

cities united
resource series

A Strategic Resource for
Mayors on Police-Involved Shootings
and In-Custody Deaths

cities
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*Working Together to
Build Safe, Healthy and
Hopeful Communities*

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introductory letter

Dear Colleagues,

As mayors and city leaders, we share a vision of safe, healthy and hopeful cities and communities, where all residents have the opportunities they need to thrive.

Cities United works closely with mayors and other city leaders to recognize African American men and boys as assets to our cities and our nation and to reduce the violence that impacts them. Today, Cities United is a national movement of nearly 90 partner cities. Key to this work is our ongoing effort to equip mayors and local leaders with the latest tools, practices and resources needed to save lives by stemming violence and expanding opportunity in their respective communities.

We have heard loudly and clearly from our partners about the need for resources to help mayors address the most urgent issues that hold far too many African American men and boys back: community violence and homicides; police-involved shootings and deaths in custody; suicides; domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. In response, Cities United is creating a series of resources to equip mayors with the information, examples and tools they need to address these tough challenges—and prevent them from happening in the first place.

This first resource focuses on police-involved shootings and deaths in custody. As the nation watches, cities across the country—from Baton Rouge and Falcon Heights to Baltimore, Cleveland and Ferguson—have seen the shooting deaths of far too many African American men and boys during encounters with police. In the event of such tragic incidents, we hope this resource can provide suggested action steps, systems and procedures that may help city leaders respond meaningfully to rebuild trust in their communities and achieve long-lasting positive change. This issue is crucial to ensuring the safety not only of our communities, but also of the men and women who protect and serve those communities.

The recommendations included in this resource are based on emerging best practices and effective responses we have identified across the country, rooted in community transformation and healing. We recognize every city and community faces unique realities particular to its size, geography and demographics. For this reason, we intend the resource to serve as a compilation of suggested steps that can be utilized by each city given its own unique context.

We know that mayors are leading the way in ensuring that their cities are pockets of hope where success and safety is not determined by class, race or zip code. We know that, every day, mayors are working tirelessly with law enforcement, city leaders, community partners, families and young people to close every harmful and inequitable gap that stands as a barrier to opportunity, and to improve pathways to justice, employment and education. More remains to be done: We must redouble our efforts to address the systemic inequalities that makes violence, whether it comes from the state or from within the community, prevalent in our neighborhoods.

introductory *letter*

We hope that this resource, and the others to follow, can serve as one of many important tools in the work to achieve our vision of safety in our cities and improve outcomes for African American men and boys, their families and the communities they call home. Doing so strengthens our cities and our nation as a whole.

*Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges, Cities United Advisory Board Member
Anthony Smith, Executive Director, Cities United*

Endorsed by

Cities United Advisory Board

- Dr. William Bell, Casey Family Programs
- Clarence Anthony, National League of Cities
- Shawn Dove, Campaign for Black Male Achievement
- Mayor Betsy Hodges, Minneapolis
- Mayor William A. Bell, Birmingham
- Former Mayor Michael Nutter, Philadelphia
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Members of Law Enforcement

- NOBLE (National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives)
- Police Chief Kenton Buckner, Little Rock, AR
- Deputy Police Chief Melron Kelly, Columbia, SC
- Police Chief Steve Conrad, Louisville, KY

partners

Mayors



Law Enforcement



National Partners



partners

National Partners *continued*



Philanthropy



about the *series*

The “Working Together to Build Safe, Healthy and Hopeful Communities” series is a new resource provided by Cities United. Mayors, city leaders and police chiefs are tackling a number of difficult issues related to violence and poor life outcomes affecting African American men and boys in their cities. Cities United heard from city leaders about the need for a series of resources on the most pressing of these issues. The series will focus on:

- police-involved shootings and deaths in custody
- community violence and homicides
- suicides
- domestic violence, and child abuse and neglect

The series is designed as one of many important resources that, taken together, may equip mayors and city leaders with the steps, information and tools they need to address and prevent the different forms of violence affecting African American boys and young men in their respective cities. The resources can equip mayors with the necessary information and action steps to address not just the incidents themselves, but also the underlying, complex and systemic issues that contribute to violence.

The best practices and suggested recommendations included in this resource are meant to contribute to community transformation, in line with Cities United’s vision of ending violence against African American men and boys and creating safe, healthy and hopeful communities for all.

If your city would like to get involved in developing this series of resources, or if your city has suggestions of best practices to include in this series, please contact info@citiesunited.org.

about this *resource*

This first tool is focused on police-involved shootings and deaths in custody, an issue that is consistently in the national spotlight, particularly since Ferguson, MO, and the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement. We have heard from city leaders that additional systems and procedures would be helpful to adequately respond to these incidents. We also understand that best practices are emerging, and our resource aims to showcase the steps that city leaders can take before, during and after an incident.

In addition, Cities United holds a broad vision of a more just approach to enforcing laws and public safety, which starts with all stakeholders in the community—mayors, city leaders, police chiefs, community residents and youth—working together to identify solutions and restore trust and hope to our communities.

guiding *principles*

This resource is built on five core principles that we believe will bring about community transformation. These principles include prevention, trust, healing, transparency and accountability.

Prevention: The best practices we spotlight in the document are en route to our goals of transforming our communities into places where our African American men and boys can thrive and live their lives to the fullest potential. We are invested in life, and are committed to doing what we can to prevent the loss of life. We focus on policies and practices that can be put in place to prevent violent incidents from happening.

Trust: Strong relationships between mayors, city leaders, law enforcement and the residents in the communities they serve contribute to safer and high-performing cities where policies and practices are in line with the needs of the community. Trust is not created overnight, however. It must be earned over time, with community members looking to city leaders to listen to their concerns and engage in sustained conversations bolstered by mutual respect.

Healing: Loss of life is devastating for directly affected family members as well as entire communities and cities. Even as we encourage city leaders to address the practical realities of responding to police-involved shootings and deaths in custody, we know there are less tangible and emotional realities we need to address. Taken together, the steps we outline throughout this resource are meant to bring about lasting change and community transformation and healing.

Transparency: Transparency is critical to building trust and bringing about healing with affected families and the community. Community members need to know what is happening, when and why. We outline a number of steps that address best practices for information sharing and ongoing engagement with community members.

Accountability: The primary demand from communities following a police-involved shooting or death in custody is that law enforcement must be held accountable. A strong and transparent process of accountability can go a long way toward addressing these concerns. Accountability can take multiple forms including policies to hold officers accountable within a police department as well as by the city, the courts and the federal government.

methodology

This resource is the result of extensive research with mayors, city leaders, police chiefs and government agency officials who play a role in responding to police-involved shootings and deaths in custody. We conducted interviews with mayors, city leaders and police chiefs across the country affiliated with Cities United, and we spoke with faith and community leaders and advocates, federal and local government agency officials as well as family members who have lost loved ones to police-involved shootings. While we kept the interviews confidential to encourage candid inputs, our recommendations are rooted in the findings from these interviews.

We reviewed a series of recent reports that spotlight best practices, including reports from the Department of Justice, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the President's Task Force for 21st Century Policing, the Black Lives Matter movement and other national advocacy organizations committed to reforming police-community relations. The full list of publications is included in the *Further Reading* section.

We also reviewed media coverage of police-involved shootings and deaths in custody in several major cities affiliated with Cities United and conducted a social media and media audit in those cities to understand how community leaders, affected families and young people to uncover the concerns and demands raised.

response
protocol

The protocol is organized to present recommended steps mayors, city leaders and police chiefs can consider taking to respond to police-involved shootings or deaths in custody as well as preventative steps that can be taken to address the underlying issues that contribute to these incidents.

Actions That Can Be Taken Before a Critical Incident

This section outlines recommended steps to take now, with the ultimate goal of preventing incidents of police-involved shootings and deaths in custody from occurring.

