

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/investing-in-evidence-based-alternatives-to-policing>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Changing the ways police operate in communities is integral to dismantling systemic racism. Local budgets disproportionately fund police departments over other public services that would promote public safety, including housing, employment support, education, and public health. Using police and punitive approaches as the primary tools to address health and social issues including mental illness, substance use, homelessness, community violence, and poverty funnels millions of people into jails and prisons. Other investments would support communities in prospering and do not come with the substantial social costs and harms that accompany positioning public safety as exclusively the domain of law enforcement. These fact sheets include recommendations for how to reallocate taxpayer dollars and invest money in evidence-based alternatives to police that promote public safety and help people thrive. It is past time to redefine public safety by investing in the services that build truly safe and vibrant communities.

Investing in Community Violence Interventions (CVI) that engage those at highest risk of gun violence and narrow the role of police improves safety and saves cities millions.

Communities should invest in civilian first responder programs for people experiencing behavioral health crises and redesign 911 systems so that nonviolent, behavioral health calls receive a public health response.

Students deserve educational and health professionals with expertise in adolescent development, not police, to respond to behavioral and disciplinary challenges in school.

Police are unnecessary for routine traffic enforcement. Instead, localities should invest in civilian first responders dedicated to traffic and road safety, as well as best practices to reduce racial disparities.

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