

Building Effective Youth Intervention Programs

Case Studies and a Roadmap for Police Agencies



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The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) funded this project under subaward number BJAG-2023-0040. All points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of any State or Federal agency.

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A Message from PERF Executive Director Chuck Wexler

Both violent crime and property crime are falling at impressive and reassuring rates,[1] but **crimes committed by young people seem to be on the rise.** In Washington, D.C., for example, in 2021–2022, people ages 15–20 made up 11.38 percent of perpetrators of homicide and nonfatal shooting perpetrators. In 2023–2024, the same age group had risen to 21.43 percent of shooters.[2] **That's an 88 percent increase in just two years.** As we prepare to submit this report, teenagers continue to commit violent assaults in our city.[3] What is happening to these young people? And how can we help them before it gets worse?

The problem of youth crime can sometimes seem intractable. For years, during our meetings and research projects and work in the field, we've heard the frustration from law enforcement officials, prosecutors, government representatives, and others. They don't have the resources to prevent young people's violent behavior, and **they certainly don't have effective interventions to keep that behavior from escalating.**

This May, I interviewed law enforcement leaders about how their departments have responded to "teen takeovers," which sometimes turn chaotic and can lead to violence.[4] Colonel Ryan Lee of the Baltimore (MD) Police Department said,

> "The vast majority of the folks are there because they just sort of want the revelry of being out as a juvenile. And there's a small set of people who are willing to engage in criminal activity or show up with a weapon. If we're there and can set some norms and expectations as the groups are starting to form, we can focus on those who want to engage in violent activity or criminal activity."

As Colonel Lee notes, most youth at these events simply want a place to have fun, especially as closures and restrictions on in-person youth spaces have increased. **Only a small number take the opportunity to engage in criminal or violent activity.**[5] Other factors also play a role, including home life, group dynamics, and a lack of positive opportunities. Put another way, most of the

1. FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), "Violent Crime Falls at Historic Rate, New FBI Data Show," press release, last modified August 24, 2026, https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/violent-crime-falls-at-historic-rate-new-fbi-data-show.
2. Marissa Stambaugh and Aaron Wechsler, "Everyone Thinks Youth Crime is Increasing—D.C. Witness Data Shows Why," D.C. Witness, last modified November 18, 2024, https://dcwitness.org/everyone-thinks-youth-crime-is-increasing-d-c-witness-data-shows-why/.
3. Madison Forsey, "Community Leaders Chime In after String of Violent Incidents Involving Teens in DC," ABC7 News, last modified October 7, 2026, https://wjla.com/news/local/washington-dc-teens-juvenile-community-leaders-crime-handle-spree-underage-city-leaders-street-accountability-incentive.
4. Chuck Wexler, "How Police are Addressing Juvenile Takeovers," PERF *Trending*, May 2, 2026, https://www.policeforum.org/trending2may26.
5. "How Disappearing 'Third Places' Are Driving 'Teen Takeovers' and Youth Loneliness," Newport Healthcare, last modified May 20, 2026, https://www.newporthealthcare.com/resources/industry-articles/third-places-mental-health/; Wexler, "How Police are Addressing Juvenile Takeovers" (see note 4).

teens are mostly okay—they just need some help. Many law enforcement agencies have realized something similar: that preventing youth from engaging in or escalating criminal behavior requires holistic strategies beyond enforcement, including offering alternatives to criminal behavior, intervening early, and providing wraparound services to struggling families.

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) brought seven such agencies together on June 10, 2025, with the generous support of the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) for a meeting to showcase their department-led, proactive youth crime–reduction programs. Their presentations showed the important strengths and potential stumbling blocks of five types of programs and strategies to combat youth violence: youth engagement and education, pre-file deflection, gang prevention and intervention, tiered intervention approaches, and intelligence-led targeted prevention. This report, based on those presentations and prior interviews with leaders from the agencies implementing each of those programs, will provide other police departments with roadmaps for implementing similar programs tailored to their jurisdictions and their communities' specific needs.

I hope you find the descriptions of these seven programs helpful in your efforts to **plan a strategy to combat youth violence in your area.** Every generation of adults wonders what's going on with the teenagers. Helping convince them to turn away from violence and violent crime is what "protect and serve" is all about.

Best,



Chuck Wexler
Executive Director
Police Executive Research Forum

Introduction

To address the challenges presented by youth crime, many law enforcement agencies are shifting from reactive, enforcement-only responses to proactive, multidisciplinary strategies that engage and educate youth, prevent criminal behavior, reduce entry into the juvenile justice system, and decrease recidivism.

On June 10, 2025, in collaboration with the Maryland Governor's Office, PERF highlighted innovative programs from seven law enforcement agencies across the country that are taking this proactive approach. PERF also visited one of the departments, the Lincoln (Nebraska) Police Department, to obtain an in-depth look at its two programs—Project Restore and Tipping Point—from September 1 to 2, 2026. This report will provide agencies and their public safety partners with pathways to implementing similar programs in their jurisdictions. They will be able to identify programs whose goals align with solving the issues they're experiencing, the stakeholders they need at the table, potential funding sources, implementation steps, and how they can measure success.

Trends in Youth Violent Crime

Violent crime rates declined 9.3 percent nationwide between 2024 and 2025.[6] However, law enforcement agencies face complex challenges concerning juvenile offenses. Those concerns are understandable. Research suggests that overall juvenile offending declined between 2016 and 2022, with around 14 percent fewer incidents at the end of that period than at the beginning and approximately 18 percent fewer young people involved.[7] However, during the same period, homicides committed by people under 18 rose by 65 percent and use of firearms by 21 percent.[8] Young people also began to get involved in crime at earlier ages, with the number of offenders aged 10 to 14 increasing by almost 9 percent over those six years.[9]

Innovative Proactive Strategies

The law enforcement leaders who implemented the programs showcased at PERF's meeting concurred that agencies cannot arrest their way out of this issue. Conversations about chronic offenders also focused on putting systems in place that would help prevent young people from reoffending—rather than punitive measures that would increase their involvement in the criminal justice system.

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6. FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), "First Look 2025 Crime Data," Crime Data Explorer, accessed September 28, 2026, https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/First_Look_2025_Crime_Data.
7. Brendan Lantz and Kyle G. Knapp, *Trends in Juvenile Offending: What You Need to Know* (Washington, DC: Council on Criminal Justice, 2024), https://counciloncj.org/trends-in-juvenile-offending-what-you-need-to-know/.
8. Lantz and Knapp, *Trends in Juvenile Offending* (see note 7).
9. Lantz and Knapp, *Trends in Juvenile Offending* (see note 7).

These programs have built police-youth trust; dropped school-related arrests and summonses by more than 90 percent; decreased participant recidivism by 24–68 percent; reduced the number of young people under intensive supervision by more than 50 percent; and slashed the number of party-related shootings from 2–3 per weekend to only 3 shootings total over the course of a whole summer.[10]

The programs fall into these five general categories, although there is overlap and some agencies use approaches from multiple categories:

1. **Targeted educational and engagement initiatives.** The Manassas City (Virginia) Police Department's Parent E3 Series empowers caregivers to address at-risk behaviors, while Team Quest connects youth with adult mentors through learning activities. The Cedar Hill (Texas) Police Department's Youth Summit strengthens police-youth relationships at interactive summer camps. The Kansas City (Kansas) Police Department's Driver's Education Program addresses license-access disparities by having officers teach driving, helping prevent citations and court involvement.
2. **Pre-file deflection models.** Programs like the Longmont (Colorado) Department of Public Safety's REWiND, the Lincoln (Nebraska) Police Department's Project Restore, and the St. Petersburg (Florida) Police Department's Second Chance create a single entry point for pre-file diversion programs, where police officers automatically refer eligible youth for low-level offenses instead of issuing tickets or making arrests. By using validated screening tools and restorative justice principles, these programs address root causes, resolve cases in weeks rather than months, and allow youth to avoid criminal records entirely.
3. **Embedded mentorship and gang intervention.** Programs like the Lincoln Police Department's Tipping Point position nonsworn prevention and intervention specialists directly in school systems. These specialists provide mentorship to at-risk or actively gang-involved youth without creating police records, successfully shifting youth away from gang participation.
4. **Tiered intervention models:** Models such as the St. Petersburg Police Department's tiered intervention approach scale support based on youth risk levels—ranging from immediate diversion for first-time misdemeanor offenders (Second Chance) to wraparound support and mentorship for repeat offenders (Forward Together) to 24/7 cross-jurisdictional Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring and compliance checks for chronic high-risk offenders (Habitual Offender Monitoring Enforcement, or H.O.M.E.).

10. Assistant Chief John Garcia, *REWiND: Rebuilding Expectations and Walking in New Directions*, Longmont (CO) Department of Public Safety, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/LongmontYouth.pdf; Chief Anthony Holloway, *St. Petersburg Police Department Youth Engagement Programs*, St. Petersburg (FL) Police Department, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/StPetersburgYouth.pdf; Commander David Saflar, *Youth Violence Reduction Program*, Phoenix (AZ) Police Department, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/PhoenixYouth.pdf.

5. **Intelligence-Led Targeted Prevention Strategy.** Strategies like the Phoenix (Arizona) Police Department's Youth Violence Reduction Program use social media monitoring, intelligence gathering, and specialized interdiction teams to address out-of-control residential and promoter parties before party-related shootings or other violence occur.

