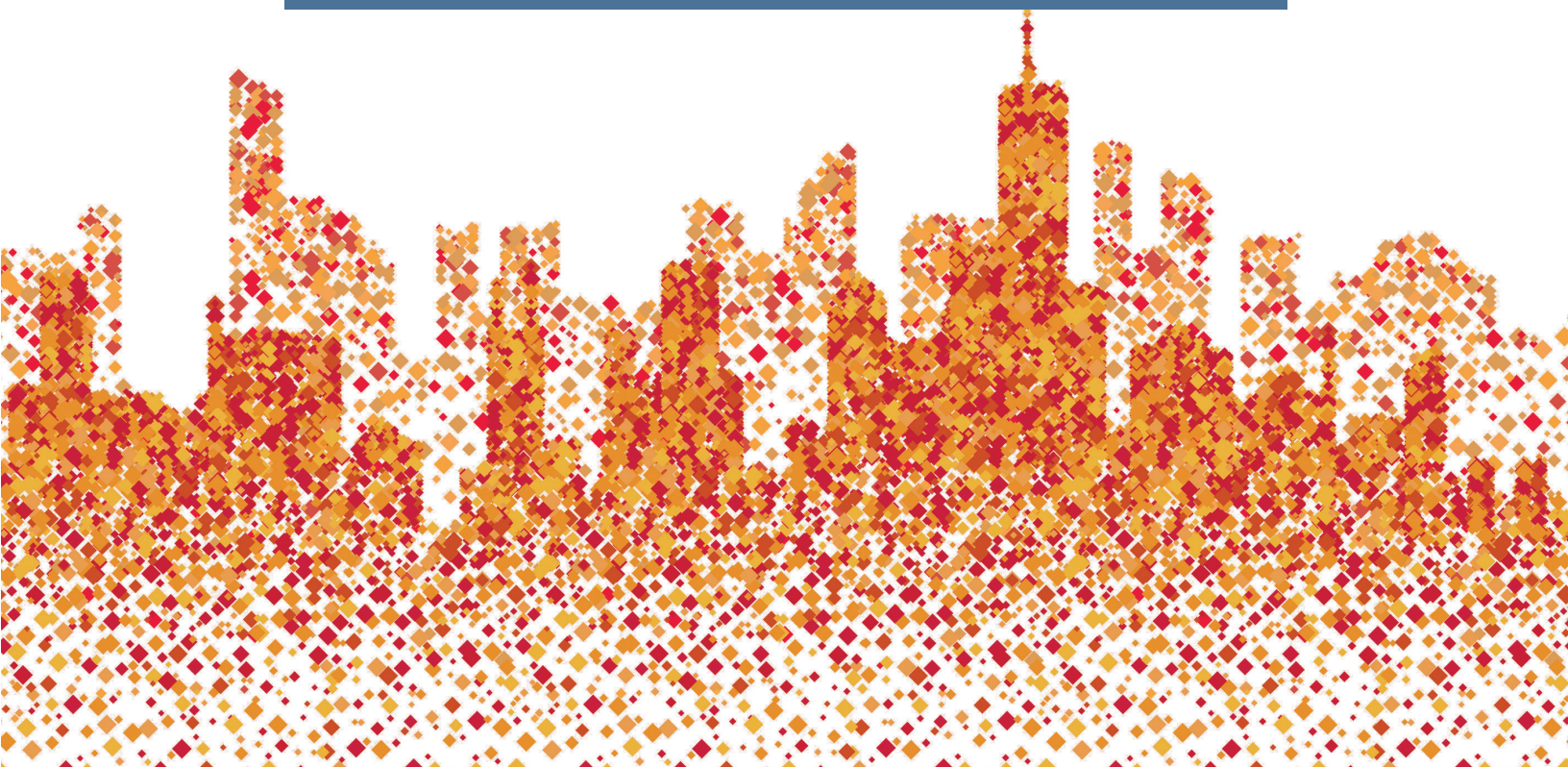


# A MEETING OF Mayors and Police Chiefs

Responding to  
Current Public Safety  
Challenges in Cities



**COPS**

Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice



# A MEETING OF Mayors and Police Chiefs

Responding to  
Current Public Safety  
Challenges in Cities



This project was supported, in whole or in part, by cooperative agreement number 2019-CK-WX-0016 awarded to the U.S. Conference of Mayors by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) or contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. References to specific individuals, agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the author(s), the contributor(s), or the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues.

The internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s), the contributor(s), nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

This resource was developed under a federal award and may be subject to copyright. The U.S. Department of Justice reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use and to authorize others to use this resource for Federal Government purposes. This resource may be freely distributed and used for noncommercial and educational purposes only.

Recommended citation:

U.S. Conference of Mayors. 2023. *A Meeting of Mayors and Police Chiefs: Responding to Current Public Safety Challenges in Cities*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Published 2023

# Contents

Introduction. ....	1
The program. ....	2
Reducing and Responding to Gun Violence. ....	3
Municipal ordinances to make gun ownership safer ....	3
Use of technology. ....	5
Community violence intervention ....	6
Community-based initiatives ....	7
Officer Recruitment and Retention. ....	9
Using Co-Responder Models to Improve Response to People in Behavioral Health Crises. ....	13
Police Reform Initiatives. ....	19
Conclusion. ....	23
Appendix. Participating Mayors and Police Chiefs. ....	25
About the U.S. Conference of Mayors. ....	27
About the COPS Office. ....	28



# Introduction

On March 5, 2022, under an award from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), the U. S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) convened a day-long session in Miami, Florida, in which mayors and police chiefs from cities throughout the nation examined several of the current public safety challenges that they face and their responses to them. The USCM wishes to thank the COPS Office and its leaders and staff for the support they have provided to it and to the nation's mayors and police departments and the mayors and police chiefs for their important contributions to the discussion.