1. Build and Strengthen Relationships of Trust with All Communities

As the White House Fact Sheet on Community Policing states¹, “Recent events in Ferguson, Missouri and around the country have highlighted the importance of strong, collaborative relationships between local police and the communities they protect. ...Trust between law enforcement agencies and the people they protect and serve is essential to the stability of our communities, the integrity of our criminal justice system and the safe and effective delivery of policing services.”

As leaders with hopeful visions for the health and safety of their respective cities, mayors and police chiefs are best positioned to build bridges and strengthen relationships between communities, law enforcement and other city government institutions. While persistent and complex issues, such as racial and economic inequity, necessitate comprehensive and long-term solutions, the following immediate and actionable steps are recommended to tackle the challenge of community trust.

Spotlight:² A simple idea conceived during a routine haircut, the Cops & Barbers initiative has grown into a tool that is helping the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) better engage its community. The North Carolina Local Barbershop Association partnered with CMPD to host 13 coordinated monthly town halls with the African American community in different parts of the city in 2015. Charlotte Mayor Dan Clodfelter worked with CMPD to obtain a \$10,000 grant from Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC) to help expand the Cops & Barbers initiative.

Steps:

- **1.1 /** Regularly host town hall meetings and other community events with active participation and input from young people as well as law enforcement and other city departments to engage community members in dialogue and exchange. Police officers and other city leaders can also participate in existing community and neighborhood forums and activities.
- **1.2 /** Measure and track community sentiment and attitudes toward city government and law enforcement through engaging and interactive polls or surveys.

¹<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/01/fact-sheet-strengthening-community-policing>

²Throughout this document we have featured Spotlights to provide concrete examples of city policies and practices, including cities not within the Cities United network. We recognize city policies and practices change over time and featuring a spotlight in this resource does not constitute an official endorsement of city policy by Cities United.

- **1.3 /** Implement or strengthen community policing efforts, and add or expand innovative programs and partnerships between community members, particularly youth, and law enforcement and other city agencies. Be mindful of tone and approach when interacting with community, recognizing the first 45 seconds of an interaction can set the tone.
- **1.4 /** Identify and build relationships with trusted community leaders who can serve as messengers in their respective communities during moments of crisis.
- **1.5 /** Identify and build relationships with trusted community leaders who can serve as messengers in their respective communities during moments of crisis.
- **1.6 /** Create a youth council, made up of youth from across the city, to regularly meet with leadership, including the police chief.
- **1.7 /** Together with community members, address concerns by developing new or expanded initiatives that tackle persistent challenges including poverty and limited opportunity.

2. Rethink Use of Force and Reform Police Officer Trainings to Emphasize De-Escalation

Use of force, especially in proportion to the threat faced by officers, has emerged as a critical issue in the wake of police-involved shootings and in-custody deaths. According to an examination by *The Washington Post*³, about 30 percent of 990 fatal police shootings in 2015 did not involve someone with a gun; in 9 percent of the shootings the subject was unarmed, while 16 percent involved the use of a knife. One quarter of shootings involved a fleeing victim, while, in another quarter of cases, mental illness played a role.

In light of such findings, cities and police departments across the country are rethinking and reengineering how and when force is used in order to preserve the lives of residents as well as police officers, and ensure stronger relationships with communities.

Key elements in this process are reforming use of force policies to go beyond the “objective reasonableness” standard set in the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Graham v. Conner*, enhancing officer training to emphasize de-escalation and addressing and eliminating bias.

Spotlight: In 2015, Philadelphia invited the Department of Justice’s COPS Office to review the police department’s use of force policies under Collaborative Reform⁴. An uptick in police-involved shootings sparked then Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey’s request. The department shifted its use-of-force policies to require de-escalation to prioritize the preservation of life, with bans on choke holds and similar

³<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-year-end/>

⁴<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/collaborativereform>

⁵<https://www.phillypolice.com/ois/>

⁶<http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/police-dept-of-justice-philadelphia-update-deadly-force-shootings-report-363240041.html>

practices that contribute to asphyxiation or death. Officers who witness inappropriate or excessive use of force by a fellow officer are duty-bound to report it.⁵ The policy shift has contributed to a drop in police-involved shootings.⁶

Steps:

- **2.1 /** Define and establish a use-of-force policy and training procedures for officers that prioritize sanctity of life.
- **2.2 /** During trainings, emphasize diffusion and de-escalation tactics, particularly in situations where an edged weapon or no weapon is involved, such as utilizing verbal skills to slow events down and establishing “buffer zones.”
- **2.3 /** Train police officers on how to respond to individuals with mental health issues. Instead of using police officers as first responders in instances where individuals are experiencing mental health issues, establish or expand the use of crisis intervention teams and other mechanisms.
- **2.4 /** Diversify staffing of police and other public safety agencies to ensure they reflect the communities they serve.
- **2.5 /** Partner with community leaders to create and implement implicit bias and cultural competency trainings to equip officers to better serve diverse communities.
- **2.6 /** Offer opportunities for community members to review and provide feedback on trainings.
- **2.7 /** Publicly report all uses of force to a database with information on related injuries and demographics of the victims.

3. Establish a Mechanism for an External and Independent Investigation and Prosecution

Establishing a mechanism for an external and independent investigation and prosecution of police-involved shootings and deaths in custody is recommended.

The primary demand by affected family members and community residents in the aftermath of a police-involved shooting or a death in custody is for an independent investigation to be conducted into the incident and the police officers involved as well as independent prosecution, if charges are filed. The family and community want to know what happened and why it happened to ensure that the officers involved are held responsible for their actions, if these actions are found to be unjustified.

⁵ <https://www.phillypolice.com/ois/>

⁶ <http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/police-dept-of-justice-philadelphia-update-deadly-force-shootings-report-363240041.html>

This is also a key recommendation of President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing as well as Campaign Zero, a policy group focused on police reform.⁷ The Task Force recommends external and independent investigations and the use of external and independent prosecutors to “demonstrate the transparency to the public that can lead to mutual trust between community and law enforcement.”⁸ External and independent investigations and prosecutions are key to building community trust and showing that the city is committed to holding its police officers accountable for their actions. An independent prosecution mechanism is critical as city and county prosecutors often rely heavily on close working relationships with their respective police departments to conduct day-to-day criminal investigations, making it difficult to appear or to be impartial in the case of alleged police misconduct.⁹

If the investigative process is seen as transparent, fair and impartial, family and community members will be more likely to trust the outcome of that process, even if a shooting or death is found to be justified. Many cities have established external and independent investigative processes that mandate the creation of a multi-agency task force that comprises state and local investigators. Others have established an investigative process that mandates a role for the next higher level of government, such as a having a state agency handle the investigation.

Spotlight: In April 2014, Wisconsin passed a first-of-its-kind law impacting cities like Milwaukee and Madison that mandates outside investigation into deaths in police custody, which includes deaths from police-involved shootings. The law requires a team of at least two investigators who are not employed by the law enforcement agencies involved to lead the investigation. The law also mandates the public release of the investigative report if criminal charges are not filed against the officers in question.

Steps:

- **3.1 /** Establish a clear and transparent mechanism for determining an external and independent investigation and prosecution prior to an incident that can be initiated in its immediate aftermath.
- **3.2 /** Determine whether the mechanism should include an external investigation, such as an FBI probe, a state investigation or inviting DOJ investigation. Draw on expertise from state and federal agencies to develop the mechanism, including the DOJ’s Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office.
- **3.3 /** Be flexible about updating the mechanism in the aftermath of an incident, e.g. if a city has established a role for an independent state investigator, but the community calls for a DOJ investigation.
- **3.4 /** Where possible, incorporate the role of an independent medical examiner review to the investigative process.

