



Safety and Justice

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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:

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 the U.S. Department of Justice [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#), 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 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 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, [636,000 Americans](#) are released from prisons, and 11 million cycle through local jails. Any successful approach to justice reform and reinvestment must

include pre-entry (diversion from incarceration) and re-entry (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 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 low-income urban and rural communities.

LISC supports:

Funding Pre-entry and Re-entry 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 re-entry 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).

As noted under our Health policy priorities, LISC also supports passage of the [Medicaid Reentry Act](#), which seeks to increase coordinated care for incarcerated people who are re-entering society.

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 [Comprehensive School-Based Approach to Youth Violence and Victimization](#) competitive grant program holistically addresses youth violence and victimization by implementing evidence-based prevention, intervention, and accountability efforts in school-based settings. This is an initiative of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), with statutory authority provided by the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act \(JJDP\), Title V—Incentive Grants for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs](#). As noted above, it is the only federal program that engages law enforcement and community boards in delinquency prevention at the local level, in coordination with a statewide plan.

We encourage the Department of Justice to continue to allocate resources for this important, targeted initiative, and urge Congress to robustly fund Title V of JJDP.



APPENDIX A
**Our Policy Lens
on Racial Equity**



APPENDIX B
**Our Policy Lens
on Rural America**



APPENDIX C
**Programs/Proposals
by Federal Agency**