The session was held on the final day of USCM's four-day 2022 Winter Leadership Meeting, attended by 50 mayors currently serving as the organization's officers, trustees, advisory council members, standing committee chairs, and task force chairs. It was opened by Miami Mayor Francis X. Suarez, the President of the Conference of Mayors, who introduced Fort Worth, Texas, Mayor Mattie Parker, Co-chair of the Conference's Mayors and Police Chiefs Task Force (participating via Zoom); Rob Chapman, Acting Director of the COPS Office; and Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director of the Conference of Mayors, all of whom offered introductory remarks.

Also introduced for opening comments were representatives of national police chief organizations participating in the Miami session: David B. Rauch, Director of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, a Vice President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police; Megan Noland, Director of Special Projects for the Major Cities Chiefs Association; and Michael Harrison, Commissioner of the Baltimore City (Maryland) Police Department and President of the Police Executive Research Forum. While scheduling the session as part of the larger Conference meeting made it possible for a larger number of mayors to participate than might have been expected for a stand-alone meeting of mayors and police chiefs, under the U.S. Department of Justice's COVID-19 policy in effect at that time, the number of participants was capped at 50.

## The program

In his opening remarks, Mayor Suarez noted that the partnership of mayors and police chiefs is vital to the success of cities and that keeping cities safe for their residents is a top priority shared by mayors and their chiefs, and CEO Cochran cited the Conference's history, dating to 1984, of bringing mayors and police chiefs together to strengthen this critical partnership.

The presentations made and discussions held during the day-long session on public safety were designed to address issues considered to be among the most serious currently being confronted by the mayors and police chiefs across the nation: gun violence, officer recruitment and retention, police response to people in behavioral health crises, and police reform initiatives.



# Reducing and Responding to Gun Violence

Cited by Mayor Suarez in his opening comments, the violent crime report published a month earlier by the Major Cities Chiefs Association compared results of a survey of police chiefs conducted at the end of 2021 with a survey conducted at the end of 2020.<sup>1</sup> (Several of the chiefs responding to those surveys were participants in the session.) The comparison found that violent crime in a majority of the larger cities across the United States remains high, with homicides alone increasing an alarming 36 percent in the past two years. In 2021 there was a 6 percent increase in homicides, a 4 percent increase in rapes, and a 3 percent increase in aggravated assaults.

**Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Mayor Sharon Weston Broome** introduced the gun violence discussion, which she moderated, by citing three major factors to which Thomas Abt, a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice, attributed the recent spike in violence: (1) the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities and first responders, (2) the surge in gun sales since the pandemic's start, and (3) the fallout of social unrest after the murder of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Broome noted that while we know there are other causes of the violence we have seen, these help us to understand the problem and to focus on solutions. The discussion she introduced would examine approaches to the problem being taken in four cities.

## Municipal ordinances to make gun ownership safer

**San Jose, California, Mayor Sam Liccardo** described his city's recent passage of an ordinance requiring gun owners to have liability insurance and to pay an administrative fee. The first element, the insurance requirement, draws on the analogy that auto insurance is mandated to drive a car because a car is potentially a dangerous weapon, so insurance should be required to incentivize safer gun ownership. Deaths related to the use of automobiles have been reduced by more than 80 percent on a per-mile basis since the 1970s because of insurance company encouragement of safety devices such as anti-lock brakes and airbags.

---

1. Major Cities Chiefs Association, *Violent Crime Survey – National Totals* (Salt Lake City, UT: Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2022), <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MCCA-Violent-Crime-Report-2021-and-2020-Year-End.pdf>.

Insurance companies will encourage and regulate gun safety—encouraging use of gun safes, trigger locks, and gun safety courses, for example—and are much more effective than governments in doing this. A city survey of insurance companies found that all offered basic liability coverage for gun ownership as part of homeowner’s or renter’s policies.

The second element of the ordinance, more controversial than the first, is a fee imposed on gun owners in the city. The fee is paid to a 501(c)(3) foundation that invests the funds in sensible gun harm reduction approaches such as suicide prevention, domestic violence prevention, mental health services, and gun safety classes.

In the realm of gun reform, the mayor explained, no good deed goes unlitigated, and a lot of lawyers are in courtrooms challenging San Jose’s ordinance. With a legal community that is passionate about the issue, however, a lot of lawyers have offered pro bono services to the City, and national organizations are interested in seeing more innovative approaches to gun safety in practice. The mayor believes that with court rulings resulting in more guns on the streets of San Jose, it becomes increasingly important that police officers be able to distinguish between those who possess guns lawfully and those who are not interested in following the law.

Two developments have arisen since the March 5 meeting:

1. Mayor Liccardo has said that he believes the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 23 decision on concealed-carry permits in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*<sup>2</sup> will result in more guns on the streets of San Jose.
2. San Jose’s ordinance survived its first challenge August 3 when a federal district court denied an attempt by gun rights organizations to halt the implementation of both the provision requiring gun owners to obtain civil liability insurance and the provision requiring gun owners to pay a fee to support gun violence–reduction programs.

---

2. *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*, 597 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2022), [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-843\\_new\\_m648.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-843_new_m648.pdf).

## Use of technology

**Mayor Suarez** opened the presentation on the use of technology to combat gun violence with a recent example of how a variety of technological tools were woven together in Miami to solve a murder and apprehend a suspected serial killer of homeless people in the community. The incident began with a gunshot that triggered the ShotSpotter system in the area. Knowing the location of the shot meant that closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in the area could be used to clearly identify the perpetrator and license plate readers (LPR) could be used to identify a vehicle in the area that could be connected to that person. In addition, cell phone pinging data could be used to verify that the person was in the vicinity of the homicide. Within 24 hours of the shooter's apprehension, ballistics data connected the gun he was carrying to the crime. The mayor also noted that the use of camera evidence means that police do not have to rely on witness testimony, which can be difficult in cases in which reprisals may be feared.