Key Actionable Steps for Implementation

Regardless of the program an agency chooses to adopt, they should follow a structured, multi-phase operational implementation framework, including the following phases and steps:

Phase 1. Issue identification and partnership development

6. **Analyze data and establish baselines.** Collect and analyze data on calls for service, ticketing, arrests, referrals for diversion or other programs, any disparities in system entry and service provision by demographic, or other data—ideally in partnership with academic researchers or evaluators—to verify the problem, determine its scope, and establish a baseline.
7. **Survey community and map services.** Survey residents and community-based organizations to align agency goals with actual community needs. Map existing community resources geographically to identify service gaps to fill or supplement.
8. **Develop partner trust.** Create mission, vision, and values statements that communicate what the agency is trying to achieve and how it will benefit the community and residents.
9. **Build multidisciplinary partnerships.** Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, such as law enforcement, prosecutors, school districts, courts, juvenile services, human services, community-based organizations, and others.
10. **Formalize MOUs.** Establish memoranda of understanding (MOU) that clearly define partner roles, information-sharing policies, and program protocols.

Phase 2. Strategy and program development

1. **Define eligibility criteria.** Establish explicit inclusionary criteria (e.g., age ranges, offense types and levels) and exclusionary criteria (e.g., felony offenses such as assault resulting in serious bodily injury, firearm involvement, or a prior criminal record).
2. **Establish referral systems and timelines.** For referral-based programs, establish clear referral routing systems between partners and timelines for services and interventions.
3. **Secure diversified, sustainable funding.** Combine state and federal grants (e.g., State Byrne JAG, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services grants) with city budgets, school district co-funding, corporate donations, or dedicated city tax allocations to avoid single-source dependency.

Phase 3. Program implementation

1. **Track outcomes.** Partner with academic evaluators, if possible, or internal analysts to continuously measure pre-post metrics (e.g., program attendance, cases diverted, arrest reductions, recidivism, high school graduation rates).

2. **Adapt and evolve.** Use data and participant feedback to evolve the program to maintain its relevance to community and participant needs.

Phase 4. Community engagement

1. **Develop inclusive messaging and accessibility.** Create mission, vision, and values statements that communicate what the agency is trying to achieve and how it will benefit the community and residents. Remove participation barriers by meeting youth and families where they are and working with their schedules (e.g., existing community events, evenings, school).
2. **Partner with culturally rooted messengers.** Collaborate with trusted neighborhood nonprofits and cultural centers to handle family outreach, build trust with historically skeptical communities, and provide language interpretation.
3. **Publicize successes.** Publicly share data to build long-term institutional commitment and community legitimacy.

Youth Engagement and Education Programs

Youth engagement and education programs—including police-led summits, interactive learning activities, parent workshops, and driver's education—are proactive interventions that strengthen communities and improve public safety. Engaging young people early through mentorship, skill-building, and dialogue builds positive police-youth relationships beyond enforcement, offers alternatives to criminal behavior, and helps young people and families address its root causes.

While it is impossible to attribute offense reduction to any one strategy or program alone, the programs in this section have shown promising impacts. Kansas City (KS) Police Department's Driver's Education program has helped 340 young people obtain their licenses, resulting in fewer police stops, traffic citations, and entries into the system for driving without a license. But success cannot be measured by offense reduction alone; community participation and feedback are also valuable metrics. Manassas City (VA) Police Department's Parent E3 Series received 98.9 percent favorable feedback out of 1,939 participant surveys.[11]

Youth Summit – City of Cedar Hill (TX) Police Department

Community context

Cedar Hill is a city of approximately 50,000 residents and is about 35 square miles, just 16 miles southwest of Dallas. The city's population is approximately 54.9 percent Black, 22.9 percent White, and 12.1 percent two or more races; 24.2 percent of residents are Hispanic or Latino.[12] The city has 13 schools serving almost 7,000 students, 60 percent of whom are considered economically disadvantaged according to classification systems used by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Texas Education Agency.[13]

The issue

In 2012, Cedar Hill residents identified community policing and community engagement as strategic priorities. The Cedar Hill Police Department (CHPD) made a critical realization: Enforcement alone—arrests, tickets, warnings, or intimidation—would not prevent future criminal involvement among its young population. They had to build relationships before youth got involved in criminal behavior.

11. Beth Anne Brink-Cox, "Parent E3 Series: Master Officer Develops Initiative to Decrease Violent Youth-Involved Incidents," The Municipal, last modified April 27, 2026, https://www.themunicipal.com/2026/04/parent-e3-series-master-officer-develops-initiative-to-decrease-violent-youth-involved-incidents/.
12. U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Cedar Hill City, Texas," accessed September 4, 2026, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/cedarhillcitytexas#.
13. Schools Explorer, "Cedar Hill ISD," The Texas Tribune, accessed September 28, 2026, https://schools.texastribune.org/districts/cedar-hill-isd/student-teacher/; Schools Explorer, "Classifications are Used to Compare and Support Schools," The Texas Tribune, accessed September 28, 2026, https://schools.texastribune.org/explorer-details/.

"The program started because there was a need in the community for building relationships between police and youth. Once we've come into contact with them, after an incident, we can arrest them or write them a ticket or yell at them or scare them. But we wanted to reach out to them and have that relationship before an incident."

— Chief Ely Reyes, Cedar Hill Police Department

The department also understood that this population required more than reactive policing; they needed proactive education and awareness on relevant issues, including texting and driving, peer pressure, drug and alcohol use, bullying, and general knowledge on police activities. Notably, many youths, particularly from low-income families, lacked access to both positive community engagement opportunities and reliable safety education, a significant gap that demanded action.

The solution

In 2012, Cedar Hill residents identified community policing and community engagement as strategic priorities and created a Crime Control & Prevention District (CCPD). This community-driven vision led the city council to approve a dedicated funding mechanism: a portion of sales tax revenue would fund community safety and crime prevention initiatives.[14] To operationalize this plan, CHPD established the Police and Community Team (PACT), a specialized unit dedicated to crime prevention through community policing rather than traditional enforcement. PACT comprised one lieutenant, one sergeant, one corporal, and four officers; 7 total members, or roughly 10 percent of the department's then–73-person staff. Importantly, all PACT members are state-certified Crime Prevention Specialists. PACT's main goal was to engage in collaborative crime prevention with the community.

With support from the City and the community, PACT launched a three-day Youth Summit in 2024. The summit enrolls children ages 11–16 who live or attend school in Cedar Hill, combining educational programming on critical youth issues with recreational engagement and positive interactions with police. The program initially had 20 participants but grew to a capacity of 75 per session because of increasing popularity and demand. The program's success is evident in participant retention; many attendees return each year, often bringing siblings and friends through word-of-mouth recruitment.

Educational topics covered

Topics covered during the Youth Summit include the following:

- Driving safety and traffic stops: interacting with officers, texting and driving awareness, and jaws of life demonstration
- Juvenile justice system education
- Dealing with peer pressure
- Mental health

14. City of Cedar Hill, "Crime Control and Prevention District," accessed September 9, 2026, https://www.cedarhilltx.com/2312/Crime-Control-Prevention-District.

- Drug and alcohol awareness and facts
- Bullying prevention
- Fire safety and extinguisher training

Sample Program Structure and Content

Registration Process

- Open to children ages 11–16 who live or attend school in Cedar Hill
- Registration includes photo, injury release, emergency contact request, medications and allergies, and shirt size
- First day of drop-off: contact information verified and parents provided with pickup card (must be presented at end of day)
- Kids provided a wristband that must be worn all three days
- Sample registration sheet*

Days 1 and 2—Police Department Activities (8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.)

- Focus on police department activities: traffic stops, patrol, crime scene investigations, court proceedings, drone operations, K9 demonstrations, dispatch operations, and SWAT
- All instructors employed by the City

Specific Day 1 Activities (Tuesday)

1. Breakfast
2. Opening with the Police Chief to make any announcements
3. Cedar Hill Municipal Court presentation
4. Crime Scene presentation and exercise
5. Mental Health presentation and demonstration
6. K-9 presentation and demonstration
7. Recreational activities (dodgeball, basketball, other games)

Specific Day 2 Activities (Wednesday)

8. Breakfast
9. CHPD drone demonstration
10. "Engaging the Officer" presentation
11. Cedar Hill Traffic Unit motorcycle demonstration
12. Cedar Hill Police Youth games with prizes
13. Library presenter session with library card registration
14. Recreational activities (dodgeball, basketball, other games)

Day 3—Field Day (Thursday)

- Held at local Recreation Center
- Structured field day activities (15 minutes per site)
    - Target practice paintball
    - Water balloon games and other water games
    - Drunk goggles relays
- Closing remarks and giveaways

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* *Youth Summit 2021 Registration* (Cedar Hill, TX: Cedar Hill Police Department, 2021), https://cedarhilltx.com/DocumentCenter/View/36902/Youth-Summit-2021-Registration?bidId=.

Meal and snack provisions

All three days of the Youth Summit include breakfast, lunch, snacks, and drinks. This component is essential to program inclusiveness and helps address food insecurity among low-income participating families.

