

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/arizonas-new-law-what-does-it-mean-for-policing>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Arizonas controversial new law, [SB 1070](#), will allow police officers (and other state officials and agencies) to check the legal status of any individual who has contact with law enforcement and is reasonably suspected of being in the country illegally. The consequences for individuals without the proper status are immense and can lead to their detention and deportation. A month and a half before the law is implemented, police agencies nationwide are debating whether to support or oppose the principles of Arizonas statute.

Two weeks ago, a national consortium of police chiefs came out in opposition to SB 1070 because they fear it will increase crime by driving a wedge between law enforcement and immigrant communities. (For more on this, read a [Washington Post](#) story about the issue and [my letter in response](#) to an article that discusses legal status and policing in Maryland.)

I recently co-facilitated [a training](#) for 13 law enforcement agencies on the U-visa, which provides legal status to immigrant victims of crime who cooperate with law enforcement. At the training, we heard numerous stories about how building relationships between police and immigrants helps solve crime and ensure public safety.

During the training it became evident that officers are open to using a variety of tools to achieve their goals of protecting the jurisdictions they serve, including working with individuals who may not have legal status. When immigrant communities trust that their interactions with law enforcement will not result in deportation, this can help police meet those goals. The officers who participated in the training also understand this: The benefits of working with immigrant communities to fully investigate and solve crimes affect everyone in their jurisdiction, whether they live there legally or not.

As laws such as SB 1070 are developed and implemented, many police officers fear the erosion of the relationships theyve built with immigrant communities. This erosion, in turn, may handicap the efforts of police to do their job.

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