**Miami Police Chief Manuel Morales** described the city's Real-Time Crime Center, where 20 full-time personnel bring all of the department's technology together. This includes more than 600 cameras, some of which have been made available through grants and public-private partnerships with nongovernmental agencies, and more than 40 LPRs, both fixed and mobile, that can be deployed in areas where the gun detection system and cameras are also present.

Miami's Crime Gun Intelligence Center, which is part of the Real-Time Crime Center, is now equipped to match guns and bullet casings used in crimes within 24 hours, where previously a county lab would require up to 10 days to perform the same analysis. The new center has analyzed more than 2,300 casings and about 1,900 guns.

Personnel at the Real-Time Crime Center are scouring social media platforms for activity of potential interest to law enforcement. It is also expected that every Miami police officer will soon have a phone that virtually mimics what they are now able to do on desktops, including getting gun detection alerts and computer-aided dispatch (CAD) information, writing reports, and running facial recognition technology.

Referring to the violent crime increases in cities described earlier in the session, Chief Morales noted that in the past year Miami has seen a reduction in murders of almost 25 percent, a 13 percent reduction in all other types of shootings, and a 20 percent reduction in robberies.

## Community violence intervention

**Baltimore (Maryland) Police Commissioner Michael Harrison** explained that, historically, the city has been totally reliant on police initiatives and police deployment to deal with violent crime and violent offenders. Two previous iterations of community violence prevention programs had been tried but never fully deployed. With the arrival of the current mayor, Brandon Scott, the city began using a community violence intervention model, or focused deterrence, and recently launched a group violence reduction strategy using violence interrupters in Baltimore's Western district, the city's most violent. The violence interrupters have previously served in Baltimore as part of a Safe Streets initiative. While they are credited with doing a good job of quelling disputes and confrontations among at-risk individuals and preventing retaliatory violence, some have become targets and paid for their efforts with their lives.

The group violence reduction strategy was started because it offers both a carrot and a stick, the commissioner explained. It is no longer feasible to have enforcement only and to arrest individuals who either carry illegal weapons or use those weapons to resolve conflicts. The new strategy is holistic and comprehensive and encompasses prevention, intervention, enforcement, rehabilitation, and re-entry. Its goal is to change the thinking of the would-be violent offender who would use a gun and to create a pathway away from violent crime and toward dealing with addiction, education, housing issues, mental illness, and other family issues without having to resort to violence to solve conflict. This strategy requires wraparound services and intensive daily follow-up for participating individuals.

Baltimore does not have a centralized real-time crime center; it relies instead on satellite crime centers at the district level and is working on the budgeting to get them in each of the city's nine districts. Each Community Intelligence Center, a Chicago model, is staffed full-time day and night by an analyst, social worker, prosecutor, and detective—everyone needed to work with violent offenders on the ground at the district level. This model does not call for Safe Streets violence interrupters to be present, preserving their independence and street credibility and guarding against their being tainted by association with the police. The centers work closely with them, however, providing intelligence to be used in resolving conflicts and preventing retaliatory violence, and interrupters' file reports on the number of interactions they have with individuals potentially on their way to commit violent acts.

## Community-based initiatives

**Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot** reported that Chicago recorded 800 homicides in 2021, more than in any of the past 19 years, and that more than 90 percent of those killed were gun violence victims. The Chicago Police Department took a record 12,000 crime guns off the streets, many of which had come into the city from other states. Emphasis has been placed on arresting and prosecuting people who use illegal firearms, including an increase in the number of specialized gun teams that interview every person arrested for a gun crime.

Law enforcement in Chicago now includes district-level centers and a range of sophisticated technologies being used by officers and detectives. But the massive resources that have been invested in crime fighting have not brought peace to neighborhoods that have never known it. It is clear that the City cannot arrest its way out of this kind of problem; ultimately, it can and must invest its way out of it. The 2022 City budget earmarks \$1.2 billion for affordable housing, health care, youth programs, street outreach, and building economic empowerment and wealth in Black and brown communities, in particular, that historically have not seen investment and have been denied economic opportunities.

Chicago has taken a whole-of-government approach to community safety. This approach grew out of the recognition that community violence is a public health crisis and the question of whether any of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis could be applied to it. The response to the question was the creation of the Community Safety Coordination Center, a nerve center that brings together in a single room workers from all parts of City government who were working on different facets of community safety:—public health, police, schools, libraries and social services. The goal is interdepartmental communication; the results have included innovations in service.

Another lesson learned from the COVID experience has brought community partners to the table. The City was successful in vaccination and testing efforts because it worked in concert with communities, particularly those that were seeing the highest rates of infection. Now the local government's focus is on 15 communities that account for more than 50 percent of the violence in the city. An asset and opportunity analysis has been done, and tabletop exercises tailored to the specific communities have focused on unique episodes of trauma caused by gun violence.

This process has involved the communities in planning how the City can better respond, use existing resources, coordinate closely, and then use these plans to fashion an on-the-ground, block-by-block strategy. A community wellness summit and town halls were held in preparation for the summer.

