



Safety and Justice

Community Safety	89
Justice	92

Safety and justice are fundamental to the health and vitality of communities. For 25 years, LISC has been the only community development financial institution (CDFI) with a dedicated safety and justice program—investing in equity-driven programs run by community-based organizations, working to keep young people, particularly people of color, from getting ensnared in the criminal justice system, and engaging community residents in developing partnerships with law enforcement to address crime. We spearhead initiatives to support individuals as they return from incarceration, helping them to better connect to the larger society and economy. Our ability to show results in local communities and neighborhoods has relied heavily on leveraging federal resources to scale, replicate, and evaluate promising approaches. Federal investments are an essential component of any intersection of places, people, and systems, and are the cornerstone of safety and justice agendas.



Community Safety

Safety is a critical component of a vibrant community, as important as quality affordable housing, good jobs, and high-performing schools. And the perception of safety is just as important to residents' quality of life as the incidence of crime. In neighborhoods that experience higher rates of crime, poverty, and police violence, concerns about police legitimacy erode safety and perceptions of safety. When police officers and residents view each other with suspicion, there is little room for meaningful collaboration, and interactions can escalate and end in tragedy. Successful safety approaches must seek to improve community policing and must be predicated upon consistent and sustained interactions with entire communities for the purpose of establishing a foundation of partnership, trust, and empowerment, a practice known as authentic community engagement.

Safety and perceptions of safety are also critical to attracting new homeowners and businesses to neighborhoods where such investments can be catalysts for revitalization. Improving the welfare and security of community residents in a way that lasts requires a focus on the physical condition of places, the quality of the connections between people in a community, and the strength and tone of relations between local law enforcement and the people they serve. Smart public policies seeking to improve community safety should be data driven, place based, and community centered. With this approach, the adoption of policies and practices rooted in equity reshapes systems, and residents are empowered to transform neighborhoods.

LISC supports:

Providing Funding for Community-Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Programs

[Community violence intervention](#) (CVI) approaches use evidence-informed strategies to reduce violence through tailored community-centered initiatives. These multidisciplinary strategies engage with individuals and groups to prevent and disrupt cycles of violence and retaliation and establish relationships with individuals and community assets to deliver services that save lives, address trauma, provide opportunity, and improve the physical, social, and economic conditions that drive violence. While there are a few well-known CVI programs throughout the country, in many communities they do not exist or are underfunded and under-resourced. The federal government is uniquely positioned to support

the adoption of CVI interventions that are community centered, equitable and inclusive, evidence informed, and effective and sustainable. The [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#), which was signed into law on May 25, 2022, authorizes \$250 million per fiscal year for a community violence intervention and prevention initiative (CVIPI). LISC supports full and robust funding for CVIPI at DoJ. We also support the appropriation of \$250 million for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Community and Youth Violence Prevention program to fund a new Community Violence Intervention Initiative.

Supporting the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative (RVCRI)

Rural communities often face unique challenges that complicate their ability to effectively address violent crime. The [Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative \(RVCRI\)](#) is an effort funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) [Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#) through the State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance account. RVCRI provides funding and assistance to rural law enforcement agencies seeking to reduce violent crime and address problems associated with violent crime. Law enforcement agencies and community partners funded through this program receive support to implement violent crime reduction strategies, improve investigations, improve services to victims, and enhance collaboration among local stakeholders. LISC supports robust funding of the RVCRI.

Sustaining the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program

In neighborhoods with persistent crime problems, the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) program (formerly the Innovations in Community-Based Crime Reduction program), administered by BJA, supports data-driven, comprehensive, and community-oriented strategies to reduce crime and spur revitalization. BCJI is a competitive grant program that seeks to make some of the country's highest-crime communities safer by mobilizing residents, law enforcement, and other organizational partners to pursue coordinated strategies in "hot spot" locations. Often these locations are streets or intersections where crime has remained high for years, damaging the broader community's chances for stability and revitalization. The BCJI model is:

- Place based. Its interventions target crimes hot spots.
- Data driven. Researchers work with partners using data to analyze problems and identify evidence-informed solutions.

- Community oriented. Residents select strategies in partnership with law enforcement.
- Cost effective. It maximizes local resources and produces lasting solutions.

LISC calls on Congress to adopt legislation that authorizes the BCJI program, and to provide robust funding so that additional communities can benefit from its effectiveness.

Providing Funding for Community Safety Coordinators

Cross-sector partnership teams are [essential](#) to the success of comprehensive efforts that address the interconnected challenges of high-crime, high-poverty neighborhoods. Oftentimes, these collaborations fumble due to a lack of dedicated staffing. [Community safety coordinators](#) fill this void by leading collaborative efforts to improve safety and quality of life in the neighborhoods and by acting as liaisons among residents, community-based organizations, developers, and law enforcement. They integrate the resources of people and institutions that influence crime and perceptions in the neighborhood to uncover more strategic and effective remedies for safety problems.

Federal investments provide critical support for comprehensive, locally led efforts to address crime in communities across the country. For maximum impact these investments should include resources for community-based organizations and law enforcement to fund community safety coordinators. This approach promotes crime reduction while building public trust to strengthen communities.