⁷ See <http://www.joincampaignzero.org/investigations>

⁸ See President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing report, http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf

⁹ http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/aiusa_deadlyforcereportjune2015.pdf

- 3.5 / Review police union contracts to reduce barriers to effective misconduct investigations and civilian oversight.
- 3.6 / Determine whether officers receive paid leave or remain on desk-duty either during an investigation into a shooting or other use of deadly force or if charged with a felony offense because of a shooting or other use of deadly force. If officers continue to receive paid leave or remain on desk-duty, be transparent with family and community members about why that decision was made.
- 3.7 / Establish an effective civilian oversight structure, e.g. a civilian review board, that has the power to investigate alleged police misconduct, including subpoena power, and makes its disciplinary and/or policy recommendations publicly available.¹⁰

4. Use Broader Focus in Police Response to Demonstrations, Beyond Simple Crowd Control

How cities respond to demonstrations, protests and other gatherings after police-involved shootings or in-custody deaths has also emerged as an important issue. Often, police response to crowds can escalate or help to diffuse the situation. It is recommended that mayors work closely with their respective public safety agencies to prepare for effective responses to such events in advance, establishing and implementing crowd management policies and training all officers. Rather than focusing simply on crowd control or dispersement, many cities train officers to balance the need to protect safety and property with the need to respect residents' constitutional right to assemble peacefully.

Spotlight: After two police encounters during sports celebrations resulted in deaths in 2004 and 2008, the Boston Police Department reformed its crowd control and management policies to more effectively serve the community. The department shifted away from outfitting their officers in riot gear in situations requiring large-scale crowd management, including sports celebrations and street protests, and increased its reliance on officers on bicycles, holding additional officers in reserve as needed.¹¹

Steps:

- 4.1 / Engage community leaders in advance to listen to community concerns to help de-escalate situations during demonstrations.
- 4.2 / Make safeguarding the constitutional right of people to gather peacefully a core principle to crowd management.

¹⁰ <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2016/08/16/chicago-s-civilian-review-board-will-the-new-one-be-better#.BbJqX5TrF>

¹¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/11/26/boston-police-say-soft-approach-demonstrations-helped-maintain-control/XBvJzzG7M3UyKO5NW9BigI/story.html>

- 4.3 / Put a regional response plan in place that uses a graded intervention approach rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, and includes use of appropriate equipment, protocols for videotaping and photographing, as well as communication and negotiation. A helpful tool can be the National Incident Management System, in particular when multiple agencies are involved.
- 4.4 / Ensure all officers are trained on effective crowd management.
- 4.5 / Understand that optics are important; a large showing of police in riot gear can incite confrontation rather than prevent it.

5. Have Plans in Place to Communicate with Each Key Constituent

In the aftermath of a crisis, mayors must keep in constant communication with a number of different stakeholders:

- The affected families, to whom communities and the media turn as leading spokespeople and advocates after such incidents
- Police rank and file, who should hear a message that signals support while explaining the need for accountability
- Police unions, who may take strong positions against efforts to reform police departments while acting in the best interest of the officers they represent
- Other city, county, state and federal leaders, who need to be kept continually informed and engaged for guidance and collaboration
- Community and faith leaders, who can play an important role in rebuilding trust with respective communities
- Youth and school officials, including youth organizations, high schools and colleges, who may exercise their right to demonstrate and speak out
- Business and philanthropy leaders, who can help resource rapid response or other efforts and help serve as spokespeople

Putting plans in place to communicate with each key stakeholder category in advance is recommended. Communications strategies will range from one-on-one meetings in-person or by phone to community listening sessions. We also recommend making sure mayors' teams are prepared to implement the plan.

Steps:

- 5.1 / Have an updated contact list of each key community, city, county, state and federal leader at the ready; distribute among team members.

- 5.2 / Create a protocol for communicating with each stakeholder category and ensure that team members also are ready to implement the plan.
- 5.3 / Establish a process for having community listening sessions in the aftermath of such incidents, including location, timing and appropriate community leader to engage as a partner.

6. Make Transparency and Release of Information a Top Priority

How and when should cities release critical information, such as names of officers involved, existing footage or incident details, after police-involved shootings and in-custody deaths? A lack of consistency is prevalent when it comes to release of information by police departments across the country, with some cities releasing information immediately while others wait months.

Traditionally, police departments have erred on the side of not releasing information in the interest of safety or an ongoing investigation. But a report by Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)¹² emphasizes that: “Police chiefs told us they are finding that approach is no longer viable, because a narrative is created within a few hours of a critical incident happening, and the narrative is written whether or not the police contribute any information to the story. Too much damage can be done if police miss their chance to explain what happened and correct wrong information that can spread in the immediate aftermath of an incident.”

Given how quickly news spreads today via social media, it is recommended that cities prioritize transparency and rapid response to curb mistrust and misinformation by presenting an accurate and complete picture.

Spotlight: The Sunlight Foundation – a national, non-profit organization focused on government transparency and accountability – has touted the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) as being “ahead of the curve” when it comes to making criminal justice data available and easily accessible to the public.¹³

Steps:

- 6.1 / Assess existing state law or police union contracts regarding release of information.
- 6.2 / Determine protocol for how quickly different pieces of information will be released, including name of officer(s) involved, available video, 911 tape, details of the incident that are available at any given time and results of investigations.
- 6.3 / If city has rolled out the use of body-worn cameras, have a protocol in place for release of footage. Ensure the protocol is part of a broader body-worn camera policy that clearly defines the purpose of its use and recording, retention and access of its footage.¹⁴

¹² <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/definingmoments.pdf>

¹³ <https://sunlightfoundation.com/blog/2015/04/01/opening-criminal-justice-data-what-we-learned-from-louisiana/>

¹⁴ <http://www.civilrights.org/press/2015/body-camera-principles.html>

- **6.4 /** Before information is released to media, inform affected family members as well as select community and city leaders.
- **6.5 /** Communicate quickly, frequently and openly. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police:¹⁵ “Quality communication requires that police leaders must fully engage, give as much information as possible and take responsibility for actions that may have contributed to issues or incidents of concern.”
- **6.6 /** Publicly share any protocols in place to respond to police-involved shootings or in-custody deaths, e.g. body-worn camera protocol.
- **6.7 /** Review police union contracts to determine whether officers’ disciplinary history can be made accessible to police departments and the public.
- **6.8 /** Publicly report all deaths in custody—including suicides and deaths linked to natural causes—to a database, in accordance with the Death in Custody Reporting Act.

7. Embrace 21st Century Media Relations that Incorporates Social Media

Today, more than ever, cities and law enforcement agencies must be prepared to communicate quickly and accurately using social media and traditional media channels. Social media has become an important organizing and information-sharing tool during these incidents. In addition, once a local story escalates to a national story, the situation on the ground can escalate as well.

Traditional media can be a partner in keeping key audiences informed; however, traditional media relations tactics are no longer enough. A growing number of cities and law enforcement agencies are embracing the use of social media as part of core strategies to engage audiences directly. According to the fifth annual Center for Social Media Survey completed in late 2014¹⁶, “95 percent of law enforcement agencies surveyed stated they were using some form of social media. Of those using social media, 78.8 percent indicated social media had helped to solve a crime in their jurisdiction and 77.5 percent stated that social media had improved police community relations in their jurisdiction.”

Well before an incident occurs, it is recommended that mayors, city leaders and law enforcement officials establish a protocol for media and social media as part of an overall communications strategy, ensuring adequate staffing for those functions, and building relationships with media outlets as well as establishing an active presence on social media channels.

Steps:

- **7.1 /** Recognize social media as an integral part of a city’s traditional approach to media, and be prepared to communicate accurately, transparently and in a timely manner through traditional and new media channels.

