

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/american-rescue-plan-equitable-recovery>

### Policy Issue Resources

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The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act provides state and local governments with a once-in-a-lifetime pathway toward recovery not only from the COVID-19 pandemic, but also from a history of disinvestment in Black communities and other communities of color. The ARP allocated [\\$350 billion](#) in flexible funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to address the harm of COVID-19, and the U.S. Department of the Treasury [encourages](#) governments to spend ARP dollars to foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes.

What does a strong, equitable recovery look like? It looks like a future where low-income and Black and other communities of color have the same access to safety, health, and wealth as white communities. Among other things, this means spending on community resources that build safety, using health-first approaches to behavioral health crises, and limiting the harms of policing and jail incarceration. These outcomes can be achieved through investments in community violence interventions, behavioral health support and diversion programs, and pretrial release and post-incarceration reentry programs.

State and local governments across the country are now planning how they'll use their new federal funds, and many are embracing this unique opportunity to invest in an inclusive and equitable recovery. A number of cities and counties have already committed to funding initiatives that promote equitable recovery through the direct or indirect use of ARP funds.

The table below lists how different places are investing in community violence interventions, behavioral health support and diversion programs, pretrial release and post-incarceration reentry programs, and other community support programs that help foster a more equitable recovery, especially for people most impacted by the pandemic. To compile this list, Vera searched for examples of city- or county-based ARP fund spending plans or fiscal year 2022 budgets to identify existing budgetary commitments toward a more equitable recovery. Not all cities and counties have made these fiscal decisions or shared them online. Vera will continue to track local spending to identify more investment examples that support a more equitable recovery.

All of these investments and more can be explicitly funded through the ARP. Community violence interventions are specifically listed in the Treasury's [interim final rule](#). Similarly, post-incarceration reentry programs are explicitly listed in a White House [fact sheet](#) on safety strategies as a key investment governments can make using ARP funds to promote public safety by increasing access to housing, employment, and other services to people leaving jails and prisons. Responses to behavioral health crises that focus on public health instead of law enforcement can be funded through an [85 percent federal Medicaid](#) match created by the Act, as well as through state and local recovery funds again, explicitly named in the final rule. Pretrial release programs keep people away from congregate settings that can spread COVID-19 and thus are fundable as support for prevention, mitigation, or other services in congregate living facilities. In some cases, rather than using ARP to directly fund new initiatives, cities and counties are using ARP dollars to replace shortfalls in revenue and thereby free up local dollars for these new investments.

With intentional investments in CVIs, behavioral health support and diversion, and pretrial release and post-incarceration reentry services, jurisdictions can use ARP dollars to catalyze a more equitable recovery for communities most harmed by the pandemic.

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 the ...

Every new budget is an opportunity to rethink the public's spending priorities. And the \$350 billion in federal recovery funds provided through the 2021 American Rescue Plan provides a rare opportunity to rethink how we provide community safety. For too long, addressing our toughest problems—whether mental health crises, substance use, homelessness ...

As state and local governments scrambled to contain the virus, the punitive policies and practices that have characterized the nation's criminal legal system became untenable. And as a result, some policymakers enacted measures that advocates have long urged. They released people from jails and prisons, reduced admissions, and took steps to make fa ...

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