Agency — that coordinate community-led programming to prevent violence, provide non-carceral responses when crises are occurring, and provide ongoing supports after crises have ended. Such programming may include, but is not limited to:
 - Non-punitive, unarmed first-responder agencies that address crises and connect individuals with voluntary community-based services where needed;
 - Non-police personnel and partnerships, including voluntary community-based programs that involve conflict resolution, de-escalation, and first aid; and
 - A non-911 emergency response number that can be used to dispatch non-punitive crisis and trauma intervention teams.

- Ensure sustainable funding for community-based organizations that provide voluntary, non-carceral, prevention-oriented services and interventions related to the following:
 - Accountability, including via reparations;
 - Violence reduction and/or prevention, including approaches focused on suicide, youth violence, child abuse, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and firearm violence. Sample programs may include, but are not limited to:
 - Violence and abuse interruption;
 - Neighborhoods mediation;
 - Youth and mentorship programs;
 - Employment, entrepreneurship, cash assistance, and other programs to help build and maintain financial security;
 - Afterschool and enrichment programs; and
 - Infrastructure investments, including park redevelopment, streetlights, and other investments in built design.
 - Public health, access to health care, and services for people with disabilities, including harm reduction-based treatment for mental health and substance use;
 - Housing security, including integrated, “housing first” housing for people experiencing temporary or chronic homelessness;
 - Non-carceral approaches to crisis intervention;
 - Supports for youth and families, including school-based counselors, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, wraparound services, and two-generational programming;
 - Supports for victims, including survivors of sexual violence and rape;
 - Reentry supports; and
 - Capacity-building support to local advocates and community-based organizations.

Promote interagency coordination around non-carceral safety

- Create an interagency task force, led by the state Department of Health and Human Services or its equivalent, to coordinate place-based statewide efforts to leverage holistic, multidisciplinary, non-carceral investments to increase community safety. The task force should ensure that these investments are reaching communities most impacted by mass incarceration.

Reallocate harmful funding flows

- Shift funding from the [drug court model](#) — which often places onerous demands on individuals who require support, not rigid requirements and threats of punishment, to be successful — to community-based programs based on harm reduction principles.



Federal Policy Priorities

Build a new state infrastructure for non-carceral safety

- Ensure the presidential budget redirects resources away from programs that focus on criminalization and toward prevention-focused investments in non-carceral supports, services, and community-led programs, and acknowledge the role that federal funding plays in instigating harmful police practices like excessive force and militarization.
- Set up a new youth safety office within the Department of Health and Human Services, which focuses on holistically supporting youth. Funded programming may include, but is not limited to:
 - Needs assessments of the local population, including attention to the frequency, causes, and underlying drivers of youth criminal-legal involvement;
 - Interagency coordination to support youth safety and facilitate service access;
 - Provision of trauma-informed health services, counseling, and healing supports;
 - Establishment of holistic co-housing and community centers that include supports for youth experiencing homelessness, youth historically underserved, and system-involved youth;
 - Afterschool, tutoring, enrichment, art, drama, music, poetry, athletics, and other programs that holistically support youth development and success;
 - Employment, apprenticeship, career, scholarship, entrepreneurship, and other programs that provide emergency safety-net assistance, including housing, food, and cash stipends;
 - Programming related to non-carceral abuse interruption and violence intervention; and
 - School-based supports that include counselors, psychologists, social-emotional learning programs, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, integrated access to health care (for all students, including students with disabilities), wraparound services, changes to the physical design of school space (*i.e.*, crime prevention through environmental design), and education surrounding healthy relationships and techniques for recognizing and/or appropriately responding to abuse.
- Create a new entity within the federal Department of Health and Human Services to oversee and coordinate: (1) research and recommendations on non-carceral, non-punitive interventions, policies, and other practices to bolster community safety and prevent needless incarceration; and (2) grants to fund state governments, local governments, and community-based organizations to conduct safety-related needs assessments and implement non-carceral, non-punitive, prevention-oriented approaches to community safety. For a model, see Part 5 of the [BREATHE Act](#), which creates a non-carceral, non-punitive Community Public Safety Agency within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Promote interagency coordination around non-carceral safety

- Create an interagency task force, led by the Department of Health and Human Services, to coordinate place-based federal efforts to leverage holistic, multidisciplinary, non-carceral investments to increase community safety.