¹⁵ http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/CommunityPoliceRelationsSummitReport_Jan15.pdf

¹⁶ <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/Portals/1/documents/2014SurveyResults.pdf>

- 7.2 / Establish clear communications roles for mayors and police chiefs, and deliver a consistent and unified message.
- 7.3 / Carry out messaging that acknowledges loss of life and the dignity of life; highlights need for collective healing; is transparent; engages family and community voices; lifts up importance of trust and relationships and shows lessons learned.
- 7.4 / Provide media training to all public safety agency leaders who will serve as spokespeople or visible leaders; ensure that the media team includes members trained in the use of social media.
- 7.5 / Create a media and social media protocol for proactive and reactive communications well in advance of an incident to guide response.
- 7.6 / Establish a routine practice of monitoring social media and traditional media coverage, using these tools as an opportunity to listen to communities.
- 7.7 / Establish timing on organizing press conference after an incident, with the understanding that, in today's social media driven news cycle, the narrative is cemented within a few, short hours.

8. Incorporate Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices Into Approach

Addressing mental health is critical to building safe, healthy and hopeful communities. That is why more cities are adopting trauma-informed practices that extend beyond health departments to inform multiple city agencies, including police departments. Individuals with mental health challenges accounted for one-quarter of deaths in police-involved shootings in 2015 according to *The Washington Post*¹⁷, while suicides (or apparent suicides) accounted for 31% of in-custody deaths in the one-year period between July 2015 and July 2016 following Sandra Bland's death in Texas according to *Huffington Post*.¹⁸

Core areas of focus include an overarching trauma-informed approach to city services as well as Crisis Intervention Team trainings and Mobile Crisis Teams that guide law enforcement interactions with the communities they serve. A trauma-informed approach means taking the motivating factors behind an individual's behavior—including trauma—into account along with the behavior itself and asking deeper questions about the lives of community members. In cities with this model, the recognition of how trauma informs each individual's life and behavior is woven across city agencies, from health to education to law enforcement so that a holistic perspective is used to more effectively approach policies and programs. This approach also recognizes the mental health strain on police officers themselves.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings are aimed at assisting police officers to understand how mental health challenges can impair an individual in their interactions with law enforcement, including impairing

¹⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings/>

¹⁸ <http://data.huffingtonpost.com/2016/jail-deaths>

their capacity to follow orders. These trainings are most effective when designed and carried out by experienced mental health professionals. Mobile Crisis Teams pair police officers—often those who have undertaken CIT trainings—with mental health professionals to respond to situations where individuals have mental health needs.

Research into in-custody deaths has found mental health challenges to be a primary cause contributing to suicide, with at least a third of these deaths occurring within the first three days in custody.¹⁹ In partnership with health departments, law enforcement agencies are employing mental health professionals, known as assessors, who can speak with individuals flagged as being potentially suicidal.

Spotlight: In May 2016, the San Jose Police Department became one of a handful of police departments in the nation to adopt mandatory 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team trainings for all of its police officers. Already, 350 out of its 900-officer police force have been trained.²⁰ The SJPD announcement came on the heels of two state Senate bills passed in California in 2015 that require police academies and police departments across the state to adopt minimum mental health training standards.²¹

Steps:

- **8.1 /** Incorporate trauma-informed practices into law enforcement’s approach to community policing. Recognize that underlying factors such as trauma may contribute to difficult interactions between the community and the police. Weave these practices into a broader trauma-informed approach to all city services.
- **8.2 /** Make 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team trainings mandatory for police officers and hire experienced mental health professionals to co-design and conduct the trainings.
- **8.3 /** Establish a Mobile Crisis Team that pairs mental health professionals with police officers to respond to incidents where the police have been called and mental health, emotional crisis or substance abuse challenges are suspected to be at issue.
- **8.4 /** Assign mental health professionals, or assessors, to jails and police lockups to be able to respond when individuals in custody are flagged by jail staff as being potentially suicidal. Train jail staff in recognizing the signs of suicidal behavior.
- **8.5 /** Prioritize officer safety and wellness and provide officers with access to mental health services to address the high-stress demands of the job. Enact limits on the length of continuous shifts worked within a 24- to 48-hour period.

²⁰ <http://www.sjpd.org/iNews/viewPressRelease.asp?ID=2315>

²¹ <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Governor-Brown-signs-bill-to-curb-racial-profiling-6548610.php>

Actions That Can Be Taken In Response to a Critical Incident

In the event that a police-involved shooting or in-custody death has taken place, we outline key recommendations that mayors and city leaders can take to respond effectively, ensure transparency with community members and bring about a more just resolution that meets the needs of the community.

First 24-72 Hours

1. Carry Out Plan to Communicate with Each Key Constituent

As noted in the previous section, in the immediate aftermath of a police-involved shooting or death in custody, key constituents will need to know the city leadership's response to the incident. Affected family members may hold a press conference to demand answers, community residents may demonstrate outside local police precincts to have their voices heard, and state and federal officials may inquire about the city's next steps.

Key constituents with whom city leaders will need to communicate include the affected family; police chief, police force and police union; community and faith leaders; youth and schools; community colleges and universities; city elected officials; city/county or state's attorneys; business and philanthropy sectors, state legislature; governor's office; and the DOJ.

Many city leaders have held town halls in the immediate aftermath of a shooting, reached out to affected family members to have private, in-person conversations or communicated with DOJ officials to brief them on the situation and solicit guidance.

Carrying out a pre-existing plan to establish clear lines of communication with each key constituent is recommended.

Steps:

- **1.1** / Carry out protocol for communicating with each stakeholder category.
- **1.2** / Prioritize outreach to the family. (See recommendation #2 below.)
- **1.3** / Establish a clear line of communication with the police chief in the immediate aftermath.
- **1.4** / Communicate a balanced message to the police force that acknowledges their hard work and the need for an investigation into the incident.
- **1.5** / Keep the police union updated on plans by the mayor and the police chief.
- **1.6** / Establish community listening sessions to allow community voices to be heard, and engage community leaders as allies.
- **1.7** / Continue to keep other city leaders as well as state and federal officials updated and engaged.

2. Prioritize Communication with the Family

Family members of the person who lost his or her life in a police-involved shooting or death in custody are most immediately affected by the incident and its aftermath. Outreach to the family by the mayor and police chief will set the tone for overall communication from city leadership following the incident. Other constituents—e.g. community, faith and youth leaders—will look to this communication as a prime example of the city's response.

Some city leaders have chosen to conduct initial outreach to the family in private, away from the media and the public, in order to ensure candid conversations and work to establish a direct relationship. Being aware of the family's needs can also help inform the city's response and improve understanding of the family's demands and actions.

It is recommended that city leaders prioritize communication with the family as they carry out their protocol to communicate with each key constituent. This communication should be ongoing, as any investigation into the incident unfolds and the community continues to come together and heal.

Steps:

- **2.1** / Reach out to the family in the immediate aftermath. Acknowledge the loss of life they have suffered and listen to their needs.
- **2.2** / Communicate with the family prior to the public release of any incident-related video.
- **2.3** / In public communication, avoid framing the victim in a negative light and instead focus on the loss of life and the loss to the family and community.
- **2.4** / Understand the family's needs and weave into city response when possible.
- **2.5** / Maintain ongoing communication with the family throughout the response.
- **2.6** / Make grief counseling and mental health services available to the family immediately after incidents, and connect them with available victims' services and resources.

3. Use Effective Crowd Management to Engage Community, De-Escalate Protests

Tensions often run high in a community in the immediate aftermath of a police-involved shooting or death in custody. There tend to be five types of responses to such incidents: community meetings, demonstrations, coordinated actions, protests that may escalate into violence and occupations.

How the police respond to community actions becomes part of the public narrative and can escalate tensions. As we detail in the previous section, having a plan in place that incorporates a local and regional

response, establishes a communication protocol about the response, trains officers and engages community leaders in advance is recommended. It is critical to employ a proactive approach that anticipates community anger and frustration, and respects residents' constitutional right to assemble peacefully.