Staffing

The Youth Summit leverages internal police resources and community volunteers to extend its reach. Specialized units rotate through the summit, including the canine unit, which provides demonstrations; the traffic unit, which conducts radar races; and executive leadership, who give opening and closing remarks. The PACT core staff leads overall programming. Citizens on Patrol volunteers also provide substantial support by helping supervise participants.

Funding

The Youth Summit was initially funded on a voter-approved Community Control Prevention District (CCPD) bond established in 2012, which has been renewed annually. This bond dedicates approximately 1/8 percent of sales tax collected, roughly $1 million annually, to support community policing programs at CHPD. However, as the program grew in scope and cost, the base budget did not increase proportionally. Instead, CHPD staff went to the community and to local businesses to request donations for meals and prizes to support the expanding program. This funding model includes contributions from the Police Association, community volunteers, the Recreation Center (which provides facilities and tents), local churches, nonprofit organizations, and Fire/emergency medical services (EMS) participation. This multi-source approach, which combines stable city funding with flexible community partnerships, creates resilience and sustainability for the program.

Growing pains / Lessons learned

As the Youth Summit expanded from 20 to a maximum of 75 participants, CHPD encountered a constraint many departments face: Demand outpaced capacity and budget. For example, as the program grew, the department identified new participant needs: "We found that the kids were a little sluggish in the morning," said Chief Reyes, prompting the team to recognize that "we're seeing a lot of low-income kids come because it's a free camp," but their families rely on school-provided meals during the academic year. Rather than operate a program that left some participants unable to fully engage, CHPD expanded meal offerings. Reyes explained the reasoning: "So we thought, you know, let's make sure that they're getting two solid meals for the day and whatever they want for a snack." Local restaurants and food chains sponsor these meals, reducing the financial burden on the police department's budget.

The Youth Summit has been a victim of its own success. Cedar Hill has achieved the lowest violent and property crime rates in the region and experienced a 40 percent reduction in overall crime over six years. CHPD found that funders perceived its low-crime communities as having "less need" than other communities, so they chose not to continue funding crime reduction efforts like the Youth Summit. CHPD applied for Bureau of Justice Assistance funding but was denied, reflecting the broader challenge of securing grants for this type of program. So although the Youth Summit does use some traditional funding methods, strong community support from businesses, volunteers, nonprofits, and local organizations is essential to its continuity and growth.

Measurable achievements

Since the Crime Control & Prevention District (CCPD) was created in 2012, Cedar Hill's overall crime rate index has decreased by 10 percent.[15] Although residents originally voted to fund CCPD through 2017, they voted to fund it for another 15 years, through 2032.[16]

While CHPD lacks long-term evaluation data for the Youth Summit, which started in 2024, other indicators suggest meaningful success. The program has nearly tripled in size since its inception, with ongoing demand exceeding capacity, strong repeat participation, and word-of-mouth recruitment demonstrating community confidence and positive experiences. More significantly, the program appears to achieve its core goal of building positive youth-police relationships. According to program documentation, "Since the camp began, no attendees have had a negative interaction with law enforcement; even more encouraging, these youth frequently seek out officers for guidance and conversation."[17] Beyond the summit, participants have voluntarily attended other CHPD community events, indicating sustained positive relationships. These anecdotal indicators are compelling but highlight the need for data collection to formally demonstrate long-term program outcomes.

How the program benefits law enforcement

The Youth Summit aims to improve law enforcement interactions with youth in the Cedar Hill community by encouraging them to learn about police functions and build trust in law enforcement. The program is resource-efficient, leveraging community volunteers to help run the program and local business donations to furnish it. Multi-agency collaboration across police, fire, municipal court, and schools shows community collaboration and commitment to helping youth. The program's tangible benefit is evident in reports that participants have experienced no negative interactions with law enforcement since the summit began. By building positive relationships before enforcement contact occurs, the program increases voluntary community cooperation in police functions and can help build trust and legitimacy in the community.

Takeaways and why others should consider adopting the program

CHPD's model proves that effective youth programming is achievable for any size agency through partnerships and effort rather than large budgets. The program's sustainability relies on diversified funding, ensuring that no single funding source threatens its viability, and on community-, city-, and department-wide investment to educate the younger population.

> *"It's doable without a lot of money because so many people do want to be engaged."*
>
> ***— Chief Ely Reyes***

15. City of Cedar Hill, "Crime Control and Prevention District" (see note 14).
16. City of Cedar Hill, "Crime Control and Prevention District" (see note 14).
17. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), "Cedar Hill (TX) Police Department – Youth Summit," *Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, n.d.), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/StrategiesYouthCrime.pdf.

The program's value resonates throughout the community—so much so that the mayor's wife actively sought increased police funding after her son's participation. Program success ultimately depends on the department's willingness to invest effort. Chief Reyes noted: "You take one bite at a time. That's a great thing about the Youth Summit and a lot of these programs—they're scalable, and you just have to be willing to put in the work."



Kids play basketball and check out a police helicopter at the 2026 Cedar Hill Police Department Youth Summit.

Source: Cedar Hill Police Department. "Youth Summit 2026 is one for the books! 80 kids were fed, snacked, and educated . . ." Facebook, June 2026. https://www.facebook.com/cedarhillpolice/posts/youth-summit-2026-is-one-for-the-books-80-kids-were-fed-snacked-and-educated-thi/1451077800397371/.

Parent E3 – City of Manassas (VA) Police Department

The issue

In the late 2010s, Manassas City, Virginia, began experiencing increased levels of delinquency among juveniles. Risk-indicating behaviors, such as lashing out at school, were on the rise: Prince William County, which surrounds Manassas, had the largest number of students charged for school-based disorderly conduct in the state from 2016 to 2018.[18] The Manassas City Police Department (MCPD) also noticed an increase in violent crimes involving juveniles, particularly homicides.[19]

The solutions

Community Vitality Officer Program

To address this issue, MCPD developed the Community Vitality Officer (CVO) Program aimed at reducing juvenile-involved crimes by enhancing community relations through engagement, education, and empowerment.

18. Daniel Berti, "Prince William Leads State in 'School Disorderly Conduct,' a Charge Virginia Lawmakers Just Eliminated," *Prince William Times*, February 20, 2026, https://www.princewilliamtimes.com/news/prince-william-leads-state-in-school-disorderly-conduct-a-charge-virginia-lawmakers-just-eliminated/article_ed3edba8-64ea-11ea-b260-5372ae0c43b4.html.
19. PERF, "Manassas City (VA) Police Department – Parent E3 Series & Team Quest," *Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime* (see note 17).

The program was built around six pillars:

1. Youth outreach programs
2. Parental education outreach programs
3. Community engagement and enrichment outreach programs
4. Education and career fulfillment outreach programs
5. Multidisciplinary and interagency partnerships
6. Data collection and reporting

Two key components of the CVO Program are the Parent E3 Series, which falls under the Parental Education Outreach pillar, and Team Quest, which falls under the Youth Outreach pillar.

"We want to foster resilience and self-sufficiency within the community through mentorship and support."

— Master Officer TJ Rodriquez

Funding

The CVO Program was created as part of a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). This grant was awarded to the MCPD in 2020.

Parent E3 Series

The Parent E3 Series is a set of community workshops created by the MCPD in partnership with Manassas City Public Schools to engage, educate, and empower parents and caregivers to effectively support youth and address at-risk behaviors. Through expert-led discussions, connections to local resources, and interactive breakout groups, the series empowers caregivers to have important and meaningful conversations about critical topics with their children. These topics include substance abuse, internet safety, cyberbullying, truancy, mental health, dating abuse, and violence.

Growing pains and lessons learned

During the inaugural six-week Parent E3 series in January 2022, the MCPD encountered challenges with low participation. MCPD partnered with Manassas City Public Schools' family liaisons to invite caregivers, which doubled participation, and held presentations at local community events.[20] Organizers also identified and addressed barriers preventing parents from attending the workshops. They now provide meals and transportation, schedule workshops in the evenings to accommodate working parents, and offer live Spanish interpretation headsets at certain events to ensure accessibility. They also learned that the content needed to be made available to age-appropriate children, so parents weren't going home to talk about it without the context needed. They now allow children of the intended age group to attend and sometimes have kids on workshop panels.

20. Brink-Cox, "Parent E3 Series" (see note 11).

Measurable achievements

Feedback for the program has been overwhelmingly positive: One year, out of 1,939 participant surveys, 98.9 percent were favorable.[21] The Parent E3 Series has received notable recognition, including the 2023 Virginia Municipal League Public Safety Innovation Award and the 2024 U.S. Department of Justice Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service in Community Policing.

Benefits for law enforcement

The Parent E3 series is beneficial to law enforcement because it enables families to proactively intervene and address concerning behaviors among youth, before those behaviors escalate and require law enforcement action. Not only does this improve overall safety and well-being across the community but it may also lead to fewer calls for service, which lessens the burden on law enforcement and allows them use their limited resources (such as personnel and overtime budgets) more efficiently.

Takeaways and why others should consider implementing the program

The main objective of Parent E3 is to reduce juvenile problems, and it meets that objective effectively. But it also provides opportunities for building trust with local families, strengthening relationships with community-based organizations and empowering families to help prevent future crime by addressing concerning behaviors proactively. MCPD's investment in this program provides a strong basis for other agencies to replicate, tailor to their own community's needs, and ultimately implement for similar benefits.