Supporting Comprehensive Law Enforcement Training

Training on how to build and sustain partnerships across sectors and with community leaders is essential for local law enforcement, particularly mid-level commanders and executives. There are numerous training resources related to implicit bias, procedural justice, and reconciliation. [Principles of Procedurally Just Policing](#), a guide produced by [The Justice Collaboratory](#) at Yale Law School, includes numerous examples of training programs and policies that support equitable engagement with local communities, including de-escalation training. LISC has compiled many resources offering a community-development perspective on policing, including LISC's "[Developer + Police = Results](#)" materials; [Building Our Way Out of Crime](#):

[The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships](#), a book co-authored by the LISC Safety & Justice program’s founding director; and a LISC curriculum on developer-police partnerships.

Additionally, community policing principles can build resiliency and preparedness in a community, while also building relationships between the community and law enforcement based on the shared goal of recovery. Major incidents, including natural disasters, incidents of mass violence, mass demonstrations, officer-involved shootings, or even long-term exposure to community violence have serious implications for local communities. Healing and recovery require the participation of a full range of community resources and are slowed significantly when appropriate roles and partnerships are not established.

LISC urges the Department of Justice to take the following steps:

- 1. Support the development of law-enforcement training that includes a focus on equitable engagement with local communities.** This should include de-escalation training and education on the value of police partnerships with community developers.
- 2. Support the development of a framework and tools—using community policing principles—to create collaborative systems approaches to resiliency and recovery following major incidents.** Engaging in planning and preparedness exercises, and coming together as a community to problem-solve and recover—particularly in the wake of major incidents— are processes that embody the primary elements of community policing. These capabilities are necessary for building strong communities.



Justice

The [rate of imprisonment](#) for Black Americans is over five times the rate of imprisonment for white Americans, and the rate of imprisonment for Hispanic Americans is almost three times that of white Americans. Justice reform and reinvestment constitute a social, moral, and economic issue at the heart of forging an agenda that promotes racial equity.

Every year, [610,000 people](#) are released from prisons, and [9 million](#) cycle through local jails. Any successful approach to justice reform and reinvestment must include pre-entry (diversion from incarceration) and reentry (exiting incarceration) strategies

focused on both people and the places where they live, work, and raise families. The strength of community-based organizations and access to economic opportunity influence both the conditions that lead to incarceration and the ability of the [formerly incarcerated](#) to be successful. Federal policies that support education, youth development, career pathways, income and wealth building, and access to health and mental-health services are needed in order to improve outcomes for people living in working-class urban and rural communities.

LISC supports:

Funding Pre-entry and Reentry Programming

People are much more likely to avoid or overcome involvement with the justice system when they have decent housing they can afford, employment that pays a living wage, and access to strong community-based treatment and service options. Federal support related to pre-entry and reentry should include substantial funding for:

- violence prevention and trauma-informed programs and initiatives operated by the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#);
- the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, Title V—Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs](#), the only federal program designed to engage law enforcement and community boards in delinquency prevention at the local level in coordination with a statewide plan;
- the [Second Chance Act Grant Program](#) (reauthorized at \$100 million per year as part of the First Step Act) that aims to reduce recidivism and provide support to people who are involved in the criminal justice system; and
- the [Reentry Employment Opportunities \(REO\) program](#) authorized under Section 169 (“Evaluations and Research”) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Addressing School-Based Violence and Victimization

Nearly [60 percent](#) of youth in the United States have been exposed to crime, abuse, and violence in their own homes, neighborhoods, schools, and/or broader communities. Trauma and adverse childhood experiences, whether in young childhood or adolescence, are linked to [increased risk](#) for violent and aggressive behavior and criminality in adulthood, activities that may lead to incarceration.

Federal initiatives that support innovative community-based programs can help place youth on productive pathways to education and employment and reduce the chance of arrest or incarceration.

The [Enhancing School Capacity To Address Youth Violence program](#) supports targeted efforts to address youth violence through implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention efforts in a school-based setting. This is an initiative of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), funded under the [Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence Act](#) of 2018 (or STOP School Violence Act).

We encourage the Department of Justice to continue to allocate resources for STOP School Violence Act programs.

Supporting the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act

For decades, the United States has prioritized punitive, reactive tools for establishing community safety and order. The result is an overgrown criminal justice system, fraught with racial and economic bias, that takes on a host of social woes it cannot resolve effectively, much less humanely. In order to right-size the criminal justice system's role in American life and upend its deep-rooted inequities, we must invest in determinants of community safety (for instance affordable housing and quality schools). We also need alternative systems for dealing with troubling situations and transgressive behavior—systems that offer rehabilitative care along with accountability.

The [George Floyd Justice in Policing Act](#) seeks to address a wide range of policies and issues related to policing practices and law enforcement accountability. It increases accountability for law enforcement misconduct, restricts the use of certain policing practices, enhances transparency and data collection, and establishes best practices and training requirements. LISC supports this legislation and sees it as an important step toward creating a system that rebuilds trust between local communities and law enforcement.