Steps:

- 3.1 / Create and follow a pre-established plan for effective crowd management that focuses on de-escalation and recognizes community concerns.
- 3.2 / Incorporate a local and regional response to crowd management.
- 3.3 / Establish a communications protocol about the response.
- 3.4 / Train officers in the crowd management protocol in advance of an incident.
- 3.5 / Engage community leaders in advance to listen to community concerns and help de-escalate situations during demonstrations.

4. Incorporate Media and Social Media to Overall City Response

In the immediate aftermath of a police-involved shooting or death in custody, the public will expect to hear from city leaders. They will need to hear that city leaders acknowledge the tragic loss of life and are working quickly to address the incident. They also will want to know as many of the details of the incident as soon as possible.

Media and social media are equally important to breaking the stories of these incidents. Key constituents, including affected family members, community leaders, police officers and federal officials, all will look to media and social media to learn the details of a city's response.

As detailed in the previous section, media and social media protocols allow city leaders to quickly respond to police-involved shootings and deaths in custody with openness and transparency. These effective communications protocols keep key constituents informed while also building trust with community members.

Steps:

- 4.1 / Carry out a pre-existing media and social media communications plan, while remaining flexible and nimble.
- 4.2 / Determine how to manage both local and national media (e.g. press conferences, one-on-one interviews, etc).
- 4.3 / Monitor media and social media 24/7 to understand the public narrative and how city response is being characterized and engaged by the public.
- 4.4 / Acknowledge the dignity of the lives lost, express remorse and concern for all parties and avoid framing the victim in a negative light.

5. Make Transparency and Release of Information a Top Priority

Guarding information in the interest of officer safety, possible litigation or investigation is no longer viable. Swift and real-time social media and online communication means that the media or other interested individuals can release information they are able to obtain, in advance of the official release of information by a mayor or police chief.

Responding quickly with the guidance of a plan already in place is imperative to ensure that city leaders are shaping the narrative based on the information they release, rather than working to keep up with a narrative that has already been set by others. Transparency also is crucial to helping rebuild trust with affected communities in the aftermath of these incidents.

As we detail in the previous section, it is recommended for city leaders to create a protocol to address what, when and how much information to make public in the aftermath. Family members, community leaders and the media, among others, will look to mayors and police chiefs for the release of key incident details including the name(s) of the officer(s) involved as well as any footage that was captured by body or dashcam cameras or video cameras in the vicinity of the incident.

Spotlight: Dallas Police Chief David Brown initiated multiple reforms after taking leadership in 2010, including changes in the Department's response to police-involved shootings. Transparency was made a priority, with the department establishing a protocol to guide its response in the aftermath of a police-involved shooting. Steps include holding an immediate press conference presenting all available facts and releasing the name of the victim(s) and police officer(s). Department leaders also walk the public through the process for investigating the shooting and determining whether it was justified.²²

Steps:

- **5.1 /** Pursue a transparent, consistent and clearly defined protocol for the release of information in the aftermath of a police-involved shooting or death in custody, including release of any available footage.
- **5.2 /** In accordance with existing laws, prioritize release of any available video within hours of an incident.
- **5.3 /** If information cannot be released to the public, be transparent and explain why. Let the public know that city leaders will share information as it becomes available. If the release of information will interfere with the integrity of the independent investigation into the incident, let the public know that as well.
- **5.4 /** Continue to inform the media and the public as more information becomes available, and correct misinformation or inaccuracies.
- **5.5 /** During demonstrations or other gatherings, like occupations, issue ongoing reports and keep the public and the media informed.

²² <http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/latest-columns/20140814-openness-restraint-were-key-after-dallas-police-shooting-chief-brown-says.ece>

First 7-30 Days

1. Maintain Ongoing Communication with the Family

Family members of the person who lost their life in a police-involved shooting or death in custody are most immediately affected by the incident and its aftermath. It is recommended that city leaders continue to prioritize communication with the family at all stages of the city's response to the incident.

Maintaining ongoing communication with the family can help inform the city's response and improve the city leadership's understanding of the family's demands and actions. This relationship can also help inform the city's understanding and response to the outcome of any independent investigation into the incident. Having this understanding can be beneficial as the community continues to come together and heal.

Steps:

- 1.1 / Maintain ongoing communication with the family throughout the response.
- 1.2 / Understand the family's needs and weave into city response when possible.
- 1.3 / Acknowledge the family's response in the city's public communication following the outcome of any independent investigation into the incident.

2. Show Support for Police Force While Being Clear That Accountability is a Priority

Police-involved shootings and deaths in custody can be a difficult touchstone for mayors and police chiefs in their relationship with the police force. It is important for mayors and police chiefs to show that a strong and effective police department has to be held to a high standard of public service, which includes enforcing accountability if and when things go wrong. Establishing a clear line of communication with the police force that acknowledges strong support for police officers while being clear that officers will be held accountable for their actions is recommended.

In addition, it is recommended that mayors and police chiefs maintain relationships with the local police union and keep the union updated in the immediate aftermath of a police-involved shooting or death in custody.

Many mayors show support for their police departments while making clear that city leaders support mechanisms to hold officers accountable if and when there is evidence of wrongdoing.

Steps:

- 2.1 / Continue pursuing a clear line of communication with the police force that acknowledges strong support for police officers while being clear that officers will be held accountable for their actions.

- 2.2 / Keep police union updated to demonstrate good faith support of officers.
- 2.3 / Refrain from passing judgment on individual officers while making clear that city leaders support mechanisms to hold officers accountable when there is evidence of wrongdoing.
- 2.4 / Explain to police on the ground why certain actions must be taken and certain messaging used.
- 2.5 / Prioritize officer safety and wellness and provide officers with access to mental health services, particularly for those officers staffing protests in the immediate aftermath of a police-involved shooting when tensions may run high. Enact limits on the length of continuous shifts worked within a 24-to 48-hour period. Require a psychological assessment and/or post-incident counseling for the officer(s) involved.

3. Acknowledge Longstanding Problems, Weave Into Response

For communities, a police-involved shooting or a death in custody is about more than the tragedy at hand. These incidents surface long-standing issues including police-community relations, racial tensions, poverty and the limited availability of jobs or educational opportunity. There is a relationship between improving police-community relations and reducing violence, whatever the source, and the social and economic conditions in a community that contribute to poverty and limited opportunity.

Many cities have created youth leadership programs, job training and employment initiatives and incentives for businesses to invest in communities affected by violence, including police-related violence. These efforts create opportunities for young people, establish pathways for adults to access jobs and increase economic activity for local businesses.

Several cities also have initiated reforms to their policing practices as a result of challenges that came to light during an incident of a police-involved shooting or death in custody. These reforms are detailed elsewhere in this resource.

It is recommended that city leaders acknowledge and address longstanding problems in police departments and local communities as part of their response to police-involved shootings and deaths in custody.

Spotlight: Detroit has spearheaded a number of initiatives to support its African American men and boys, who represent a majority of the male population, to create opportunity and invest in the communities where they live and work. Initiatives include Grow Detroit's Young Talent program, Goal Detroit! citywide youth soccer league and the job training and placement efforts of the Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation.²³

²³ The Promise of Place report, Campaign for Black Male Achievement, December 2015. http://cityindex.blackmaleachievement.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/CBMA_CityRprt_web_P3.pdf

Steps:

- **3.1** / Acknowledge longstanding concerns in police departments and local communities surfaced by the incident in communications with the public through the media and community conversations.
- **3.2** / Reach out to DOJ's Community Relations Service and engage their participation to facilitate community conversations about the challenges as well as the solutions.

Ongoing Actions That Can Be Taken After a Critical Incident

The key recommendations outlined in this section can aid mayors and city leaders as they take steps to reform police departments and rebuild trust with their communities after an incident.