Team Quest

Team Quest – Greater Manassas Youth Project is an early intervention program for at-risk youth between the ages of 13 and 17. The program serves 40–50 participants, both non–court involved and low-level court-involved. Participants are engaged in positive activities that emphasize teamwork, leadership, career exploration, fitness, service, and personal growth and are paired with adult mentors from the community at no cost.

This program is a collaborative, multidisciplinary strategy comprising community stakeholders and partners in the greater Manassas area, including the following:

- Police Department
- Juvenile Court Service Unit
- Schools
- Department of Social Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Community Services Board – HIDTA Prevention
- Local businesses
- Other nonprofits, stakeholders, and identified community partners

21. Brink-Cox, "Parent E3 Series" (see note 11).

Funding

Team Quest is funded through the Virginia Juvenile Crime Control Act, as part of a strategic plan with the Prince William County (VA) Juvenile Court Service Unit and the City of Manassas Department of Social Services.[22] This act funds community- and evidence-based solutions to reduce crime while improving juvenile outcomes.

Growing pains and lessons learned

During the first three years of the program, staff had difficulty recruiting community partners and developing interactive and engaging activities. Since then, they have adapted the program focus more on the participants. Allowing young people to use their creativity and assist staff in identifying and planning future activities gave them an ownership stake in the program, which greatly improved buy-in. Staff also realized that while less-frequent activities may be sufficient during the school year, weekly activities during the summer months are helpful for maintaining involvement, which is especially important because summer months can present increased risks for already at-risk youth.

Measurable achievements

Team Quest has operated successfully for nearly two decades, demonstrating long-term commitment and thriving on the continued collaboration among law enforcement, schools, juvenile courts, social services, and other community partners. With the support of the community, Team Quest has been able to evolve and expand over time, providing youth with the most effective support possible.

Benefits to law enforcement

Team Quest offers numerous benefits to law enforcement. By focusing on early intervention and cross-disciplinary collaboration, the program reduces reliance on enforcement-only approaches and prevents future crime from taking place. Team Quest also fosters trust and strengthens law enforcement's relationship with youth and other community entities.

Takeaways and why others should consider implementing the program

MCPD's experience with Team Quest demonstrates that prevention and relationship-building can effectively complement traditional public safety strategies. Team Quest offers a proactive path to prevention, stronger relationships with youth, and ultimately better outcomes than relying on enforcement alone or waiting to intervene until youth become justice-involved. The program's effectiveness and sustainability are both enhanced by cross-disciplinary partnerships that combine resources and expertise. Agencies should consider replicating these efforts as a long-term investment in their community's youth that will enhance public safety.

22. Master Police Officer TJ Rodriquez, *Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime*, Manassas City (VA) Police Department, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManassasYouth.pdf.



Master Officer TJ Rodriquez speaks at a Parent E3 event.

Source: City of Manassas, VA. "This is what Parent E3 is all about! Communities coming together to support our . . ." Facebook, May 23, 2026. https://www.facebook.com/cityofmanassas/posts/this-is-what-parent-e3-is-all-aboutcommunities-coming-together-to-support-our-yo/1316609490657702/.

Case Study: City of Kansas City, Kansas – Driver's Education Program

What was the problem or issue

Community context

Kansas City, Kansas, has a population of just under 158,000 and is roughly 124.7 square miles. It sits on the Kansas-Missouri border and is the third-largest city in the state, hosting up to 10 million visitors per year.[23] The city is approximately 39.0 percent White, 19.6 percent Black, 5.4 percent Asian, 1.8 percent American Indian and Alaska Native, and 17.9 percent two or more races; 35.7 percent of residents are Hispanic or Latino. Roughly 16.0 percent of the population live in poverty.[24] The Kansas City, Kansas, Police Department (KCKPD) has 420 staff members, with more than 340 sworn officers.

23. "History," Kansas City Kansas Police Department, accessed October 8, 2026, https://www.kckpd.org/Department/History.
24. U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Kansas City City, Kansas," accessed October 8, 2026, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kansascitycitykansas#.

Identified problems

A department survey of schools across Kansas City, including four local high schools—two in inner-city districts and two in suburban districts—revealed a stark disparity in driver's licensing: In underserved urban areas, 80 percent of youth lacked driver's licenses, while in affluent suburban areas, 80 percent of youth possessed them. This licensing gap stems from multiple barriers including the costs of obtaining a license (which can exceed $1,000), fear of engaging with government agencies, and a lack of knowledge about the licensing process. The consequences of this disparity are substantial. Young unlicensed drivers in urban areas encounter a harmful cycle: When ticketed for unlicensed driving, they may face court appearances; missing court dates results in warrants; and warrants can lead to negative police interactions that can unnecessarily introduce them to the criminal justice system. Young people in suburban areas with higher socioeconomic status deal with fewer such challenges.

Families with undocumented members face additional barriers. A child born in the United States may be the only person in their family legally able to obtain a license. But they often cannot practice driving with an undocumented family member: If they are ticketed for unlicensed driving before obtaining their license, it becomes significantly harder to obtain that license in the future. This dynamic can put pressure on youth to drive illegally out of family necessity, only to face compounding legal barriers to licensure.

After recognizing this systemic disparity, KCKPD implemented an innovative program to increase access to driver's education in the city.

How they came to address it

In 2022, KCKPD launched a driver's education program designed to provide accessible, police-led driver training for youth aged 15–18 across the city. The program is a driver's education class exclusively taught by sworn police officers who are state-certified driving instructors. The program combines practical and classroom education: six hours of in-car driving instruction with 8–10 hours of classroom-based learning. Participants receive this in-car instruction with an officer, which not only provides education on driving rules but also helps them interact positively with police officers. Upon completion, KCKPD takes students to the Department of Motor Vehicles to help with the license test and car registration, removing logistical barriers to licensure. The Police Athletic League (PAL), a nonprofit foundation, delivers the program and allows community members to donate money to support the initiative. Students complete 30 hours of service at the PAL to participate in the program.

Recognizing that driver's education is only one component of community engagement, KCKPD has developed various other complementary programs targeting youth in underserved areas. These include a Youth and Police Football Camp, a Peace Walk, and Youth Academies.

Educational topics covered

- How to conduct yourself at a car stop
- How to navigate the court system
- Maintaining vehicle insurance and registration
- Routine vehicle maintenance
- PAL recruitment tool, future police officers, dispatchers, and first responders
- Confidence in driving
- Information on insurance
- No more looking over the shoulder while driving
- Conflict resolution

Funding

The driver's education program is supported through multiple funding mechanisms. The PAL operates as a nonprofit foundation, which enables community donations and support. State and local grants, city budgets, and private and business donations have also been valuable funding sources. The program has grown from an initial pilot to a citywide program, indicating sustained institutional commitment.

This funding supports the following:

- A minimum of one sworn officer
- Possible overtime
- State certified driving training course
- Vehicles that meet state law requirements for vehicles used for driver's education (e.g., a brake on passenger's side)
- Maintenance and insurance

Growing pains and lessons learned

The Lincoln Police Department, reviewing the Kansas City model for potential implementation, identified several critical considerations that represent lessons learned and challenges for departments adopting this program model. First, any police department considering a driver's education program must consult with city management and government regarding liability and risk structure, as these considerations determine program feasibility at the municipal level. Specifically, departments must understand what insurance, risk, and liability protections exist for a police-led driver's education program. KCKPD's experience demonstrates that engaging directly with insurance companies, not just legal counsel, can resolve some of these barriers. Agencies must also understand and address state regulations governing driver's education vehicles. In addition, departments should assess what driver's education programs already exist in their jurisdiction before launching their own, as partnerships with existing programs may be more efficient than standalone initiatives. These options may benefit departments with limited staffing or funding.

Moreover, capacity planning is essential for this type of program. Departments must decide how many youths they can serve annually with available resources and establish clear participant criteria. KCKPD has experienced high demand for its program, so it has restricted enrollment to those living in or connected to Kansas City, Kansas. During the pilot, the department taught the program in schools but faced resistance from school boards. Lastly, programs need to accessible and inclusive to ensure they serve all community members; KCKPD employed bilingual officers and offered a Spanish-language academy to help build trust with immigrant and undocumented communities.

Measurable achievements

Since the program's launch in 2022 and through the end of 2024, KCKPD helped 340 young people obtain their driver's licenses. This figure represents concrete, quantifiable progress in addressing the city's licensing gap, and continued program growth has led to a waitlist. The program has reduced traffic citations among youth, demonstrating improved compliance with traffic laws. In 2021, officers issued 1,114 tickets in Kansas City, Kansas, to youth for driving without a license (including operating without a proper vehicle license). From February 2024 to May 2025, there were only 46 driver's license violations. Program participants have also contributed to the community, completing 7,980 service hours during this two-year period.

How the program benefits or reduces the burden on law enforcement

The KCKPD driver's education program benefits law enforcement and the community in several ways. By helping young adults obtain licenses, the program equips participants with valuable driving skills and knowledge of traffic laws, reducing the likelihood of future traffic violations, tickets, and accidents. The program also addresses a structural source of police-community division: Traffic stops accounted for approximately 80 percent of reported police-initiated interactions with U.S. residents 16 or older in 2022 (reports were roughly 61 percent from drivers and 19 percent from passengers).[25] . Teaching youth, before they have any enforcement contact, how to interact with police during potential future traffic stops can help keep encounters positive if and when they do occur.

