



## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY STEPS FOR CITIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

*Mayors have been on the frontlines of the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have taken action a variety of areas, including public health, schools and childcare, local economies, and general civic life. Cities must also institute lifesaving policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the justice system. This document, which will be updated periodically, highlights key informational updates and action steps for cities related to COVID-19 in the justice system.*

**NEW:** **Federal funding for local law enforcement agencies.** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ([CARES](#)) Act, signed into law on March 27, allocates \$850 million for state and local law enforcement agencies to “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.” DOJ’s Bureau of Justice Assistance is now [accepting applications](#) for funding which are due by May 29, 2020 at 11:59pm ET.

- Funding can be used to support any criminal justice need related to COVID-19, including the purchase of personal protective equipment, overtime for officers, and medical care for incarcerated individuals.
- Funding allocations are based on the FY2019 Byrne Justice Assistance (JAG) formula to avoid “[roadblocks](#) intended to punish so-called sanctuary cities.”

**NEW:** **Limit the amount of calls that police officers respond to in-person.** To reduce the spread of COVID-19 among police officers, agencies should issue guidance to reduce in-person responses to non-emergency issues. Reserve in-person responses for issues that present an imminent threat to public safety, or instances where investigation or evidence collection cannot be delayed. Encourage the public to report non-urgent complaints via an online portal or non-emergency phone line.

- [Arlington \(VA\)](#) Online Police Reporting System.
- Policy Changes from the [Syracuse \(NY\)](#) Police Department and the [Portland \(OR\)](#) Police Bureau around responding to calls-for-service.

**NEW:** **Reduce the spread of hate and bias targeting Asian, and especially Chinese, communities** in the wake of the novel coronavirus. Elected officials should refrain from using geographic locations or groups of people when naming COVID-19, sharing only confirmed and verifiable information pertaining to the virus, and condemning negative behaviors, including statements made by other public officials.

- A new hate crime hotline created by the [New York State Attorney General’s](#) office as a response to rising violence targeting Asian American communities.

**NEW:** **Prominently advertise domestic violence resources.** While the majority of those under stay-at-home orders are safer in their homes, [many](#) are not, including victims and survivors of domestic violence. If your jurisdiction is under a stay at home order, work with local service-providers to readily promote hotline numbers or other [resources](#) alongside all guidance issued to the public online, in the press, and social media.

- [Nashville \(TN\)](#) stay at home order including local YWCA resources.
- [Minnesota Department of Public Safety](#) guidance to local law enforcement including relocation to ensure safety as the number one provision.

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a resource from [Mayors for Smart on Crime](#)



## PREVIOUS ACTIONS STEPS (MARCH 24, 2020)

- 1. Limit police stops and custodial arrests.** Officers should be instructed to issue citations or warrants for as many categories of offenses as possible. Individuals should only be taken into custody if they pose a clear risk to public safety. When custodial arrest is necessary, ensure that individuals are evaluated by a medical professional before being booked into jail.
  - Guidance from [Philadelphia](#) Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw
  - Executive Order from [Washington \(DC\)](#) Metropolitan Police Department Chief Peter Newsham
- 2. Suspend penalties for parking violations**, including towing and ticketing. Delay drivers' licenses suspensions and financial penalties for overdue tickets.
  - Press Release from [Chicago](#) Mayor Lori Lightfoot
- 3. Distribute sanitizing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) to officers** to wear if they must approach an individual displaying symptoms. Otherwise, encourage officers to remain 6-feet away from members of the public whenever possible. Require **911 dispatchers** to ask callers if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms. If yes, ensure that responding officers are wearing full protective gear.
  - [Los Angeles](#) Times article on LAPD policies
  - [Bellevue \(WA\)](#) Fire Department public announcement
- 4. Release incarcerated individuals from local jails** belonging to groups the CDC has classified as vulnerable — including elderly individuals and those with underlying medical conditions — unless there is clear evidence of a threat to public safety. Upon release, ensure access to stable housing and other key reentry resources.
  - Marshall Project article on how the [Alameda County \(CA\)](#) Sheriff's Office released over 300 people from jail and [partnered with local hotels](#) to provide rooms for those who need housing.
  - News article on [Cuyahoga County \(OH\)](#) extending early release for people incarcerated for low-level offenses.
- 5. Restrict in-person visitation in local jails and expand access to virtual visitation** (calling and video) at no additional cost to incarcerated individuals or their family.
  - [Pennsylvania State Department of Corrections](#) policy