

Expert panel identifies changes most likely to deliver results

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – National training standards, duty-to-intervene policies, and a federal registry of decertified officers top the list of urgent changes needed to reduce racially biased policing, limit use of force, and restore trust between law enforcement and communities, the [Council on Criminal Justice Task Force on Policing](#) said today.

In its final report, [The Path to Progress: Five Priorities for Police Reform](#), the Task Force also urged jurisdictions to adopt a trauma-informed approach to law enforcement and called for federal leadership and incentives to improve the collection and transparency of police-related data.

Composed of 11 civil rights, law enforcement, and community leaders, the Task Force emphasized that no single reform measure – or collection of them – will produce progress without fundamental changes to the problematic culture within many police departments. But after extensive deliberations and the analysis of more than 300 research reports and other relevant documents, the panel said its five top recommendations hold the most promise to deliver results.

“Nearly a year after George Floyd’s death, far too many people continue to be killed, injured, and poorly served by current policing practices, and policy remedies have been piecemeal at best,” said Task Force Executive Director [Nancy La Vigne](#). “This Task Force was convened to help address that shortcoming, and these recommendations – along with the panel’s full package of reports – can help set the nation on course toward fair, effective, and just policing for all.”

Explaining its consensus on the five priorities, the Task Force said:

- American police training is too short, uses ineffective teaching methods, and spends too little time on de-escalation, communication, critical thinking, and other skills officers need most on the job. The federal government should develop **national training standards** and use grant funding as leverage to incentivize states and localities to adopt them.

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- A patchwork of decertification policies across the country allows officers who break the law to obtain employment in other jurisdictions. Congress should create a publicly accessible **police misconduct registry**, and federal funding incentives and mandatory state reporting laws should be used to persuade agencies to contribute records.
- A “blue code of silence” plagues many police departments. Agencies should adopt policies that **require officers to intervene** when witnessing excessive force committed by colleagues – and mandate the reporting of other misconduct. Doing so can prevent harm to residents, identify officers whose behavior warrants intervention by superiors, and change “them against us” policing culture.
- Officers who are trained to identify and address trauma in the community, and who recognize and seek help for their own stress and trauma, are better equipped to police equitably and respectfully. **Trauma-informed policing** can build trust, especially in Black and brown communities affected by disproportionate use of force.
- Accessible, reliable data on the performance and impacts of law enforcement is critical to reform efforts – and sorely lacking. Federal leadership and incentives are needed to **improve the collection and public sharing of data** on use of force and other police activities.

In addition to its priority recommendations, the Task Force today released policy briefs advising police agencies to invest in [officer wellness programs](#) and boost efforts to recruit a [higher quality, more diverse workforce](#).

A third brief addressed proposals to [offload some police functions](#) to other entities, and reduce police funding accordingly. It found that mental health-related calls represent a small share of calls to police (1-4%) and officer time spent on calls (2%). This suggests that co-responder models may be feasible for many agencies, but also means that offloading these calls is unlikely to substantially reduce the footprint of police. By contrast, traffic stops and enforcement consume about 18% of officers’ time, and some of these activities could potentially be handled by unarmed officials. Members cautioned, however, that there is no evidence that non-police responders would behave in a less biased manner toward residents.

Launched in November 2020, the Task Force was charged with evaluating the most commonly proposed reforms focused on preventing police use of excessive force, reducing racial biases, increasing police accountability, and improving the relationship between law enforcement agencies and communities. For each measure, members produced an assessment weighing the proposal’s relative value based on the best available research and the expertise and experience of members. Today’s release represents the fourth set of

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reports; earlier work produced recommendations on more than two dozen other reforms, including [chokehold bans](#), [no-knock warrants](#), [police training](#), [government](#) and [civilian oversight](#), [body-worn cameras](#), and [qualified immunity](#).

Task Force [members](#) represent a diverse range of perspectives and experience, and include law enforcement leaders, civil rights advocates, researchers, a former big-city mayor, and people who have lost loved ones to police violence. The [Crime Lab](#) at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy is serving as research partner for the Task Force, evaluating the empirical evidence that guides its recommendations

The Task Force members are:

- Art Acevedo, Chief, Houston Police Department; President, Major Cities Chiefs Association
- Roy L. Austin, Jr., Partner, Harris, Wiltshire & Grannis, LLP; former White House domestic policy adviser
- Louis M. Dekmar, Chief, LaGrange (Ga.) Police Department; former President, International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Collette Flanagan, Founder, Mothers Against Police Brutality
- Walter Katz, Vice President of Criminal Justice, Arnold Ventures; former police oversight official, Los Angeles County and San Jose, Calif.
- Cynthia Lum, Professor, George Mason University, Department of Criminology, Law and Society; Director, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy
- Tashante McCoy, Regional Manager and Founder, Crime Survivors for Safety & Justice/The OWL Movement
- DeRay Mckesson, Educator, Author and Co-Founder, Campaign Zero
- Michael Nutter, Former Mayor, City of Philadelphia; former President, U.S. Conference of Mayors
- Sean Smoot, Director and Chief Counsel, Police Benevolent and Protective Association of Illinois
- Rosie Rivera, Sheriff, Salt Lake County, Utah

About the Council on Criminal Justice



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The Council is a nonpartisan membership organization and think tank created to advance understanding of the criminal justice policy challenges facing the nation and builds consensus for solutions based on facts, evidence, and fundamental principles of justice.

For more information on the Council and the Task Force, visit <https://counciloncj.org/>