The program also fosters positive relationships between police and youth by positioning officers as educators and mentors rather than enforcement actors. These early, positive interactions establish trust, fundamentally shifting how youth perceive and interact with police. KCKPD has found that this trust has even led participants to share information, resulting in solved homicide cases. In addition, the program supports police recruitment efforts by exposing youth to law enforcement professionals in a positive context. In fact, **six program alumni have been hired as officers and four as dispatchers in the KCKPD.**

25. Susannah N. Tapp and Elizabeth J. Davis, *Contacts between Police and the Public, 2022* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2024), https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/contacts-between-police-and-public-2022.



A student practices driving with a Kansas City Kansas Police Department driving instructor.

Source: Police Athletic League of Kansas City Kansas. Photo. Facebook, February 19, 2024. https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=722488840070351&set=pcb.722503016735600.

Youth Education and Engagement Programs— Implementation Steps

Takeaways

1. Prioritize proactive prevention and trust-building over enforcement alone.

   These programs show that relationship-building and proactive prevention effectively complement traditional public safety strategies. Intervening early—rather than relying on enforcement alone or waiting until youth become justice-involved—builds trust with local families, strengthens relationships with community organizations, and empowers families to address concerning behaviors early to prevent future crime.

2. Lighten law enforcement burden through multidisciplinary partnerships.

   Effective youth programming is achievable for any size agency through strong partnerships. Broad cross-sector collaboration—engaging law enforcement, schools, social services, juvenile and municipal courts, Fire and EMS, recreation centers,

foundations, local businesses, and community volunteers—combines resources and expertise, reduces police workload, builds police-youth trust, and reduces youth entry into the justice system.

Implementation steps

Phase 1. Issue identification, partnerships, and strategic alignment

1. **Analyze data and establish baselines.** Collect and analyze data on calls for service, citations, arrests, referrals for diversion or other programs, any disparities in system entry or service provision by demographic—ideally in partnership with academic researchers or evaluators—to verify the problem, determine its scope, and establish a baseline.
2. **Survey community and map services.** Survey residents and community-based organizations to align agency goals with actual community needs. Map existing community resources geographically to identify service gaps to fill or supplement.
3. **Build multidisciplinary partnerships.** Collaborate with relevant stakeholders—local schools, juvenile courts, social service agencies, government entities, and community organizations—early in planning to maximize perspectives, combine resources, and align expertise.
4. **Establish strategic frameworks and core pillars.** Build the program around clear objectives (e.g., to positively engage youth to reduce system entry, to build police-youth trust), and define operational pillars (e.g., youth learning, mentorship, parent education).
5. **Secure institutional and city- or countywide buy-in.** Engage city officials, organizational leadership, and administrative bodies early to build support, and pursue local or state funding opportunities. Securing city-, community-, and organization-wide investment ensures long-term program stability and permanency across leadership changes.

Phase 2. Strategic, accessible design and funding diversification

6. **Adopt a scalable, incremental implementation approach.** Design program activities to start small and scale over time. Focus on low-cost, high-impact models (e.g., youth summits, parent education workshops, interactive mentoring, driver's license education) built in response to data and resident input on community needs.
7. **Secure diverse funding sources.** Program sustainability relies on diversified funding so that losing any single funding source does not threaten program continuity. Sustainable models blend federal and state grants, city budget allocations, municipal tax allocations, police association donations, business sponsorships, and other sources.
8. **Prioritize community access.** Remove participation barriers by planning activities around where youth and families will already be and their schedules (e.g., existing community events, evenings, school, holidays, summer break). Ensure program materials are translated and culturally adapted.

Phase 3. Launch, evaluation, and continuous evolution

9. **Implement outcome measures and tracking systems.** Implement quantitative and qualitative metrics—such as number of participants, number of successful participants (in programs with specific goals such as driver's licensing), participant and parent satisfaction scores and feedback, and reductions in juvenile arrest rates; youth crime data; citations, justice system contacts; and school offenses.
10. **Use trusted messengers.** Leverage partners including schools, community organizations, and cultural centers to spread awareness about the program.

Ongoing

11. **Adapt continually to feedback and community trends.** Maintain flexibility by reviewing evaluation data, survey responses, and emerging local trends to refine activities, address concerning youth behaviors proactively, and stay aligned with community needs.

Pre-File Deflection Programs

Pre-file deflection programs offer a transformative approach to juvenile justice by diverting youth into interventions before formal criminal charges or court summonses are filed. Grounded in restorative justice principles and comprehensive support, these programs emphasize personal accountability, address root causes of behavior, and allow youth to avoid acquiring a permanent criminal record with lasting impacts.

By intercepting cases at the point of police contact, the pre-file deflection programs in this section have delivered significant, measurable benefits for their communities, courts, and law enforcement agencies. The Longmont (CO) Department of Public Safety transitioning to pre-file deflection for low-level offenses has reduced school-related arrests and summonses by more than 80 percent.[26]

Pre-File Deflection Programs – Lincoln, NE, and Longmont, CO

The issue

The Longmont (Colorado) Department of Public Safety (LDPS) and Lincoln (Nebraska) Police Department (LPD) found that many youths in their jurisdictions were being ticketed or arrested for lower-level offenses, leading to early entry into the criminal justice system.

All agencies highlighted in this report presented at PERF's June 10, 2025, meeting on innovative strategies to proactively address youth crime. PERF also visited the Lincoln (Nebraska) Police Department in person to get a more comprehensive look at its programs from September 1 to 2, 2026.

LDPS

LDPS reported that before launching the pre-file deflection version of their program in 2022, school resource officers (SRO) and patrol officers ticketed or arrested approximately 105 young people each year. They also noted discrepancies with respect to which juvenile subjects they were referring to existing pre-file restorative justice and which they were ticketing—with predominantly white youth being diverted to the pre-file restorative justice and predominantly minority youth being ticketed before referral to LDPS' post-file diversion program at that time. In 2023, the Boulder District Attorney's Office, which serves the City of Longmont, released data for the County showing the percentage of juvenile individuals diverted by race—63 percent were white (compared with 61 percent of all filed cases, juvenile and adult, and 77 percent of the total population); 2 percent were Black (compared with 6 percent of filed cases and 1.3 percent of the population); 30 percent were Hispanic (compared with 30 percent of filed cases and 13 percent of the population); and the remaining 4 percent were other or unknown.[27]

26. Garcia, *REWIND* (see note 10).
27. Twentieth Judicial District DA Dashboard, "Diversion and Deferral," Boulder County District Attorney's Office, accessed October 14, 2026, https://data.dacolorado.org/20th/deferral-and-diversion/.

Growing calls for legislative reforms regarding the criminalization of high school students additionally signaled that police and their partners should consider alternative approaches. The need for other options was also financial; juvenile incarceration in Colorado cost approximately $132,000 per youth annually, burdening system resources.

LPD

LPD is part of Lancaster County's Reducing Racial & Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) Committee, comprising all county juvenile and adult criminal justice departments, the county human services office, county and city attorneys' offices, elected officials, the school district, youth organizations, juvenile justice officials, mental health and substance abuse agencies, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL).

In 2015, UNL evaluated LPD's juvenile case data. The evaluation found that minority youth were arrested at twice the rate of their White counterparts. However, further analysis showed that law enforcement calls were reactive in nature, and when the suspect was identified, White and minority youth were arrested at the same rate.[28] Additional data analysis showed that low-level assaults and disturbing the peace offenses occurring in school settings predominantly drove referrals to SROs, with crimes involving minority youth more frequently being referred to police.[29]

Schools lacked short-term solutions to address these incidents, particularly violent ones, and often relied on 5-day suspensions, school transfers, or expulsions to separate offending students from victims while awaiting court processes. Human Services youth programming and interventions also had limited impact because outreach after a ticket could be delayed by up to nine months. By then, families had often already taken informal steps (e.g., an apology to the victim or grounding the youth).

> *"In one case, a kid had stolen a cookie and was issued a ticket before coming through Human Services. Before this incident, the school had tried everything to get the kid services and eventually felt getting them into the system was the only way to do so. This started the conversation around how to get services into schools at the starting point."*
>
> ***— Sara Hoyle, Director, Lancaster County Human Services***

R/ED led the initiative to determine how to decrease disproportionate rates among minority youth entering the justice system, and one component was figuring out how to reduce entry after police were called.

The solution

Both LDPS and LPD offer pre-file deflection programs to which youth are referred for offenses before formal charges or court summonses are issued—LDPS REWiND (Rebuilding Expectations and Walking in New Directions) and LPD Project Restore.

28. *Lancaster County Juvenile Services Comprehensive Plan July 1, 2015–June 30, 2018* (Lincoln, NE: Lancaster County Board of Commissioners, 2015), https://www.lancaster.ne.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=51.
29. *Lancaster County Juvenile Services Comprehensive Plan July 1, 2015–June 30, 2018* (see note 28).

Both programs aim to prevent more youth from entering the criminal justice system, obtaining official arrest records, or facing court-ordered probation, in turn decreasing disparities in demographics of youth represented in the criminal justice system.

Programs' Origin and Focus

LDPS REWiND

The REWiND program, started in 2017, was originally a post-file voluntary diversion program led by LDPS, the municipal courts, and probation. It operated separately from the BRITE Collaborative (formerly Longmont Community Justice Partnership), a restorative justice program established with partners in 1996.[30] Silos between partners and multiple response options for the same offenses had disproportionately led to underserved youth being referred to REWiND rather than to restorative justice.