**Chicago Police Superintendent David Brown** believes that most cities are seeing violence levels, particularly gun violence levels, they have not seen since the mid-1990s when, during the crack cocaine epidemic, a low initial investment would buy a kilo of drugs, and cutting it (mixing it with other substances) would increase profit margins in a high-demand market. While today's situation is similar, it is fentanyl, not crack cocaine, that is being combined with other, cheaper drugs, making it more potent even in its adulterated form and significantly increasing the dealers' profits, with which they pay for the jewelry and cars that spark the jealousies and arguments increasing the gun violence. Financial investigations leading to seizure of dealers' assets will disincentivize the easy-money culture that the young people are attracted to. Needed now are the short-term, mid-level investigations pursued in the 1990s that have a more immediate impact on the lifestyle of the subject and that alert young people to the consequences—asset seizure, prosecution, and years in prison—of drug dealing.

Because young people, increasingly, are gun violence offenders, according to Superintendent Brown, there is no way to move forward without a strong commitment to intervention—to resources directed to housing, jobs, and mental health services in communities that feel left behind. Gun violence and poverty: You can't solve one without solving the other.

# Officer Recruitment and Retention

**Kansas City, Missouri, Mayor Quinton Lucas**, the moderator of this session, cited a survey taken in 2021 in which 194 police departments reported that, on average, they were filling only 93 percent of their authorized positions. Among the responding agencies overall, fewer new officers were hired than they were hoping for, and there was a 45 percent increase in the retirement rate. It is a challenge to attract police officers to departments in an atmosphere of public protests and political disputes and the divisive rhetoric of 2020–2021. No one would say that it is easier to be a police officer today than it was prior to this period. And rhetoric plays a role in how policing is perceived: How do we achieve balance to make sure that we are speaking to the diverse groups and viewpoints in our cities?

**Kansas City (Missouri) Police Chief Richard Smith** said that while the city had seen a rise in the number of applications to the police department, he had been cautious about the quality of those applicants compared to those of the past. One response to this situation was to involve the department's younger officers, to take advantage of having a very diverse group of officers fresh out of the police academy who could accompany senior officers engaged in recruiting in the community. These young officers could relate to potential recruits in their age group and talk to them about the challenges of the profession and why they had made the decision to go into it. The result was that the quality of recruits improved in comparison to the two previous years.

Retention of officers in Kansas City benefited enormously from a pay raise, the chief reported. Officers who had planned to leave the department decided to stay because of the increased pay. But well beyond pay, successful retention depends on officers' perception of support they are receiving from their department in recognition of the job they do day and night in their city.

**Austin, Texas, Mayor Steve Adler** said that while his city claims one of the lowest homicide rates in the nation, this rate had doubled from 2020 to 2021, hitting numbers unlike anything recorded before. He sees the homicides as being largely due to the number of guns available, with incidents that might once have ended in fistfights now being resolved when someone pulls out a weapon.

Mayor Adler believes that in the political arguments of 2020 and 2021, his city has become a kind of poster child for defunding the police, and no matter how loudly he repeats the City's support for the police and opposition to defunding them, for

political and fundraising purposes both the left and the right refuse to accept this. It is difficult to have a serious and meaningful conversation about public safety and policing in this environment, but city leaders are trying to have one, to reimagine public safety and find nonpolarizing words to convey that a police force needs to have the strength, the people, and the resources to actually take criminals off the street while at the same time being seen as a guardian—not an offensive or militaristic—force. Changing the culture of a police force and the community’s perception of it can be a force multiplier that works across the community to change who applies to be a police officer. The goal is to match the culture in the community with the culture in the police force. With this alignment, policing becomes a better and better supported job.

**Austin (Texas) Police Chief Joseph Chacon** stressed that the level of trust and legitimacy that a police department enjoys in the community relates directly to community involvement in slowing crime and cooperating with the police, and some of the most critical engagements that affect this cooperation are the individual contacts between police officers and community members. Departments must be intentional in recruiting and retaining police professionals who have the right mindset and attitude.

Police salaries have to be competitive, and the police department, including the police academy, has to be a place that people want to come to. Recruiting for diversity of race and gender has to be intentional. Austin’s recent recruitment classes have been “majority minority,” with more people of color and more women than ever before—particularly from the Hispanic-Latino community—applying. And recruiting has to be local: Departments recruiting outside their cities often see applicants returning to their home cities after a year on their streets.

Austin has incorporated Community Connect in its Cadet Academy; this is a two-week program that puts cadets in the community with community advocates, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), social activists, and social service providers from other City departments to illustrate the network needed to successfully serve a community. While this helps raise the profile of the police department for people looking for a career, it also acknowledges that policing may not be the best option for everyone. The department also has signed the 30x30 pledge: 30 percent of the sworn workforce will consist of women by 2030. As a result of these two initiatives, the Austin Police Department has seen an increase in applications.



While Austin's recruiting initiatives have received significant media attention and resulted in a surge of applications to the department, vacancy rates remain relatively high—11 percent in the sworn workforce, 17 percent in the civilian workforce. Given the current labor shortage, it is not possible to match the higher starting salaries offered by private companies, and COVID-19 has added to the difficulty of keeping trainees in the Cadet Academy and of doing police work in general. The key is to make the police department stand out as an innovative and attractive option for younger people for whom money may be an important thing but not the only thing. Monetary incentives to keep personnel in the profession may not be as important as the intrinsic sense of satisfaction derived from police work.

**Providence (Rhode Island) Police Chief Colonel Hugh Clements** has served in his city's police department for 36 years, 11 of these as chief. The department is enmeshed in the community, with members serving on more than 50 boards that support everything it does, including recruiting and retention. Clements's first nine years as chief saw significant reductions in violent crime and the introduction of some groundbreaking changes in the culture of the department that were consistent with the six pillars of the final report of President Barack Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.<sup>3</sup> The decline in violent crime ended with the pandemic and the concurrent civil unrest. In a city with eight colleges and universities there were more than 70 protests in 18 months, but there were no calls from the community to abolish or defund the police, and the City Council was calling for more, not fewer, police. Still, the rhetoric targeting policing during this period has made recruiting more difficult.