1. Reform Officer Trainings to Emphasize De-escalation, Alternate Options to Use of Force

Police-involved shootings and deaths in custody can serve as flashpoints on long-simmering issues in communities and shine a spotlight on deficiencies in police procedures and practices. In particular, use of force has become a defining issue for policing. As we detail in an earlier section, cities across the country are rethinking their procedures and practices and are taking steps to re-engineer how force is used in interactions.

It is recommended that reforms to use of force combined with increased community engagement and trainings that acknowledge implicit bias be put in place to build community trust with the police, serving as a preventive measure against future shootings.

Spotlight: At the direction of outgoing Police Commissioner William Bratton, New York City Police Department officers are required to report any and all use-of-force incidents involving civilians. In addition, under the new guidelines, officers could potentially face discipline if they fail to intervene when a fellow officer uses excessive force.²⁴

Steps:

- **1.1** / Establish or update use of force policies for all scenarios that officers may face, including no weapon, edged weapon, use of vehicle and other incidents.
- **1.2** / Emphasize de-escalation tactics in officer trainings and make such trainings into specific courses in Police Academy and beyond.
- **1.3** / Track use of force in police departments, and have measures in place to hold officers who use excessive force accountable.

²⁴ <http://pix11.com/2016/06/01/nypd-implements-new-use-of-force-policy-to-curb-physical-confrontations/>

- 1.4 / Incorporate implicit bias trainings, and work with community leaders to have culturally competent trainings that better equip officers to serve diverse communities.
- 1.5 / Assess recruiting and hiring practices and update as necessary to ensure that police departments reflect the communities they serve.

2. Hold Police Department Accountable to Enacting Reforms and Changes

While announcements of reforms to police department practices and policies are a step in the right direction, it is recommended that they be accompanied with a clear process and timeline for adoption for maximum impact. Doing so will help overcome community skepticism stemming from lack of trust in city leaders and police departments.

Spotlight: In Seattle, an independent monitor was hired in 2012 to oversee implementation of a consent decree between the Seattle Police Department and DOJ to address the use of excessive force. The independent monitor team keeps the public informed about their activities through a regularly updated website and were commended by the DOJ in 2015 for “initial compliance” with the mandated reforms that have led use-of-force incidents to be handled better than in the past.

Steps:

- 2.1 / Include input from impacted communities and community leaders in proposed changes.
- 2.2 / Assign an independent body or individual to oversee implementation of proposed reforms and changes.
- 2.3 / Establish a clear timeline for implementation, along with benchmarks along the way.
- 2.4 / After the initial announcement of reforms, continue to update key community leaders and the public about progress and tangible changes.

3. Assess Challenges and Lessons Learned Following an Incident

Some cities and city leaders are taking steps to assess response in the aftermath of police-involved shootings and in-custody deaths. Insights on what went well and what can be improved can help cities, police departments and communities achieve progress and move forward. Such assessments can examine response to demonstrations and other mass gatherings; identify successful decisions and practices as well as inadequate responses; and provide lessons learned to help cities rebuild community trust and strengthen efforts to protect communities. Assessments can review internal and external communications, crowd management tactics, use of force, equipment and training, leadership and coordination and policies and procedures.

Spotlight: Missouri Governor Jay Nixon created the Ferguson Commission in November 2014 to improve policing and identify longstanding issues contributing to poverty and inequality in Ferguson and throughout

the state. Issued in October 2015, the Commission's report *Forward Through Ferguson* spotlights a number of recommendations for how to improve police-community relations and transform communities to create stronger relationships between city leaders and the people they serve.

Steps:

- **3.1** / Capture lessons learned, including what worked and what didn't. Cities can also request an "after action" report from the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Service.
- **3.2** / Revise existing protocols to address challenges and inefficiencies while enhancing strengths.
- **3.3** / Incorporate lessons learned to bolster officer and staff trainings.

4. Direct Additional Resources Toward Community Building

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors' U.S. Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination²⁵: "For all of the progress we have made in civil rights in America, serious racial and ethnic disparities persist: Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to be poor than their white counterparts. Black children are three times more likely to be poor than white children. Black children are one and one-half times more likely to be uninsured than white children and twice as likely to die before their first birthday. Blacks and Hispanics have a higher unemployment rate than the white population."

The 10-point plan of action identified by the Conference highlights the need to expand efforts to reduce poverty, which disproportionately affects communities of color, and create employment opportunities by increasing job creation, job training, child care availability, transportation availability, affordable housing and other needed assistance. The U.S. Department of Justice's Violence Reduction Network, the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods, Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods Program and President Obama's My Brother's Keeper challenge are some of the efforts that can help cities create safe, healthy and hopeful communities.

Spotlight: In Washington, DC, Mayor Muriel Bowser partnered with organizations like DC Trust to create improved career and educational pathways for the city's young men of color through strategic investments in job training, education and mentorships. DC Trust led a citywide social awareness campaign designed to generate positive mental models, promote holistic narratives and develop a pipeline of youth leadership, challenging community and police perceptions of young men of color by uplifting the humanity and diversity of their experiences.

Steps:

- **4.1** / Direct resources as needed to community policing programs and efforts to improve relationships with communities.

²⁵ <http://usmayors.org/10-PointPlan/10pointplan.pdf>

- 4.2 / Support youth or community programs that help young people, and other community members, to reach their full potential, get an education or secure good jobs.
- 4.3 / Work with local businesses to create or enhance summer employment opportunities for youth.
- 4.4 / Work with local businesses to create or enhance summer employment opportunities for youth.

5. Acknowledge Community's Disappointment if Investigation Does Not Result in Outcomes They Seek

Families and communities often experience renewed feelings of trauma and injustice throughout the critical phases of an investigation into a police-involved shooting or death in custody. If the officer involved is not charged with a crime, the decision by the district or county attorney can spark community outcry. If the officer involved is charged and the case goes to trial, but a not guilty verdict is returned, this can also spark a community outcry.

It is recommended that city leaders acknowledge the family and community's pain and disappointment if the investigation into an incident does not result in the outcomes they seek. It may also be necessary to explore reforms to the existing legal mechanisms that guide the investigative process and/or the legal process of charging officers with crimes, e.g. the grand jury process.

Having a transparent and independent mechanism that city leaders follow to hold its police officers accountable combined with building strong relationships in the community, can go a long way toward addressing the community's concerns that the justice system is unfair.

Steps:

- 5.1 / Acknowledge the family and community's disappointment if officers are not charged, or else found not guilty at trial.
- 5.2 / Be transparent and clear about the legal mechanism that brought about the decision by the justice system.
- 5.3 / Initiate reforms to existing legal mechanisms including improved independent oversight of police department if learnings from the incident show that reform is needed.

6. Assess Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices Within Law Enforcement Approach

Following a police-involved shooting or in-custody death, city leaders and law enforcement have the opportunity to assess their mental health and trauma-informed practices. Such assessments might lead to an adoption of a wider spread trauma-informed approach to city services as well as expanded Crisis Intervention Team trainings or expanded use of Mobile Crisis Teams.

As we noted in an earlier section, addressing mental health is critical to building safe, healthy and hopeful communities. That is why cities across the country are adopting trauma-informed practices that extend beyond health departments to inform multiple city agencies including police departments.

Spotlight: The Houston Police Department employs 12 Crisis Intervention Response Teams, pairing police officers with licensed mental health professionals to respond to incidents where it is deemed an individual requires mental health assistance. The program is part of the department's broader Crisis Intervention Team approach to address incidents where mental health, emotional crisis or substance abuse challenges are suspected to be at issue. This is the largest program of its type in the nation.²⁶

Steps:

- **6.1 /** Assess the effectiveness of mental health and trauma-informed practices within law enforcement's response to a police-involved shooting or death in custody. Identify lessons learned and make any needed program or policy changes.
- **6.2 /** Expand the number of officers who undertake Crisis Intervention Team trainings, if not all officers have been trained. Mandate consistent and periodic re-training in CIT for all officers.
- **6.3 /** Boost funding and capacity for Mobile Crisis Teams as required to serve city residents.
- **6.4 /** Increase number of mental health professionals, or assessors, in jails and police lockups to ensure sufficient access by potentially suicidal individuals who require it.
- **6.5 /** Increase resources to support officer safety and wellness including mental health services.