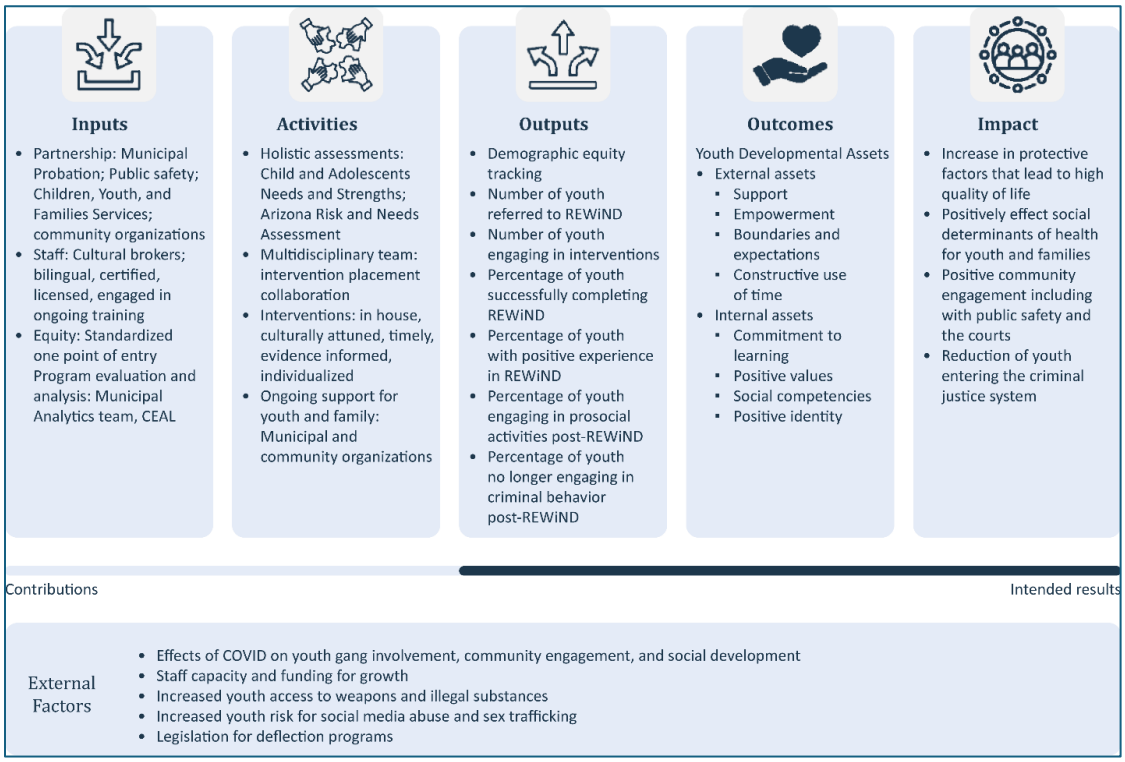
In 2022, REWiND began transitioning into a community-wide pre-file deflection program. By 2023, the department's policy required officers to automatically refer eligible youth (aged 12–18, expanding to 25) and crimes (with probable cause) to REWiND, rather than issue a ticket. The goal was to create a single point of entry into the program and increase equity in restorative justice referrals. The full list of eligible and ineligible offenses and disqualifiers is shown in table 1 on page 25.

REWIND partners include the following:

- BRITE Collaborative (restorative justice program)
- Local public school district
- Municipal courts
- Probation
- Alternative education centers
- Children, Youth and Family Services
- Community-based organizations

30. "Bringing Restorative Interventions to Everyone," BRITE Collaborative, accessed September 23, 2026, https://www.britecollab.org/; Albert W. Dzur and John McKnight, "Refunctioning the Police in Longmont," *National Civic Review* 110, no. 4 (2022), https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/ncr-article/refunctioning-the-police-in-longmont/.

Figure 1. REWiND Program deflection logic model



Source: Garcia, *REWiND* (see note 7).

LPD Project Restore

To determine solutions for the issues revealed during the juvenile case data evaluation, RED stakeholders attended Georgetown University's Center for Youth Justice's Certificate Program on Advancing Racial Justice and Equity in Youth Legal Systems.[31] They then reached out to the Center for program design guidance and outcome evaluation. They identified the Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program model as one they could tailor to their youth and jurisdiction's circumstances and needs.[32]

In 2015, the stakeholders launched Project Restore, a referral-based pre-diversion model. School resource officers or law enforcement refer students (initially 14–17, now as young as 11) involved in certain school-based incidents (expanding to after-hours school events). The full list of eligible and ineligible offenses and disqualifiers is shown in table 1.

31. "Advancing Racial Justice and Equity in Youth-Serving Systems," Center for Youth Justice at Georgetown University, accessed September 28, 2026, https://cyj.georgetown.edu/certificate-programs/advancing-racial-justice-and-equity/.
32. Kevin Bethel, *Keeping Kids in School and out of Court: Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program* (Philadelphia, PA: Stoneleigh Foundation, 2015), https://stoneleighfoundation.org/keeping-kids-school-court-philadelphia-police-school-diversion-program/.

Table 1. LDPS REWiND vs. LPD Project Restore: Eligible and ineligible offenses and disqualifiers

	REWiND	Project Restore
Geographic scope	Community-wide	School premises or school events
Ages served	10–17 (expanding to age 25)	14–17 (now as young as 11)
Eligible offenses	• Level I, II, and III offenses *(e.g., trespassing, fighting, substance or alcohol possession, theft, harassment, vandalism, nonmenacing weapon charges)* • Low-level felony-level offenses *(e.g., car break-ins, high-dollar vandalism, drug cases, fights turning into felony assault)*	• Low-level offenses *(e.g., assaults and fights, disturbing the peace, trespassing, shoplifting)* If two youth are mutually involved in a fight, they may both be referred to Restore.
Ineligible offenses or disqualifiers	• Traffic and DUIs • Safety issues, including active threats or use of a deadly weapon *(actual use or bringing a firearm to school)* • Mandatory arrest offenses *(e.g., domestic violence, protection order violations, warrants)* and sex crimes *(excluding public indecency or mutual sexting between peers)* • Participation in REWiND three times already • Current county probation status or bond conditions *(to avoid overburdening youth)* • Needs are beyond services REWiND can provide • Screening team determined ineligible	• Gang-inspired or -motivated violence *(will check if youth flagged for gang involvement and determine if the incident was gang-related)* • Involved weapon *(often becomes a felony)* or serious bodily injury • Domestic assault and sex-related offenses • Participation in Restore within past two years • Currently in diversion program or receiving government services *(to avoid overburdening youth)* • Previous involvement in juvenile justice system • County Attorney determined ineligible

Project Restore partners include the following:

- County Attorney's Office
- The Mediation Center[33]
- Local public school district
- County Human Services
- Georgetown University and University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- Juvenile court, probation, and detention
- Cultural centers

The partners formalized their roles, policies, and protocols in the MOU included in the appendix beginning on page 62.

Program referrals and interventions

REWiND's and Project Restore's referral and screening processes are very similar, as shown in figures 2 and 3 on pages 27 and 28.

The entry point for each is a referral from a law enforcement or school resource officer who was contacted about the offense. A multidisciplinary, multi-agency team conducts REWiND's screening. For Project Restore, County Human Services (HS) sends referrals to the Chief Deputy County Attorney (CDCA) of the Juvenile Division for screening.

If the youth is determined eligible and they and their family agree to the youth's participation, staff conduct an assessment using validated screening tools: REWiND uses the Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths and the Arizona Risk Needs Assessment tools, and Project Restore uses the Nebraska Youth Screen and a tailored version of the Youth Level of Service Tool independently validated by the University of Nebraska.[34] The assessment results inform the intervention plan.

To support youth success, interventions connect youth and their families with local service providers who can address their holistic needs. Both are grounded in restorative justice principles that emphasize personal accountability and repairing harm rather than punitive approaches.

