

2023 Public Safety Agenda for Newly Elected Mayors, City Council Members and Local Elected Leaders



INTRODUCTION

Mayors, city council members and local elected leaders play a significant role in protecting our communities through public safety initiatives and ordinances. Although crime is generally analyzed at either the national or state level, [research](#) shows that crime is a very local issue.

To this end, many cities and localities of varying sizes and demographics, including large, sprawling cities like Atlanta, Houston and New York, as well as smaller jurisdictions like Newport News and South Bend, have [established Offices of Violence Prevention](#) to tackle some of the pressing crime issues facing their communities. Further, organizations like the [National League of Cities](#) and the [U.S. Conference of Mayors](#) have launched programs and taken action to [seek local solutions](#) to public safety issues across the country.

Here, we explore some key initiatives and offer recommendations to help newly elected mayors and city leaders advance smart policy to combat the rise in crime and promote public safety.

AGENDA ITEMS

INVEST IN ALTERNATIVES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Growing the use of pre-arrest deflection programs that allow alternative responses to crisis calls when appropriate and safe.

❓ **Why:** Common causes of crime [include](#) poverty, substance use and abuse issues, mental health, and unstable housing and employment—none of which are inherently criminal in nature. However, law enforcement spends only an [average of 4 percent of their time](#) working cases that involve violent crime, and as such, jails and prisons have overwhelmingly become [de facto treatment facilities](#) for nonviolent criminals.

✔ **Benefit:** Allowing law enforcement to focus more resources on violent crime and other imminent threats to public safety stands to benefit both those offenders who need treatment for their conditions instead of only incarceration and [law enforcement](#) by alleviating pressures from staffing shortages and reducing the number of “frequent flyers” or repeat calls. Alternatives [can also](#) dramatically reduce jail populations, address clogged court systems, and lessen recidivism or repeat offense.

📌 **Take note:** Deflection [is currently in use](#) in more than 850 jurisdictions across the country and is endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

📌 **Location Initiatives:**

- [Fairfax County, Virginia](#): Co-responder model
- [Baton Rouge, Louisiana](#): Adult crisis center
- [Aurora, Colorado](#): Community service response
- [New York City, New York](#): Co-responder model

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT AGENCY TRANSPARENCY

Creating reliable standards of transparency for practices and data that constituents can rely on to improve trust in communities.

- ? **Why:** Mutual trust and positive relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve are critical to enhance public safety. Transparency is a [vital](#) component in establishing this trust and is especially important as law enforcement agencies exercise [discretionary power](#). In order to ensure that citizens receive equal protection under the law, agencies must be held accountable for things like use of force, routine activities, crime statistics, training and other policies.
- ✓ **Benefit:** Prioritizing transparency and accountability presents a positive, constructive way for mayors across the [country](#) to work with their local government leaders to establish platforms that benefit residents and local officials and officers alike. It also allows opportunities for inter-agency and inter-departmental collaboration for better information sharing inside of local government, as well as with residents.
- 👤 **Take note:** Adopting reasonable accountability and transparency measures is [widely recognized](#) to be a critical avenue to improving public trust in police, which [reached](#) a low of 48 percent in 2020 for all U.S. adults and 18 percent for Black Americans.
- ★ **Location Initiatives:**
 - [Baltimore, Maryland](#): Public Safety Accountability Dashboard
 - [Mesa, Arizona](#): Transparency in Policing

ESTABLISH PUBLIC SAFETY AND VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION ACTION PLANS

Establishing civilian offices dedicated to understanding and promoting programs in communities to both proactively prevent crime as well as help interrupt existing cycles of crime.

- ? **Why:** While it is meaningful for police to focus more resources on violent crime, the reality is that [predictors](#) of violent crime often [emerge](#) far before violence occurs, such as [previous exposure to violence](#) or [existing social behavior](#). It is critical to identify and pursue ways to disrupt violence in communities or in other venues before the behavior reaches criminal activity that leaves little-to-no choice but to incarcerate for the sake of upholding the rule of law and protecting public safety.
- ✓ **Benefit:** Through establishing offices dedicated to understanding where violent crime is coming from in communities, [many cities](#) are already reaping the benefits of cross-collaborative solutions between government and communities from [businesses](#) and [hospitals](#) to local neighborhoods and other public gathering places to stymie violence before it even happens. Such calculated and strategic investment of resources before violence occurs protects communities, businesses and law enforcement alike.
- 👤 **Take note:** Community violence intervention programs in Oakland, California have been shown to [reduce shootings and homicides](#) by almost 50 percent over six years.
- ★ **Location Initiatives:**
 - [Oakland, California](#): Oakland Ceasefire
 - [Indianapolis, Indiana](#): Community-Based Violence Prevention Partnership
 - [Washington, D.C.](#): Cure the Streets

FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

If you need help with further research around these issues, taking the next step to push forward initiatives or local ordinances, or anything else, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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