²⁶<http://www.houstoncit.org/mental-health-division-2/>

community
voices

Survivors / *Maria and Nate Hamilton*

At the Democratic National Convention in July, Milwaukee's Maria Hamilton took the stage with eight other women—mothers who have lost children to police-involved shootings, in-custody deaths and gun violence. The group included Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin; Lezley McSpadden, mother of Michael Brown; Gwen Carr, mother of Eric Garner; Lucia McBath, mother of Jordan Davis; Geneva Reed-Veal, mother of Sandra Bland; and Cleopatra Cowley-Pendleton, mother of Hadiya Pendleton.

The women are known as Mothers of the Movement. Maria Hamilton describes herself as “a hurting mom with a purpose.” In April 2014, Maria's son, Dontre Hamilton, then 31 years old, was shot 14 times by former Milwaukee police officer Christopher Manney. Dontre, who had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, was laying against a statue in a downtown park when he was confronted by Manney.

“This particular type of trauma and pain changes your life forever,” Maria said. “When your child passes before you do, you will always be affected. You don't get over it.”

Manney did not face criminal charges for his actions. After community pressure, he was fired by the city's police chief for his actions leading up to the shooting (not for use of force), a decision that was upheld by Milwaukee's Fire and Police Commission and, in July, by an appeals court. In 2016, Maria Hamilton and her family filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Manney and the City of Milwaukee. The lawsuit alleges that the police department's policies and practices led to Dontre's death.

Maria and her son, Nate Hamilton, continue to fight for justice for Dontre and have launched efforts to provide support and advocacy for other families who are facing similar loss. Maria is an advocate for reforming police departments and expanding racial justice and opportunity. She also founded Mothers for Justice United for other bereaved mothers who had lost children to different forms of violence.

“I had no help, no services where I can actually go and get care unless I checked myself into the mental hospital,” Maria said. “That wasn't what I needed. In the last two years, being able to be a support for moms and these families has been healing for me. Just in listening, I learned that I needed to help myself.”

On Mother's Day weekend in 2015, Mothers for Justice organized a Million Moms March in Washington, D.C. The group marched to the U.S. Department for Justice, demanding justice for their children, and to put an end to over-policing and police violence in communities of color.

“The first thing police do now is draw their guns -- so we have to take the fear out of them so they can actually police our communities the way it's needed,” she told a local newspaper.

Nate Hamilton co-founded Coalition for Justice, which advocates against police brutality and for specific reforms, such as amending state law to require that outside investigative agencies have no ties to the unit being investigated; ensuring that any officer involved in any criminal investigation be immediately suspended without pay until the investigation is concluded; publicly releasing all information regarding any officer involved in a criminal investigation at the time of the incident, including (but not limited to) the name

of the officer and a copy the incident report filed; and implementing mandatory psychological evaluations for all patrol officers every two years.

“We thought it would be best to start our own movement,” he said.

With support from community foundations, the group’s advocacy has already resulted in securing 40 hours of mandatory Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for all Milwaukee Police Officers and County Sheriffs by 2017, as well as 16 hours of reoccurring Crisis Intervention Training for all officers every two years.

Youth Advocate / *Jamira Burley*

Transparency is one of the most important responses that Jamira Burley would like to see from city leaders after a police-involved shooting or death in custody.

“City leaders must address the issue head on,” Burley said. “Share what the process will be moving forward, including details about the investigation, the timeframe for getting results and information on how communities can hold them accountable. The less you tell us, the more we assume that things are not right.”

A nationally recognized speaker, youth and social justice advocate, as well as a leader in gun violence prevention and criminal justice reform, Burley is committed to helping transform communities like the one she grew up in. Both Burley’s parents and 12 of her 13 brothers were incarcerated. She is the first of 16 children to graduate from high school and pursue higher education. A graduate of Temple University, Burley has served as Executive Director of or the City of Philadelphia’s Youth Commission. She also has been appointed to the Pennsylvania Commission on Children and Families, the City of Philadelphia’s Police Advisory Commission, the Fund for Philadelphia Board, as well as the United Nations Global Education First Initiative, Youth Advocacy Group and Cities United Youth Leader. She also served as National Deputy Millennial Vote Director for the Hillary Clinton Campaign.

In her previous role as Senior Manager for Gun Violence and Criminal Justice for Amnesty International USA, Burley helped develop and implement human rights driven campaigns on gun violence, criminal justice reform and police brutality. In 2015, Amnesty released a new report, *Deadly Force: Police Use of Lethal Force in the United States*. The report found that all 50 states and the District of Columbia fail to comply with international standards on the use of lethal force by law enforcement officers, which require that lethal force should only be used as a last resort when strictly necessary to protect themselves or others against imminent threat of death or serious injury. The report called for reform at the state and federal levels to ensure that laws are brought in to line with international law and standards.

“Over policing in communities of color increases the possibility of violence in those communities, whether it is homicides or police violence,” Burley said. “As part of my work, I recognize that we can’t talk about police and gun violence without also talking about economic disparity. In marginalized communities, it is important to put money and resources into education, reentry and other opportunities that help prevent violence and not just react to it.”

Faith Leader / Reverend Alvin Herring

Reverend Alvin Herring's community advocacy started when he was about 18 years old in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, where there were very few African American officers, and even fewer who were ranked. In response to the unjust firing of one of those officers, Rev. Herring joined other young people in protest. The young people chained themselves to the mayors' desk. The officer ultimately did get reinstated, and went on to a distinguished career.

"I am of the age where I can remember the active segregation and apartheid that affected the social landscape in the south," he said. "We felt it was unjust and it wasn't right. I have been at this for a while."

In October 2014, Rev. Herring, then Deputy Director of Faith and Formation for PICO National Network, was arrested along with other religious leaders while demonstrating outside the Ferguson police department. After the shooting death of Mike Brown and the ensuing demonstrations sparked and led by young people, Rev. Herring joined other faith leaders for more than four weeks in Ferguson, participating in peaceful protests. The morning of his arrest, the demonstrators were asking to speak to the police chief.

"The program at PICO, Live Free, is one of the most powerful well thought out intentional efforts to this issue and overall issue of violence involving young people," Rev. Herring said. "The young people (of Ferguson) did the nation a great service. They have expressed their outrage in a powerful way. I can attest that the young people were civil, they were peaceful and they were met with a military force whose intention was to rob them of their democratic process."

Among the recommendations Rev. Herring shares for how Mayors can address the issue of police involved shootings and deaths in custody are:

- Mayors have to choose a police chief who is fit for the job, one who has a love for and an intention to serve the people. "The role of the police chief is a leadership position; you are a public leader," he said. "Smart mayors choose leaders who can operate in that capacity, and are culturally and diversity sensitive."
- Mayors need to be supportive of civilian review boards that allow for additional oversight and for residents to have a voice in the process. "We have got to find a way for citizens to have a voice," he said.
- Mayors can also lead with integrity in instances where there is a problem. "We have seen communities when the Mayor calls for openness and a thorough investigation, and assures advocates that the right thing must and will be done and information in appropriately and accurately disclosed in a timely fashion."

"These are the things that good mayors can do to make their communities safer and also make police safer," Rev. Herring said.

More broadly, Rev. Herring also asks that cities ensure that the police force looks like the communities they serve, and that trauma and healing among police is also prioritized. “This is traumatizing work,” he said. In addition, Rev. Herring encourages city leaders to have ongoing engagement with young people and actively bring together and collaborate with the many different sectors within a community.