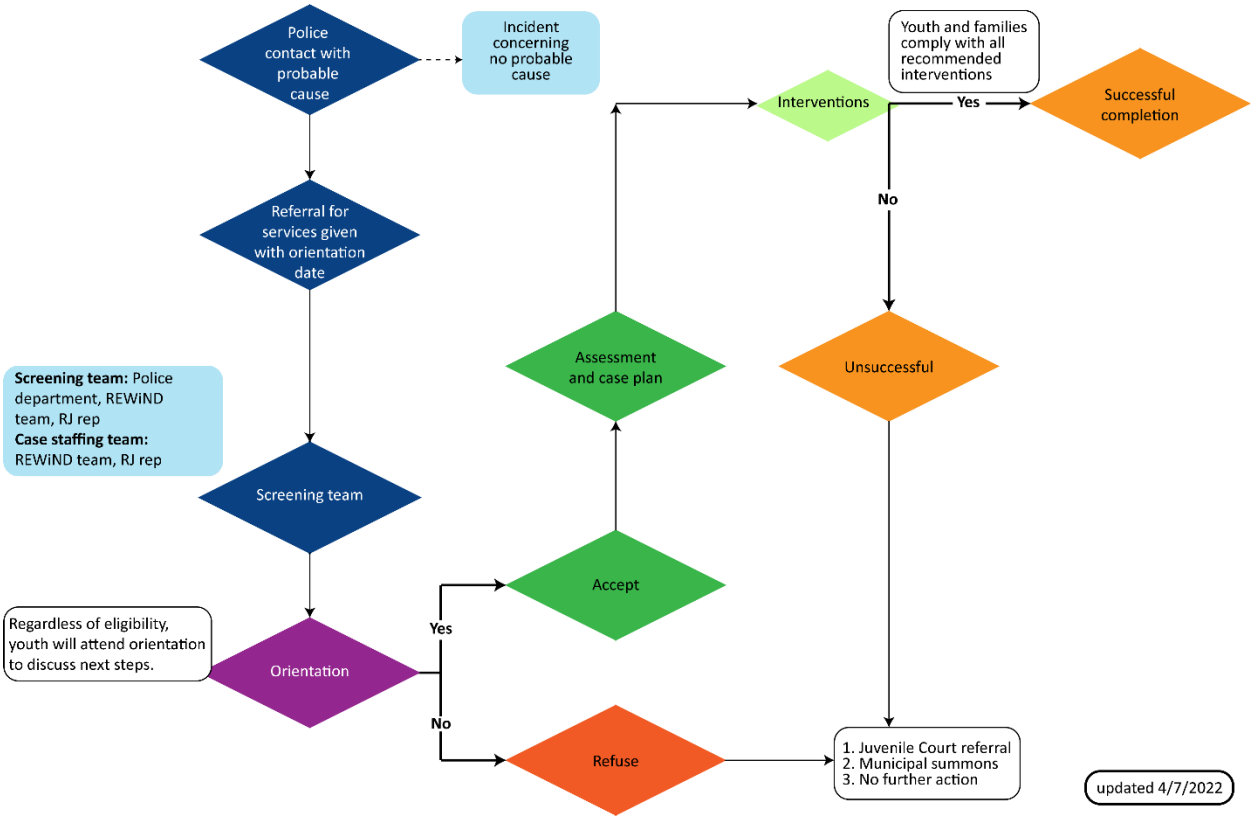
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33. "The Mediation Center," The Mediation Center, accessed September 23, 2026, https://themediationcenter.org/.
34. "Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)," National Child Traumatic Stress Network, accessed September 28, 2026, https://www.nctsn.org/measures/child-adolescents-needs-strengths; "The Arizona Risk-Needs Assessment (ARNA)," New York State Association for Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, accessed September 28, 2026, https://www.nysap.us/services/risk-assessment-case-planning/arna-the-arizona-risk-needs-assesment; *The Nebraska Screen and Assessment Tool (NSAT)* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Crime Commission, 2023), https://ncc.nebraska.gov/juvenile-justice-resources; "Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory Training (YLS/CMI 2.0)," New York State Association for Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, accessed September 28, 2026, https://www.nysap.us/services/risk-assessment-case-planning/yls-cmi-2-youth-level-of-service-case-management-inventory-training.

In addition to restorative justice, REWiND interventions may include youth or family counseling, substance use education and counseling, crisis intervention, parenting skill development, or recreational programs.

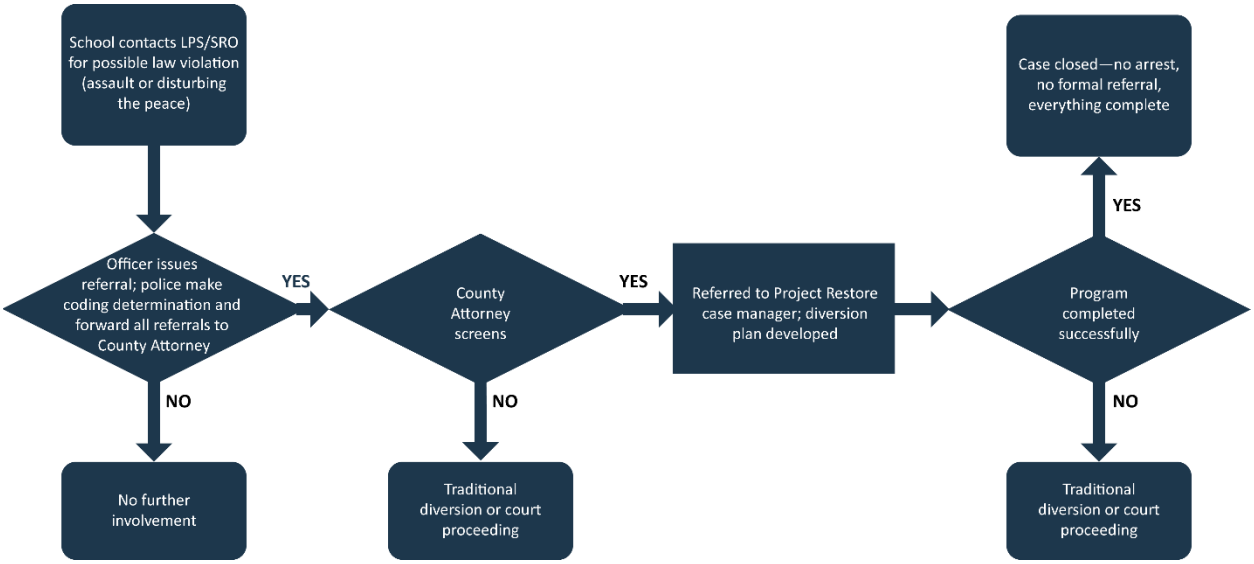
If youth successfully complete the program, they do not receive a criminal record, and the case is closed. If participation is declined or youth do not complete the program successfully, the case returns to the juvenile justice system.

Figure 2. REWiND referral and screening process



Source: Garcia, *REWiND* (see note 10).

Figure 3. Project Restore referral and screening process



Source: Assistant Chief Jason Stille, *Reducing Youth Disproportionality through a Restorative Justice Approach*, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/LincolnYouth.pdf.

Record retention

Project Restore's record retention protocols are as follows:

- If the youth was eligible for and successfully completed the program, LPD maintains an automatically sealed record of the ticket with the assigned case number, noting that they completed the program, which can only be released with a court order.
- HS maintains an internal record of whether youth completed the program or not.
- The County Attorney's Office does not enter case information into their case management system. In the files they receive from HS, they can see only whether a youth has participated in the program previously, which makes them ineligible to participate again. However, it does not make them ineligible for other diversion programs.

Funding

REWiND

Since shifting to pre-file deflection in 2023, REWiND has received annual funding from the Boulder County Opioid Abatement Region, which funds substance misuse and behavioral health services, both components of REWiND.[35] (All states' opioid settlement funds and grant availability are collated and viewable on The Opioid Settlement Tracker.[36])

REWiND is also partly funded by program fees, with a sliding scale available for those who need financial assistance. The standard fee is $75 and covers all services, compared with traditional probation fees of $130 or more.

Project Restore

The program was primarily funded for the first 10 years through federal funds amounting to approximately $100,000 annually from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, awarded by the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Office of Violence Prevention.[37]

The county currently pays the prevention specialist's salary, evaluation costs, and other expenses directly. The Mediation Center receives support through grants from the Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution, awarded by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and previously by the Sherwood Foundation, to implement restorative justice initiatives.[38]

35. "Opioid Settlement Dollars Funding, 2023 Funded Agencies," Boulder County, accessed September 29, 2026, https://bouldercounty.gov/departments/community-services/strategic-initiatives/boulder-county-region-opioid-settlement-dollars/#1776732560263-45e3bb41-ceaf.
36. Christine Minhee, "The Everything Table," Opioid Settlement Tracker, last modified August 20, 2026, https://www.opioidsettlementtracker.com/everything.
37. Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program," Office of Justice Programs, last modified August 25, 2026, https://bja.ojp.gov/program/jag/overview.
38. Jenniver Blevins, *Project Restore Gives Youth a Second Chance* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Office of Dispute Resolution, 2017), https://nebraskajudicial.gov/programs-services/mediation-restorative-justice/odr-documents-resources; Nebraska Judicial Branch, "Office of Dispute Resolution Receives $1 Million Grant to Reduce Youth Involvement in Court System," press release, December 20, 2017, https://nebraskajudicial.gov/administration/news/office-dispute-resolution-receives-1-million-grant-reduce-youth-involvement-court-system; Nebraska Judicial Branch, "Office of Dispute Resolution Awarded $1M Grant from OJJDP for Juvenile Justice System Reform Initiative," press release, November 9, 2021, https://nebraskajudicial.gov/administration/news/office-dispute-resolution-awarded-1m-grant-ojjdp-juvenile-justice-system-reform-initiative.

Measurable Achievements

REWiND

- **Reduction in youth arrests and summonses.** Between 2019 (post-file deflection) and 2025 (pre-file deflection), school-related arrests and summonses dropped more than 80 percent.
- **Reduction in municipal court caseloads.** Juvenile court cases decreased by more than 90 percent, and supervised probation cases dropped by about 80 percent (on track for 99 percent in 2025).
- **Decreased recidivism rates.** Recidivism dropped by about 10 percentage points to 16 percent in 2024 (down from nearly 26 percent in late 2022). For youth receiving restorative justice interventions, recidivism dropped to as low as 14 percent.
- **Substantial cost savings.** The program diverts youth into interventions costing between $1,500 and $39,000 annually per youth, compared to the state cost of approximately $132,000 per youth annually for juvenile incarceration.
- **Broad statewide and national recognition.** REWiND was selected as a state benchmark by Colorado legislators and highlighted by the NAACP, state legislators, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Denver DA's Office, and the National Center for Youth Law.

