

Demystifying Defunding the Police

Defunding the police, in large part, is about reprioritizing budgets to alternatives around social welfare structures and well-being programs. These efforts are largely centered in large, metropolitan cities and are complex discussions that do not translate letter for letter into small towns – but rather, force important discussions around the topic on the best and most effective use of police resources.

Those who support the movement to scale back the responsibilities of the police say officers frequently abuse their power and instigate violence rather than prevent it. They say many social welfare tasks that currently fall to armed police officers — responding to drug overdoses, and working with people who have a mental illness or are homeless — would be better carried out by nurses or social workers.

Dallas is pioneering a new approach where social workers are being dispatched to some 911 calls that involve mental health emergencies. The program has shown success, and many of the people receive care that they would never have gotten in jails or overcrowded hospitals.

In California, the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective deals with child sexual abuse without the police. The collective develops pods — groups of people including survivors, bystanders or people who have harmed in the past — that each pod-member feels they can turn to for support when needed.

Some programs, like one in Washington, D.C., do not work with the police; its staff members rely instead on personal outreach and social connections for information about violence that they work to mediate and diffuse. We should invest in these programs, which operate on shoestring budgets, so they have their own dedicated dispatch centers outside of 911.

Cahoots, a nonprofit mobile crisis intervention program that has handled mental health calls in Eugene, Ore., since 1989. Cahoots employees responded to more than 24,000 calls for service last year — about 20 percent of the area’s 911 calls — on a budget of about \$2 million, probably far less than what it would cost the Police Department to do the work.

Resources:

[The HAVI](#)

[Washington DC Programs](#)

[Dallas Programs](#)

[Bay Area Transformative Justice](#)

[DeFund the Police from The Guardian](#)

[NYC Police WorkStop Order](#)

[There’s No Such Thing as a Dangerous Neighborhood](#)

[Cahoots](#)

[ACLU Re-Imagining the Role of Police](#)

Resources from [Color of Change](#) & [Campaign Zero](#)

We are calling on public officials to adopt the following demands:

Strengthen police use-of-force policies to protect human life and rights.

1. Limit the use of deadly force to situations where there is an imminent threat of death or serious injury and require officers to exhaust all other measures before resorting to deadly force.
2. Require a duty for officers to intervene when other officers are inappropriately using physical force or when the use of force is no longer required.
3. Lower the standard of proof for Department of Justice civil rights investigations of police officers.
4. Fund reliable federal tracking and reporting of all incidents involving the use of deadly force by law enforcement, whether lethal or not.

End ‘broken windows’ policing and stop unnecessary prosecution of low-level offenses.

1. Decriminalize activities that pose no threat to public safety including, but not limited to, disorderly conduct, trespassing, loitering, marijuana possession, disturbing the peace, petty theft, fare evasion, and other misdemeanor offenses.
2. Prevent racial profiling and police interventions solely based on "suspicion" of one's Blackness or other aspects of their identity.

Establish effective civilian oversight boards with investigative and subpoena powers.

1. Create and publicize easily accessible methods for civilians to submit, view, and discuss complaints.
2. Ensure civilian oversight boards have the power to interrogate officers, access crime scenes, subpoena witnesses and files with penalties for non-compliance, make disciplinary and policy recommendations to the police chief and prosecuting attorney, and compel the police chief and prosecuting attorney to explain why they have not followed a recommendation.
3. Ensure that civilian oversight boards exclude current or retired law enforcement from membership.

Respond to mental health crises with healthcare, not policing responses.

1. Establish non-police interventions to crises involving homelessness, intoxication, disorientation, substance abuse, and mental health.
2. Ensure that the role of mental illness in fatal police shootings is identified and reported in government data collection.

Require independent investigations in all cases where police kill or seriously injure people.

1. Establish a permanent special prosecutor's office at the state and/or federal level for cases of police use of physical force and an oversight board that includes civilians with the power to appoint and supervise the special prosecutor.
2. Local prosecutors should establish a special unit to investigate police misconduct. The unit should be isolated from other parts of the office that work too closely with police to hold them accountable.

End the profit motive in policing.

1. Ban municipalities from generating more than 10% of total revenue from fines and fees, and prohibit the collection of fines and fees from individuals on probation or parole and for failure to appear in court for traffic citations.
2. End police department quotas for tickets and arrests.
3. Prohibit police from seizing money and property from individuals unless they are convicted of a crime and there is clear and convincing evidence that the property is related to the crime.
4. Require police departments to bear the cost of misconduct by requiring settlements to be paid out of the police department budget rather than the city's general fund.

Invest in healthy communities not policing

1. Review police department budgets.
2. Increase investment in education, healthcare, jobs, and housing for communities hardest hit by crime, police violence, and over-incarceration.
3. Increase funding for community-based solutions to crime and violence.

Do away with unfair protections for officers in police union contracts and Law Enforcement Officers' 'Bills of Rights.'>

1. Remove provisions that create barriers to effective misconduct investigations and civilian oversight of police activity.
2. Remove provisions that prevent police departments and members of the public from accessing officers' disciplinary history.
3. Remove provisions that require or allow officers that kill or seriously injure people to continue to be paid while they are under investigation or on suspension.

Increase transparency and accountability for officers with records of misconduct.

1. Make misconduct records easily accessible by the public.
2. Build a national registry of police who have been recommended for termination due to misconduct.
3. Prosecutors' offices must develop 'do not call' lists of police with records of misconduct to prevent them from participating in future prosecutions.