



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DRAFTING YOUR OWN COMMUNITY SAFETY POLICY AT THE STATE LEVEL

A Community Safety Policy is a policy agenda that makes non-carceral, life-affirming safety investments now, as well as institutionalizes these investments so that they are sustained over time. Our Community Safety Policy is modeled on the The People's Response Act, as introduced by Congresswomen Cori Bush, Ayanna Pressley, Jan Schakowsky, and Pramila Jayapal, and The BREATHE Act, created by the Movement for Black Lives and championed by Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib. This policy begins a journey that is essential for shifting our current paradigm—moving the concept of “safety” from a primarily criminal-legal model and funding regime to a new framework that roots safety in public health.

*This guide must be adapted to meet state needs.
See the full state policy guide for a more
comprehensive overview.*



THE STEPS

STEP #1: CREATE GRANT PROGRAMS TO FUND NON-CARCERAL SAFETY.

1. **Grant for community-led organizations:** Provide grants to community-led organizations (CBOs) that are implementing non-carceral programs with a “demonstrable connection” to public safety—programs like violence interruption, non-carceral crisis response, behavioral health, supportive housing, housing vouchers, and reentry support.
2. **Formula grant for local jurisdictions:** Provide a formula grant that supports local jurisdictions to do a Safety Needs Assessment, assessing system-level safety needs, then make strategic, non-carceral investments to meet these root needs.
3. **Incentive grant for local jurisdictions:** Provide a competitive grant that incentivizes localities to shrink criminal-legal harm while providing them much-needed resources to fund non-carceral community safety.
4. **Hiring grant for non-carceral first responders:** Crisis response is a persistent issue for states; too often, people who are struggling with mental health, substance use, or related issues are subject to police encounters when a social worker or other trained professional would be better suited to safely address their needs. This grant would fund the hiring of non-carceral first responders.

STEP #2: ESTABLISH A DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SAFETY TO OVERSEE NON-CARCERAL SAFETY INVESTMENTS.

Every state should have an entity wholly dedicated to bolstering non-carceral approaches to community safety. This agency would administer grant programs like those described above, as well as guide related research and other important activities. Our recommended approach is to create a Division of Community Safety within the state Department of Health and Human Services. This Division would approach safety using the same interdisciplinary framework often used in the “social determinants of health” policy space. And, importantly, the Division would focus exclusively on non-carceral approaches, thereby creating a way to fund safety programming that remains fully outside of the criminal-legal system.

STEP #3: ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD WITH STATUTORY POWER.

States must ensure that the Division of Community Safety is ultimately led by community members representing diverse jurisdictions statewide, including and especially people who have been impacted by criminal-legal harm, their families, and their neighborhoods. To this end, the Community Advisory Board should be a representative body—selected to embody the backgrounds and experiences noted here—tasked with approving annual priorities, evaluating and assessing the Division, and making annual recommendations for change.

STEP #4: ESTABLISH TARGETED OFFICES TO SUPPORT SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

Some populations—including harm survivors, youth (including and especially LGBTQIA+ youth), and people returning from incarceration—have specific needs related to community safety. We recommend that the Division of Community Safety create dedicated structures to particularly serve these groups.

MUST-HAVES OF ANY COMMUNITY SAFETY POLICY

- Ensure robust, ongoing funding for the Division of Community Safety.
- Ensure funding preferences for representative community-led organizations.
- Center individuals impacted by the criminal-legal system.
- Ensure all funding flows have requirements to preserve the non-carceral, non-punitive character of the dollars being spent.

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