

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/publications/turning-necessities-into-virtue-pittsburghs-experience-with-a-federal-consent-decree>**

## Policy Issue Resources

### Publication

In 1997, the Justice Department for the first time used its power to sue a city over a pattern or practice of policing that violated federal law or the U.S. Constitution. The department entered into a five-year consent decree with the city of Pittsburgh that police officials and civil rights groups generally view as a success in terms of increasing police accountability and improving officer training. This report examines specific elements of the Pittsburgh experience that helped to bring the police department into compliance with the decree, such as a strong implementation committee and an early-warning system that could identify officers in need of corrective supervision, and highlights issues that require continued attention, such as community relations and employee morale.

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