The process of recruiting young men and women from the community to be police officers includes several steps, the most important being the recruiting announcement and advertising via social media and all other media outlets. Community partners with whom department personnel are involved are brought in for the announcement. Partners also serve on the oral boards that are part of the selection process, and Chief Clements says they may be more demanding of the candidates than department members.

---

3. President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P311>.

Going forward, police departments must be creative in attracting young men and women prepared for police work and honest about both the danger and difficulty associated with it and the personal rewards that come from service to the community, with its potential to influence the lives of young people. The fabric of the city must be considered if the police department is to reflect the community it serves. Providence's four most recent Police Academy classes have been "majority minority;" in one of these, 14 languages were spoken among the 53 recruits. Across the city, with 50 languages being spoken, recruits with language skills are currently being targeted.

# Using Co-Responder Models to Improve Response to People in Behavioral Health Crises

**Columbus, Ohio, Mayor Andrew Ginther**, the moderator of this panel, opened the discussion with a summary of recommendations relating to use of co-responder models made in 2020 by the Conference of Mayors Working Group on Police Reform and Racial Justice.<sup>4</sup> This group recommended that cities and police departments regularly analyze calls for service to determine who should be the responder in varying circumstances—essentially, not asking police officers to solve all of a community's problems—and suggested use of pilot and co-responder models in which the police are partnered with mental health groups or other social service providers.

Mayor Ginther described a six-week pilot program conducted in his city in the summer of 2020 that focused on connecting 911 callers with the appropriate mental health and substance abuse resources and with dispatchers who coordinated with inhouse clinicians to stabilize and de-escalate situations while on calls. During the pilot period, 450 calls were triaged by this unit, and more than one-third of those required no police response. No uses of force were reported during the pilot period. Freeing police resources during a record year of homicides in Columbus was recognized as a significant benefit to the city. Based on the summer pilot experience, the model has been funded to operate through 2022 and will lead into creation of an alcohol, drug, and mental health crisis center in 2024.

**Denver, Colorado, Mayor Michael Hancock** described his city's history of multi-million-dollar lawsuits and settlements resulting from deaths of people experiencing mental health crises at the hands of law enforcement officers in situations in which the officers had to reconcile threats to themselves and to the subjects they were dealing with. The mayor believes he was elected to talk about the need for police reform in his city and has seen Denver through a series of aggressive and innovative approaches to reforming excessive use of force policies, programs, and services.

---

4. *Report on Police Reform and Racial Justice* (Washington, DC: U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2020), <https://www.usmayors.org/issues/police-reform/>.

Models currently in place in Denver include putting a licensed clinician in the car with police officers to help them determine the best approach to a situation; sending emergency medical technicians and behavioral health clinicians, not officers, to engage individuals experiencing mental health issues, poverty, homelessness, or substance abuse problems; and an aid center where individuals arrested or detained and believed by officers to be experiencing mental health, drug, or behavioral crises can be triaged by clinicians and other professionals to determine how best to treat them and connect them to services.

In Denver, when a 911 caller reports an individual in crisis, call-takers trained to decode what is happening dispatch either law enforcement or nonpolice responders. In thousands of nonpolice responses, no police officer has ever been called to provide backup. All cities must deal with people facing crises and respond to them in a way that keeps them out of jail, where they don't belong, and connected to the services that are so badly needed.

**Denver (Colorado) Police Chief Paul Pazen** reported on his city's experience aimed at reducing social harms through a precision policing model that builds on their co-responder experience. The chief's overview of Denver's programs included the STAR (Support Team Assisted Response) program, which was in development for about two and a half years before it was launched in June 2020, a time of great challenges for cities throughout the nation. The program provides a paramedic professional and a clinician who work out of a van. There are now three van teams that provide coverage for most of the day, seven days a week. With the mayor's support the program will grow to have 10 teams and six vans providing around-the-clock coverage of the city. Because the program is strictly limited to nonviolent cases not involving weapons, the training of the 911 team is critically important: The entire program could be at risk if a paramedic or clinician were to be injured on a call.

Also key to the success of the STAR program are the outreach case coordinators who follow up with the individuals who have been handled initially by the van teams and provided initial services. The case coordinators follow up with these individuals to create a long-term sustainable solution—a continuum of care. Instead of a police officer trying to navigate all the different resources available, a case manager connects an individual in crisis to services that can reduce future crises. Obviously, working with city partners and nonprofits is critical in this process.

An assessment intake diversion center that has been under development for about six years was slated to be launched in June 2022. Individuals arrested for low-level nonviolent crimes would be queried by officers regarding job status, housing, mental health, substance abuse, or other issues and taken to the center, which is staffed by case managers, substance abuse navigators, housing specialists, and human services specialists available to help work through the issues. The individual's case will not be filed; as long as they continue to work with their case manager they will never set foot in a jail or courtroom.

Federal and state funds can be leveraged to support these programs, so taking funds from law enforcement to pay for them should not be an issue. Alternative programs such as these are not offered at the expense of policing, and both contribute in a balanced approach to ensuring public safety.

**Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt** described the creation of a Mayor's Law Enforcement Policy Task Force in response to the turmoil of the summer of 2020. Working with Chief Charles Ramsey and 21CP Solutions, the group developed a set of 39 recommendations that were adopted by the City Council. Co-responder models were among the reforms. It is important to recognize the power of terminology: Referring to the concept as *co-response* contributes to a community's understanding that there will continue to be a law enforcement response in the city when one is needed.

