

2025 Public Safety Agenda for Mayors, City Councilmembers, and Local Policymakers



INTRODUCTION



While much national media attention focuses on federal elections and bills passed by Congress, important policymaking and creative solutions occur in the [nearly 20,000 incorporated](#) cities, towns, and villages in our country. Broken down further, of [more than 90,000 total governments](#) in the United States, only 51 are federal or state. When it comes to the criminal justice system, focusing on these tens of thousands of local governing bodies is particularly important, as crime is highly localized and solutions must be tailored to individual localities—and even to individual neighborhoods. Here, we elaborate on two key initiatives researched extensively in the past year to help mayors, city councilmembers, and other local officials combat crime and promote public safety for the betterment of all communities.

AGENDA



COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION (CVI)

Limiting law enforcement involvement and instead deploying credible messengers to intervene with at-risk individuals in order to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.



— ? Why:

[Decades of consistent research show](#) that only a small group of people drive most of the violence in any given community. To address violence effectively, communities must focus their resources and efforts on this small group. While less than 0.5 percent of a given population engages in violent crime, those individuals are [linked to 60 to 70 percent](#) of shootings and homicides. With this in mind, CVI hones in on [violence hotspots](#) to target those most likely to cause harm or become victims and works to stop violence before it occurs—thus slowing the spread and ripple effects of violence.

✓ **Benefit:**

Over the past few years, particularly following the [increase in violent crime](#) in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, public polling consistently shows the majority of Americans believe crime is [still increasing](#) and should be a [top priority](#) for elected officials to address, [describing the problem](#) as “extremely” or “very” serious. By addressing violence in a targeted way, local officials can play a direct role in helping citizens feel safer in their own communities.

🗨️ **Keep in Mind:**

Following the large influx of federal dollars to state and local governments during the COVID-19 pandemic, many states and localities face budget shortfalls [going into 2025](#). By shifting some of the burden of violence prevention from the state to private individuals and organizations, CVI programs can help shrink the footprint of local government programs while improving public safety.

☰ **Options for Communities:**

Our June 2024 policy paper [outlines three strategies for employing CVI](#):

- **Group violence intervention:** Encourage community leaders and law enforcement to work together to identify hotspots for violence, relying on both personal intervention and police enforcement to deter further bloodshed. Individuals who continue to engage in violence should be subject to arrest and prosecution, which is clearly communicated up front and only used once violence occurs.
- **Violence interrupter programs:** Root individuals in the community with the specific knowledge and independence necessary to conduct street outreach, de-escalate conflicts, halt retaliation, and provide resources to disrupt cycles of violence.
- **Hospital-based violence intervention:** Operate out of emergency departments and trauma centers to engage survivors of violence immediately after injury occurs, working with victims as well as their families to prevent retaliation and facilitate recovery.

**HOMELESSNESS
SOLUTIONS**

Promoting local solutions to address homelessness in communities across the country, considering both immediate and long-term paths toward transition into housing.

● — ? **Why:**

Individuals experiencing homelessness are often at the center of communities’ perceptions of safety, disorder, and sanitation. Consequently, many decisions made around homelessness focus on reducing visibility—akin to putting a Band-Aid on a bullet hole when it comes to fully addressing the problem. In 2023, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that [over 653,000 individuals](#) experienced homelessness on a given night, with 40 percent of those being unsheltered and 31 percent chronically homeless. These historically high numbers prove that policies focused on reducing visibility have not solved the problem.

✓ **Benefit:**

Cities nationwide are struggling with growing rates of homelessness, especially as the overlaps increase between homeless communities and those with behavioral health struggles like substance use and mental health disorders. Effectively addressing homelessness in both immediate and long-term contexts can prevent homeless individuals from crossing over into the criminal justice system, which too frequently uses its limited resources on those with behavioral health issues. This detracts from the focus on violent crime, which is a more pressing public safety issue.

🗨️ **Keep in Mind:**

It is important to consider the different types of homelessness when determining how to tackle the overall issue. While we tend to think of those living in tents under overpasses or in city parks as the “face” of homelessness, other examples might include an unsheltered single mother, families living out of motels or squatting in vacant properties, a single male who couch-surfs, or a single student living out of her car. Policy solutions should reflect the fact that different people have different needs, ensuring that anyone experiencing homelessness can pursue a path toward long-term shelter.

☰ **Options for Communities:**

Our October 2024 policy paper [outlines three ways to address homelessness](#):

- **Immediate actions:** Providing jobs—such as trash cleanup in an encampment—to homeless individuals, managing public spaces, and offering safe parking lots for those living in vehicles can prove impactful. Homeless outreach teams can also play a crucial role.
- **Long-term strategies:** Expanding transportation and housing options is critical for reducing homelessness, as doing so provides greater access to jobs and shelter. Employing community courts for rehabilitative justice and using shelter-finder apps can help stabilize individuals.
- **Early intervention:** Providing financial training and support equips individuals with the skills to manage money effectively and plan for major life events, which can help prevent one setback from snowballing into homelessness. Predictive analytics can identify at-risk individuals, and improving access to mental health and substance use treatment are crucial as well.

If you need help with further research around these issues, information on implementing these types of initiatives, or anything else, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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