

Police Accountability & Community Safety:

What's Next?

In 2022, President Biden signed one of the most significant federal actions to date on police reform, an executive order (EO) titled “Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety.” Sparked by the murder of George Floyd, this EO aimed to restore public trust and increase accountability in law enforcement. It banned the use of excessive force, improved detention conditions, promoted alternatives to incarceration such as sentence reductions, and emphasized rebuilding trust between communities and the police. A major outcome was the launch of the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database (NLEAD) in December 2023 – a centralized federal system for tracking police misconduct.

However, as of January 2025, the current administration has begun to roll back many of these reforms.

- As of April 08, 2025, the administration revoked Biden's EO on policing and deleted NLEAD.
- On April 28, 2025, the administration issued an EO called “Strengthening and Unleashing America’s Law Enforcement to Pursue Criminals and Protect Innocent Citizens.” The EO is filled with harmful rhetoric and directives that will embolden aggressive, dangerous police behavior while failing to call for enhanced accountability or investment in meaningful police reform. For example, the EO does not include provisions to improve use-of-force policies, implement de-escalation techniques, or acknowledge the issue of police violence.
- In January 2025, the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division announced it was freezing cases against police departments found to have engaged in civil rights violations and other unconstitutional police actions.
- On May 21, 2025, the Department of Justice announced it would be abandoning consent decree agreements in several cities, including Minneapolis and Louisville, the cities where George Floyd’s and Breonna Taylor’s police killings occurred.

Police reform is necessary because police accountability has not meaningfully improved since George Floyd was killed. The U.S. criminal-legal system has failed to protect all communities equally and justly. The system has too often relied on “Tough on Crime” policies that have been proven to be ineffective at reducing crime and have resulted in profiling, as well as abusive and fatal policing practices, mostly in Black, Brown, and low-income communities.

The current state of community safety efforts

In April 2025, the Department of Justice canceled more than \$810 million in funding for more than 350 grants to community safety programs. These grants had already been awarded to nonprofit organizations that support victims of crime and others impacted by the criminal-legal system, offering mental and behavioral health treatment, among other services. The grants also funded research on evidence based approaches to public safety. These cuts may lead to immediate, devastating, and long-lasting harm, including near-term increases in violence, to marginalized communities.

Addressing people's health and safety needs is the most effective way to keep communities safe. Non-carceral, affirmative investments in service, mutual aid, and community dispute resolution can address the economic, social, and environmental conditions that lead to violence in the first place. Investing in efforts like community violence intervention programs can drive down shootings and homicides by providing mentorship and services for people at greatest risk of committing or experiencing gun violence; in some cases these programs have been shown to drive down gun violence by 70 percent. Alternative crisis response or having health-focused professionals respond to mental health crises can lead to crime reduction through sharp reductions in low-level crime. Simply put, community safety programs are proven to reduce crime through prevention; and communities are safest when harms are prevented before they arise.

For years, community advocates have told elected officials at all levels that investments in evidence-based community safety efforts will help public safety. To improve public safety, community safety programs need significantly more funding to ensure they are long-lasting, well-resourced, and incorporated in all communities.

Where do we go from here?

Today, communities can still engage in, and advocate for, police accountability and initiatives that will make everyone safe. Civic engagement in police accountability efforts is critical to ensuring the protection of all people from police violence. Examples of such engagement include civilian review boards, police accountability nonprofits, and local policy. Community members can support front-end, public health-based, and non-carceral alternatives in state and local policymaking. They can advocate for programs and policies that divert people away from incarceration and toward education, housing, employment, and medical care. Even in the face of funding cuts, community violence intervention (CVI) programs, programs supporting domestic violence and crime survivors, Second Chance Act implementation, and programs that support alternative first response teams across the country continue to serve communities.

The \$811 million round of cuts impacted programs in 35 states as well as DC and Puerto Rico. Advocates and organizations that experienced these sudden cuts are working to get their funding restored. Additionally, national organizations are continuing to advocate for federal investment in resources for jobs, physical and mental health treatment, social supports, affordable housing, and all the other community-based programs that help communities stay safe and thrive.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has a [Vision for Justice policy platform](#) and is a member of the [Community Safety Working Group](#), a nationwide coalition of more than 70 organizations that has just released its [legislative](#) and [appropriations](#) agenda to help support all of these efforts.

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