In the City's most recent budget, the City Council allocated additional funding to implement the new policing models. It is important to illustrate that funding does not come out of the existing police budget but rather is new money for additional and future programs, including co-responder models to be implemented in the years ahead. This is important because residents think it is important. While the police reform effort was underway, a high-profile incident occurred in late 2020 in which a person with severe mental health problems was killed in an encounter with police. This was not the catalyst for change, because the process was already in place, but it did provide more support for the community position and prompt more work toward change in this area. It's important for a city to have a plan to accommodate these situations or dissatisfaction will boil up in the community.

**Oklahoma City Police Chief Wade Gourley** explained that, until last year, Oklahoma law restricted who could respond to mental health calls and provide needed transportation. In 2019, the police department had started looking at the quality-of-life issues officers encounter on a daily basis that could be helped if officers took a more active role in connecting individuals to the services and resources they need. A large portion of these cases involve individuals with substance abuse and mental health problems who are challenged by navigating the system to get the services they need—a challenge many police officers did not fully appreciate.

In 2019, the chief and Oklahoma's new Department of Human Services Director discussed how, working together, they could get resources for these individuals where they needed to be. Through the partnership formed, social workers were assigned to work with the police department in specific areas of the community. Ironically, this partnership was aided by the demands posed by COVID-19: With social workers no longer working out of centralized offices, it was easier to establish areas in the community where they could develop working relationships with police officers that benefited residents. An officer responding to a call and going into a home might recognize the need for a social service. In the new system, that officer can use the computer in their car to create a referral to a community services provider. Within 24 hours, and usually sooner, the officer is notified that a community services provider has made contact. Following this contact, case reviews and assessments are conducted monthly by the police and human services departments. One of the largest providers of mental health and substance abuse treatment in the area has come on board and is part of this referral system, which now is citywide.

The success of the police and social work partnership has led to the concept being applied in other areas. Truant officers are going into students' homes in search of reasons for their not being in school and, through referrals to partner agencies, are remedying problems ranging from lack of internet connections to lack of food and transportation to even cases of head lice. A one-stop center is available to victims of domestic abuse to connect them to attorneys, housing assistance, and other services available in the community.

The State Department of Mental Health is now funding transport systems so police officers no longer have to provide this service to residents needing it. Work is also underway on a 988 call system to be used instead of 911 when mental health services are needed. (Telephone and text providers in the United States and its major territories have been required to direct 988 calls and texts to the National Suicide

Prevention Lifeline since July 16, 2022.<sup>5</sup>) A successful transition to this system can improve responses to problems and help avoid unneeded police officer involvement. The attention now being given to service models that both improve law enforcement and better meet community needs has raised awareness of the importance of expanding the infrastructure of services required to support these models.

**Albuquerque, New Mexico, Mayor Tim Keller's** presentation opened with context that included his city's long-running crime problems, worsening homelessness, and a U.S. Department of Justice consent decree in place since 2015 based on police officer use of force, including the killing of individuals with mental health issues. Albuquerque is a "majority minority" community going back to 1715, and the use of force there did not break down along racial lines.

Albuquerque's police officers were spending too much time on calls where they were not helpful, showing up for low-level situations that often involved the likelihood of escalation and spending an average of three hours on each call. But the mayor said there were reasons that conventional approaches to police reform would not work from either the officers' or the community's perspective, and models that sent emergency medical technicians (EMT) or clinicians and social workers along with officers on calls were working but were doubling the resources the calls required. The system was being overwhelmed by 911 calls—50,000 per month—and people needing help were not getting it.

After the murder of George Floyd, it was clear that public safety in the community had to be reimagined. The response was to create a new cabinet-level City department totally dialed-in to 911, an alternative to both police and fire that was not a co-response model. The new Community Safety Department is budgeted at \$10 million for almost 100 responders, who will handle 911 calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is expected that the Community Safety Department will pull 10,000 calls each month out of the police response system, roughly the equivalent of adding 100 more police officers. Police department and union support for the new department was strong, based on the view that officers will avoid "down-and-out" calls and be free to focus on fighting crime. The fire department and its EMTs also saw it as a force multiplier.

---

5. "988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline," Federal Communications Commission, last modified July 20, 2022, <https://www.fcc.gov/988-suicide-and-crisis-lifeline>.

The Community Safety Department has its own fleet of cars, and responders wear Community Safety Department uniform jackets and badges. Responders continue to be hired and trained for different response levels—a mix of highly trained clinicians and others trained in de-escalation—and applicants are screened for mental disposition to deal with people who may be overdosing, having a mental health episode, or simply feeling angry. Applicants must also accept the fact that there are dangers involved in working with the population that the Community Safety Department was created to deal with.

In creating the new department there was some initial concern that 911 dispatchers would not be able to handle routing calls to a third department and that mistakes in dispatches would be made. Early experience has shown that this is not an issue: Through 4,000 dispatches, only six have resulted in a police officer incorrectly being called in for assistance.



# Police Reform Initiatives

Charles Ramsey, the former Chief of Police of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C., and Commissioner of Police of the Philadelphia Police Department, served as moderator of this session and referred the mayors and police chiefs to two documents of relevance to the topic of police reform: (1) the Conference of Mayors Working Group's *2020 Report on Police Reform and Racial Justice*<sup>6</sup> and (2) the *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*,<sup>7</sup> a task force he had co-chaired. Ramsey also recognized COPS Office Acting Director Rob Chapman for his agency's collaborative reform assistance, which helped transform Philadelphia's police department during the time he was commissioner.

**Fayetteville, North Carolina, Mayor Mitch Colvin** described the situation in his city in 2012 when "driving while Black" police stops first reported to the state were four times the statewide average. The City called in the U.S. Department of Justice to review its processes; the changes recommended served the city well during the "stress test" of 2020. Fayetteville was one of the first cities in the country to pilot and then implement the use of police body cameras. A move to community policing included an investment in technology and equipment, including dashboard cameras in cars, and the tracking and analysis of stops and incidents by a crime analyst.