Fund state and local infrastructure for non-carceral safety

- Increase the federal investment to build the infrastructure of culturally competent and effective community-based health and voluntary MH/SUD services, so that there is capacity in every community, particularly in underserved, low-income communities. Such infrastructure will help reduce and prevent entry into the criminal-legal system.
- Create a new grant that funds local governments to create community-led entities that (1) conduct safety-related needs assessments of the local community, including mechanisms that explicitly incorporate and center the voices of people who have been directly impacted by criminal-legal harm, violence, and other threats to individual and community safety; (2) make re-grants to address these needs; (3) coordinate with other stakeholders, including government agencies, to ensure that these agencies are coordinating their action and addressing infrastructure gaps to address safety needs; and (4) monitor the effectiveness of this safety planning and plan implementation.
- Increase spending on programs that prevent violence and harm holistically, including harms related to workplace safety, labor conditions, school, and environmental safety — all of which can and should be encompassed as part of how “community safety” is defined.
- Create a new grant that explicitly funds alternative, non-carceral approaches to crisis response, including the creation of dedicated Offices of Violence Prevention and Crisis Response — whether freestanding or part of a Community Safety Agency — that coordinate community-led programming to prevent violence, provide non-carceral responses when crises are occurring, and provide ongoing supports after crises have ended. Such programming may include, but is not limited to:
 - Non-punitive, unarmed first-responder agencies;
 - Non-police personnel and partnerships, including community-based programs that involve conflict resolution, de-escalation, and first aid; and
 - A non-911 emergency response number that can be used to dispatch non-punitive crisis and trauma intervention teams.
- Create a new grant that provides sustainable funding for community-based organizations — especially CBOs run by individuals who are directly impacted and who represent the racial diversity of the community served — that provide non-carceral, prevention-oriented services and interventions related to the following:
 - Accountability, including via reparations;
 - Violence reduction and/or prevention, including approaches focused on suicide, youth violence, child abuse, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and firearm violence. Sample programs may include, but are not limited to:

- Violence and abuse interruption;
 - Neighborhoods mediation;
 - Youth and mentorship programs;
 - Employment, entrepreneurship, cash assistance, and other programs to help build and maintain financial security;
 - Afterschool and enrichment programs; and
 - Infrastructure investments, including park redevelopment, streetlights, and other investments in built design.
- Public health and environmental justice, including access to health care for people with disabilities and harm reduction-based treatment for mental health and substance use;
 - Housing security, including integrated housing for people experiencing temporary or chronic homelessness;
 - Non-carceral approaches to crisis intervention;
 - Supports for youth and families, including school-based counselors, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, wraparound services, and two-generational programming;
 - Supports for victims, including survivors of sexual violence and rape;
 - Reentry supports; and
 - Capacity-building support to local advocates and community-based organizations.

Reallocate Harmful Funding Flows

- Eliminate all Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program funding, especially funding that supports police in schools and the COPS Hiring Program.
- Divert federal funding for police to health care and other appropriate community services and supports for people with disabilities.
- End and do not allocate any funding to programs aimed at hiring additional police officers for states or localities (e.g., Operation Relentless Pursuit, Operation Legend, or Project Safe Neighborhoods).
- Federally fund state programs that divert mental health-related 911 calls to mental health professionals, peer support workers, and other people trained to de-escalate individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and — where needed — connect individuals to voluntary, community-based services.
- Prioritize federal funding streams for state and local efforts that will reimagine safety by shifting resources away from criminalization and policing toward prevention-oriented investments in social supports and programs.