Rev. Herring knows the issue is a complex one that will take a long time to solve. But, he said, “it is my job to stay hopeful.”

messaging
principles

This section outlines a suggested approach to messaging, including core principles to elevate. It is recommended that mayors and city leaders weave these principles into messaging in response to police-involved shootings and in-custody deaths.

Messaging Approach

The nation has seen far too many African American men and boys lose their lives in interactions with police. The acknowledgment of both the loss of life and the dignity of that life, as well as the trauma experienced by police, families and communities, is critical when communicating with the public. No matter the outcome of the independent investigation into the incident, acknowledging the tragic impact of the death (s) for the family and community is paramount. Being honest about the community's collective hurt is as important as communicating transparently about the independent investigation to uncover what happened and hold the officers involved accountable.

As with the rest of this resource, the suggested messaging approach is meant to help city leaders respond meaningfully to rebuild trust in their communities and achieve long-lasting positive change, with the goal of stopping such incidents from occurring in the first place. This issue is crucial to ensuring the safety not only of our communities but the men and women who protect and serve our communities. We want to show our communities the concrete steps and reforms that mayors and city leaders are taking to bring about community transformation and healing.

Core Principles

Here we articulate six core messaging principles critical to building trust, restoring community relationships and strengthening public safety.

Acknowledge loss of life and the dignity of life. Acknowledge what has happened. Mourn the tragic loss of life and express condolences for the family. Acknowledge the dignity of life of the victim and the pain of the family and community. Acknowledge that city leaders are invested in life, and are committed to doing what they can to prevent the loss of life. Do not get drawn into conversations about the moral or criminal character of the individual killed in the incident.

Highlight the need for collective healing. Recognize that loss of life is devastating for directly affected family members, entire communities and cities, as well as police officers. Let community members know that you recognize the need for healing, and communicate opportunities and spaces for healing.

Be transparent. Share as much information as possible on what steps the mayor and police chief are taking to address and to independently investigate the incident. Share the police officer(s)' names and camera footage, if possible, and if not possible, then share why that information will not be shared. Community members need to know what is happening, when and why.

Engage family and community voices. Create opportunities for the affected family and community to speak with the mayor and city leaders immediately following an incident. Hold a series of private as well as

public conversations—which may be difficult or painful for all involved—to listen, learn and work together on next steps and potential reforms to the city’s response.

Lift up importance of trust and relationships. For an authentic healing process, emphasize trust and relationship building with affected family members and the community at large. Reaffirm your commitment to working with everyone in the community to create a safe and vibrant city where all residents can thrive without fear of their neighbors or the police. Show what is being done to heal and strengthen relationships between mayors, city leaders, law enforcement and the communities you serve.

Show lessons learned. Show that mayors and city leaders are listening to and learning from the community to prevent any future loss of life. Show what steps or reforms are being taken based on these lessons learned. Remind the community that you are invested in life, and are committed to doing what you can to prevent the loss of life. Show that you are listening and learning to be able to put policies and practices in place to prevent violence.



The recommendations included in this resource distill emerging best practices and outline suggested responses to prevent and address police-involved shootings and deaths in custody before, during and after such incidents occur. These recommendations are rooted in prevention and community transformation, and we prioritize building strong police-community relationships that promote trust and healing.

However, we understand and acknowledge that each city is grappling with unique challenges that may stand in the way of implementing the recommendations outlined in this resource. Potential challenges include:

- Cities' geographic location
- Size of cities and complexity of roles and relationships
- Budgetary implications
- Deep-rooted perceptions and issues in communities
- Community distrust of courts and legal system that do not yield punitive measures against officers

We also understand and acknowledge that each city and county is located within a unique legal and political environment so that uniform policy and practice changes are not possible across every jurisdiction. The recommendations outlined in this resource spotlight best practices that can and should be tailored to local legal and policy realities.

Cities United can serve as a resource to aide cities who are working to strengthen and improve their responses to police-involved shootings and deaths in custody, as well as violence in general. Cities United can draw upon its network of mayors, city leaders, police chiefs and state and federal government agencies to facilitate conversations, channel resources and support reforms.

about *cities united*

Launched in 2011, Cities United is a national movement focused on eliminating the violence in American cities related to African American men and boys. The nearly 90 mayors currently participating in Cities United intend to reduce violence by 50%, by the year 2025, in each of their cities by targeting the highest-risk neighborhoods and engaging African American males in finding solutions, focusing on prevention rather than prosecution and intervention rather than incarceration. Moreover, they are committed to restoring hope to their communities and building pathways to justice, employment, education and increased opportunity for residents.

As a resource, Cities United helps mayors assess their current situations, increasing opportunities for awareness, alignment, action, advocacy and accountability in communities across the country. The organization provides assistance with planning and implementing solutions by sharing best practices, instituting innovative approaches and understanding how and where to reconfigure resources. The members of Cities United hold each other accountable for achieving results, calling on federal support while asking members of the community to get involved as well.

From the outset, Cities United was based on the simple but fundamental premise that African American men and boys matter and are assets to our nation. Under the leadership of then Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, New Orleans' Mayor Mitch Landrieu and Dr. William Bell, CEO Casey Family Programs, and in partnership with National League of Cities and Campaign for Black Male Achievement, Cities United was founded at a time when every 24 hours in America, 14 young people were being gunned down on the streets of our cities. That number has begun declining in many major US cities, including Philadelphia itself, where the murder rate has declined over 35%.

Cities United has grown to support a national network of mayors committed to working in partnership with community leaders, families, youth, philanthropic organizations, government officials and other stakeholders to reduce the epidemic of homicide-related deaths and injuries plaguing African American men and boys. They receive support in their mission from Casey Family Programs and the Campaign for Black Male Achievement. Additional support has come from the Ford Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Jacob and Valeria Langeloth Foundation, William Penn Foundation, the Mayor's Fund of Philadelphia, Lenfest Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

In addition to its national community of financial supporters, Cities United engages a broad network of partners, strategic allies and field experts. They include the Association of Black Foundation Executives, BMe, PolicyLink, National League of Cities, Opportunity Agenda, Forward Change Consulting, Opportunity Youth Investment Network, African American Mayors Association and Louisiana Center for Children's Rights.

further reading

This section includes a list of the tools and publications we drew upon to create this resource with links where available.

Social Media and Communications

- <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P261>
- <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P222>
- <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/Portals/1/documents/2014SurveyResults.pdf>

Overall

- <http://www.usmayors.org/83rdWinterMeeting/media/012215-report-policing.pdf>
- <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/05/18/10-cities-making-real-progress-launch-21st-century-policing-task-force>
- <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P306>
- Violence Trends, Patterns and Consequences for Black males in America: A Call to Action (forthcoming from Cities United)

Use of Force

- <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/30%20guiding%20principles.pdf>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/us/long-taught-to-use-force-police-warily-learn-to-de-escalate.html>
- http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/an%20integrated%20approach%20to%20de-escalation%20and%20minimizing%20use%20of%20force%202012.pdf
- <http://sanfranciscopolice.org/use-force-documents>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/nyregion/new-york-police-will-document-virtually-all-instances-of-force.html?smid=pl-share>
- <http://sfmayor.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=484>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings-2016/>

Cultural Competency

- <http://www.vera.org/project/police-connecting-communities-color>
- <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P306>

Crowd Management

- <http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/is15aspecialeventsplanning-jamanual.pdf>
- http://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/11-2015/lessons_from_ferguson.asp

Information Release

- <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/definingmoments.pdf>

Community Relations

- <http://usmayors.org/10-PointPlan/10pointplan.pdf>

Community Policing

- <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/01/fact-sheet-strengthening-community-policing>
- <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0735>

Mental Health

- <http://www.nami.org/Law-Enforcement-and-Mental-Health/What-Is-CIT>
- http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=3490&issue_id=92014

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cities united

2500 Montgomery Street | Suite 9
Louisville, KY 40212
502-614-6333 | citiesunited.org