Following his 2017 election and hiring of a new chief of police, the mayor's main priorities were to increase transparency, accountability, and community trust. The City has invested heavily in the promotion of police officers' physical and mental wellness, understanding that a bad day for an officer has different consequences than a bad day for a worker in another occupation. Efforts to increase community involvement are aided by grants that help officers maintain housing in the city, helping them get to know and so better serve and protect residents. In addition, Fayetteville was one of the first "30x30" cities, pledging it will have a police force that is 30 percent female by 2030.

Efforts to increase transparency have been aided by cameras placed in the city's main traffic corridors. A camera captured an incident involving an off-duty sheriff's deputy and an individual the sheriff's department believed to be mentally challenged. Release of videos such as this can become contentious; the mayor made the decision to release this recording in a timely fashion in the interest of building trust in the community.

---

6. *Report on Police Reform and Racial Justice* (see note 4).

7. *President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Final Report* (see note 3).

The mayor was invited to chair a subcommittee on law enforcement for a criminal justice racial equity task force formed by the governor of North Carolina in the wake of the racially charged incidents of 2020. This task force gave Fayetteville a unique opportunity to be at the forefront of policy change at the state level, an area in which the role of cities is often limited. The task force made 125 recommendations to state legislators, many of which have been adopted.

**Fayetteville (North Carolina) Police Chief Gina Hawkins** explained that her city's approach to police reform is based on a continuing assessment of how well the workforce is able to take care of the community—an understanding that if all police personnel (officers, dispatchers, and others) are not healthy, the community cannot be healthy—and this requires an understanding of the stresses that all employees go through on a daily basis. She has created a Community Affairs unit focusing on the community's input to the department to offer more opportunities for the community to get engaged. This effort has led to the creation of a Citizens' Police Academy and to a quarterly Faith Forum for the department to hear from religious groups, another segment of the community whose input the department values. The department has expanded its Police Athletic League program, and summer internships now bring students behind the scenes to see how the department operates.

The murder of George Floyd prompted the department to institute a range of diversity and equity training approaches for officers, different ways of delivering needed information in a police culture in which desire to understand crises varies among individuals. Aiding this effort, the IACP's Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center is pilot testing a new duty-to-intervene program in Fayetteville in advance of making it available across the country. The City's view of duty to intervene goes beyond use of force situations to include any inappropriate behavior by an officer toward another person.

The department has brought in a nonsworn mental health liaison officer to help officers with calls received to aid people with mental health issues and identify the community resources that are needed. Calls involving homeless individuals are now supported by a nonsworn homeless coordinator with links to community resources for this population and by a sworn homeless affairs officer. A community violence reduction advocate will be doing a landscape analysis of the city to identify how community institutions such as hospitals and the school system can contribute to police department efforts to combat violent crime.

**New Orleans, Louisiana, Mayor Latoya Cantrell** described her city's progress in complying with the consent decree imposed on the police department in 2013—from 21 percent compliance in 2016 to more than 90 percent today. Based on her assessment of how much the City was spending each year on implementing and enforcing the consent decree, the mayor has pushed the judges and the monitors since 2018 to provide a clear pathway that can be followed to full compliance. As a result, New Orleans is approaching full compliance and will move into the maintenance phase of the decree.

Mayor Cantrell says there is no doubt that the culture of the police department has changed and that this was demonstrated during the unrest in 2020 when the police department could be seen on the national stage—a time when people were pushing for the “8Can’tWait” approach to police reform.<sup>8</sup> At this point, she says, the City had already adopted the eight reforms called for, plus several more.

**New Orleans (Louisiana) Police Superintendent Shaun Ferguson** encourages his police department and the community to move beyond the consent decree terminology and to think instead about constitutional policing and its focus on the community's expectations regarding how the police will meet its needs and concerns.

In a public hearing, the superintendent reported on five areas of reform covered in the consent decree: (1) community engagement, (2) performance evaluations, (3) stop and search, (4) arrest supervision, and (5) bias-free policing. Moving into the important maintenance phase of the consent decree, the department is conducting across-the-board monthly audits and releasing monthly reports to the public on its website. The chief will be asking the city council to sustain the reforms that have been put in place by codifying them. He envisions a quarterly report to the council and the public on problems the department encounters, what it is doing about them, and what improvements it has made.

---

8. “8Can’tWait,” Campaign Zero, last modified June 2021, <https://8cantwait.org/>.

The department has implemented Ethical Policing is Courageous<sup>9</sup> and partners with the Georgetown University Law Center to build upon Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement.<sup>10</sup> Following the murder of George Floyd, the city experienced more than 150 protests, of which only one was a police-related incident. The mayor supported the police publicly, and there was never a call to defund them. Recent efforts aimed at community engagement include holding officer roll calls in the community so residents can hear what is being discussed—an idea shared by the mayor of Tampa, Florida—and deploying officers in the same area every day, giving them and the community an opportunity to know one another.

---

9. "Ethical Policing Is Courageous," City of New Orleans, accessed October 25, 2022, <http://epic.nola.gov/home/>.

10. "Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project," Georgetown Law, accessed October 25, 2022, <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/>.

## Conclusion

Following the four areas of presentation and discussion, several of the participants made some general observations about the session:

- Both mayors and police chiefs commented about how useful and important it was to spend a full day together sharing information about the problems they face in their cities and the strategies they are using to address them.
- One police chief commented that he thought he spoke for all the police chiefs in appreciating the Conference of Mayors for devoting so much time to hearing from chiefs and allowing them to provide their perspective.
- Another chief commented that chiefs' voices alone may fall on deaf ears, but when the mayor and chief are "singing the same song" their voices will be heard because the public knows that mayors are looking out for everyone—law enforcement agencies, city employees, and the entire community. He said that such sessions need to continue; that these are difficult times, we have to do some things differently, and we need to find balance among the competing interests.

COPS Office Acting Director Rob Chapman recognized the value of the long partnership between the COPS Office and the Conference of Mayors and the involvement of so many mayors and police chiefs in the day's discussions. Both he and Cornelia Sigworth of the Bureau of Justice Assistance discussed the many funding opportunities and other resources available from their agencies.

Tom Cochran expressed appreciation for all their comments and assured participants of the conference's continuing commitment to bringing mayors and police chiefs together.



# Appendix.

## Participating Mayors and Police Chiefs

Akron, Ohio

**Mayor Dan Horrigan**

---

Albuquerque, NM

**Mayor Tim Keller**

---

Arlington, TX

**Mayor Jim Ross**

---

Augusta, GA

**Mayor Hardie Davis**

---

Austin, TX

**Mayor Steve Adler**

**Chief of Police Joseph Chacon**

---

Baltimore City, MD

**Police Commissioner**

**Michael Harrison**

---

Baton Rouge, LA

**Mayor-President**

**Sharon Weston Broome**

---

Bridgeport, CT

**Mayor Joseph Ganim**

---

Burnsville, MN

**Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz**

---

Carmel, IN

**Mayor Jim Brainard**

---

Chicago, IL

**Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot** (virtual)

**Superintendent of Police**

**David Brown** (virtual)

---

Columbus, OH

**Mayor Andrew Ginther**

---

Denver, CO

**Mayor Michael Hancock**

**Chief of Police Paul Pazen**

---

Des Moines, IA

**Mayor Frank Cownie**

---

Doral, FL

**Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez**

---

Elizabeth, NJ

**Mayor J. Christian Bollwage**

---

Fayetteville, NC

**Mayor Mitch Colvin**

**Chief of Police Gina Hawkins**

---

Findlay, OH

**Mayor Christina Muryn**

---

Fort Worth, TX

**Mayor Mattie Parker** (virtual)

**Chief of Police Neil Noakes**

---

Gresham, OR

**Mayor Travis Stovall**

---

Houston, TX

**Mayor Sylvester Turner**

---

Huntington, WV

**Mayor Steve Williams**

**Chief of Police Karl Colder**

---

Kansas City, MO  
**Mayor Quinton Lucas**  
**Chief of Police Richard Smith**

---

Lansing, MI  
**Mayor Andy Schor**

---

Lincoln, NE  
**Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird**  
**Chief of Police Teresa Ewins**

---

Louisville, KY  
**Mayor Greg Fischer**

---

Miami, FL  
**Mayor Francis Suarez**  
**Chief of Police Manuel Morales**

---

Miami Beach, FL  
**Mayor Dan Gelber**

---

Montgomery, AL  
**Interim Chief of Police**  
**Ramona Harris**

---

New Bedford, MA  
**Chief of Police Paul Oliveira**

---

New Orleans, LA  
**Mayor LaToya Cantrell**  
**Superintendent of Police**  
**Shaun Ferguson**

---

Oklahoma City, OK  
**Mayor David Holt**  
**Chief of Police Wade Gourley**

---

Orion, MI  
**Mayor Chris Barnett**

---

Pembroke Pines, FL  
**Mayor Frank Ortis**  
**Chief of Police Kipp Shimpeno**

---

Piscataway, NJ  
**Mayor Brian Wahler**

---

Providence, RI  
**Chief of Police**  
**Colonel Hugh Clements**

---

Rochester Hills, MI  
**Mayor Bryan Barnett**

---

San Jose, CA  
**Mayor Sam Liccardo**

---

San Leandro, CA  
**Mayor Pauline Cutter**  
**Chief of Police Abdul Pridgen**

---

Scranton, PA  
**Mayor Paige Cagnetti**

---

Sterling Heights, MI  
**Mayor Michael Taylor**

---

Tampa, FL  
**Mayor Jane Castor** (virtual)

---

Toledo, OH  
**Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz**

---

Westland, MI  
**Mayor William Wild**

---

Youngstown, OH  
**Mayor Jamael Brown**  
**Chief of Police Carl Davis**

---



# About the U.S. Conference of Mayors

The **United States Conference of Mayors** is the official nonpartisan organization of the more than 1,400 U.S. cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Each city is represented in the conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

Conference members speak with a united voice on organizational policies and goals. Mayors contribute to the development of national urban policy by serving on one or more of the conference's standing committees, which at annual meetings recommend policy positions they believe should be adopted by the organization. Members discuss and vote on policy resolutions, which collectively represent the views of the nation's mayors and are distributed to Congress and to the President of the United States.

For more information about the United States Conference of Mayors, visit [usmayors.org](http://usmayors.org).

# About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has been appropriated more than \$20 billion to provide training and technical assistance, enhance crime fighting technology, and add more than 130,000 officers to our nation's streets. COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, <https://cops.usdoj.gov>.



In March 2022, 50 mayors, police chiefs, and other representatives of law enforcement executive organizations met at the Winter Leadership Meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors to discuss the cooperation necessary between local government and law enforcement to keep cities safe. Topics included ordinances, technology options, and community interventions and other initiatives to respond to and reduce gun violence; officer recruitment and retention issues; the use of co-responder models to improve response to people experiencing behavioral health crises; and police reform initiatives. This publication is a summary of that session.



**COPS**

*Community Oriented Policing Services*  
*U.S. Department of Justice*

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services  
145 N Street NE  
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details about COPS Office programs,  
call the COPS Office Response Center  
at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at [cops.usdoj.gov](https://cops.usdoj.gov).