Project Restore

Before developing Project Restore, stakeholders formed a partnership with Georgetown University's Center for Youth Justice. Since the program's launch, County Human Services has contracted with the center to evaluate project outcomes for $140,000 annually.

Their evaluation of data from 2018 through 2025 found the following:

- **High acceptance and completion rate.** Nearly 68 percent of youth referred were accepted into the program (increased to 100 percent in 2025), and almost 96 percent successfully finished the program.
- **Recidivism reduction.** From referral to Restore (as early as age 11) until aging out of the system at 18, youth who completed the program were nearly 24 percent less likely than their peers to receive another LPD referral and about 27.8 percent less likely to face a subsequent county attorney filing.
- **Significant reduction in case processing time.** Case processing now takes, on average, two months from the offense date to program completion and case resolution. Previously, HS took up to nine months to contact youth and families and begin services.

Overcoming Challenges

REWiND

Dismantling silos for equity and holistic care

Challenge

Despite a long history of collaboration, silos existed both within LDPS and between it and its partners, leading to inconsistencies in which youth were referred to post-file diversion and which were referred to restorative justice programs.

Solutions

- LPD transitioned REWiND to pre-file diversion rather than post-file and combined it with the existing restorative justice model.
- Department maintained officers' discretion to issue warnings so that minor incidents are not unnecessarily funneled into formal program pipelines.
- City leadership issued clear directives on accountability, ownership, and active collaboration, calling for committed organization liaisons.
- Partners committed to a shared goal and working through perspective differences to achieve it.

Results

- The program increased equity in youth deflection referrals by giving law enforcement, including SROs, a simplified decision-making protocol and clear eligibility standards.
- It also led to holistic youth and family interventions through coordination among partners and community-based organizations for referral screening, assessments, and services.

Project Restore

Parent, youth, victim, and school participation

Challenge

The school district and stakeholders had concerns that SROs were the system component driving the "school-to-prison pipeline."

Solution

The department publicized objective data showing that the SROs were responding equitably to the calls they received. So the solution needed to be two-fold: (1) creating clear guidelines on which issues school administration handles and which it refers to police and (2) developing an alternative to police issuing tickets.

Result

Clear communication shifted community and school district perceptions and established SROs as supportive, protective figures in the school ecosystem.

Challenge

Early on, many parents of minority youth declined voluntary participation in Project Restore, opting instead for traditional court processing because of a lack of trust in government-led initiatives.

Solution

The department partnered with trusted, culturally rooted community organizations to serve as the primary contact and explain program options and benefits to families.

Result

This partnership drastically increased family buy-in and program participation.

Challenge

From 2018 to 2024, an average of only 63 percent of program participants completed the program.

Solution

The department adopted modern communication tools (e.g., Snapchat) to engage with youth and parents and an app-based incentive system to maintain youth engagement.

Result

All but one youth completed the program in 2025.

Exclusions unintentionally harmed equity goals

Challenge

Young people with prior criminal history are ineligible to participate, which initially had a disproportionate impact on minority youth.

Solution

In 2025, the program lowered the eligible age to 12 to enable earlier intervention.

Result

In 2025, 100 percent of referred youth were accepted, compared with an average of 68 percent for the years 2018 to 2024.

Timeline considerations

Challenge

The goal is to get youth back in school as quickly as possible. Once the offender returns to school following suspension, the school must keep the youth and the victim separated until the resolution is complete. Previously, youth referrals to the Mediation Center took weeks.

Solution

Project Restore referrals are walked from HS to the deputy chief county attorney within 24 hours, connecting youth to the program within a week and completing the restorative resolution in 1–2 weeks.

Result

The fast-tracked 1- to 2-week mediation window provides schools with an immediate safety plan structure, allowing students to reintegrate safely without long-term separation or expulsion.

Pre-File Deflection Programs: Takeaways and Implementation Steps

Key takeaways

1. **Address root causes early without formal system entry**
    - Intercept youth at the initial point of law enforcement contact before official criminal filing occurs.
    - Use standardized, validated risk/needs assessments (such as CANS, ARNA, or YLS/CMI) to deliver tailored services—including restorative justice circles, counseling, substance use education, and family support—that address behavioral root causes.
2. **Reduce recidivism**
    - REWiND reduced youth recidivism to 16 percent (and down to 14 percent for restorative justice participants) compared to about 26 percent under post-file diversion. Lincoln's Project Restore participants who completed the program were 24 percent less likely to receive a repeat police referral and about 28 percent less likely to face court filings.
3. **Promote racial equity and reduce disparities**
    - Minority and underserved youth were historically disproportionately referred to law enforcement for low-level school-related incidents (e.g., simple assaults, disturbing the peace), resulting in racial disparities in court system entry.
    - Establishing single points of entry, clear objective eligibility matrices, and lower entry ages (down to 11–12) and partnering with culturally rooted nonprofits to engage skeptical families removed barriers to participation.

Actionable implementation steps

Phase 1. Identify issue, collaboration and operational frameworks

1. **Analyze data and establish baselines.** Collect and analyze data on calls for service, citations, arrests, referrals for diversion or other programs, any disparities in system entry or service provision by demographic, or other factors—ideally in partnership with academic researchers or evaluators—to verify the problem, determine its scope, and establish a baseline.
2. **Form a steering committee.** Convene executive leadership across key stakeholder entities—police/SRO command staff, school district administrators, county/city prosecutors, youth/human services, juvenile probation, and community organizations.
3. **Draft inter-agency MOUs.** Formalize entities' operational roles in signed memoranda of understanding (MOU), for example:
    - **Police/SROs.** Issue program referrals instead of filing for criminal charges.
    - **Prosecution or screening team.** Assess youth and case eligibility for program acceptance.
    - **Service providers and community organizations.** Provide interventions, such as restorative justice, counseling, substance use education, and family support.
4. **Establish eligibility criteria.** Determine qualified age range and define explicit, objective criteria:
    - **Eligible offenses.** e.g., Simple assault, disturbing the peace, school fights, minor theft, trespassing, vandalism, alcohol or substance possession, and select nonmenacing felony charges (e.g., high-dollar property damage or car break-ins).
    - **Disqualifiers.** e.g., Mandatory arrest offenses (domestic violence, sex crimes), possession of a firearm, active threats to safety, active county probation, or a "three-strikes" program limit.

Phase 2. Workflow and infrastructure development

5. **Create referral routing processes.** Establish protocols for prompt participant referral handoffs from law enforcement to the eligibility decision-maker, case manager, and intervention providers.
6. **Build information firewalls.** Establish strict information-sharing and record protocols. Tickets and records remain sealed from criminal intelligence databases unless youth are ineligible for or do not complete the program or record release is court-ordered.
7. **Train sworn personnel.** Train patrol officers and SROs on benefits of pre-file program, standardized eligibility criteria, and referral processes.

Phase 3. Launch and evaluation

8. **Engage credible messengers.** Partner with trusted neighborhood nonprofits (e.g., local cultural centers) to conduct initial family outreach, addressing skepticism or lack of trust in government-led initiatives.
9. **Partner with researchers.** Contract with an independent university or research entity from day one to measure pre- vs. post-recidivism, completion rates, referral turnaround times, and cost savings.

Ongoing. Sustainability and evolution

10. **Secure sustainable funding.** Present objective outcome data to possible funders to transition from initial limited funding into multi-source sustainable funding (e.g., federal, state, county, municipal, foundation grants).
11. **Continuous evolution.** Maintain flexibility so the program can adapt to data outcomes, community feedback, and emerging trends, ensuring it continues to meet the jurisdiction's needs.

Gang Prevention and Intervention Strategy

All agencies highlighted in this report presented innovative strategies to proactively address youth crime at PERF's June 10, 2025, meeting. PERF also visited the Lincoln (Nebraska) Police Department (LPD) in person from September 1 to 2, 2026, to get a more comprehensive look at its programs, including Tipping Point.

Tipping Point is an innovative youth crime prevention and intervention strategy embedded directly with the department's Gang Unit. In close partnership with Lincoln Public Schools (LPS), the program deploys nonsworn prevention and intervention specialists to provide tailored, direct mentorship to at-risk and actively gang-involved youth in middle and high schools.

In the 11 years it has been operating, the program has had a notable impact on disrupting the youth-gang pipeline. In 2015, youth aged 14–23 accounted for 41 percent of Lincoln's total documented gang population; by 2026, this combined age proportion had dropped to 13 percent.[39]

The Issue

Most of Lancaster County, Nebraska, is rural; Lincoln is the county's most populous city, with approximately 300,000 residents and around 42,000 K-12 students.[40] Although the city is small, it faces the same challenges as metropolitan areas: youth involvement in carjacking, gangs, and violent crime—just on a lesser scale. Youth gangs are largely localized in neighborhoods and schools; however, they are influenced by national gangs. In addition, social media trends and "beef" can escalate to in-person violence.

Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, lack of family support, and family involvement in gangs contribute to some youth in the community being exposed to gangs as early as 3rd to 6th grade. LPD has found that group/gang mindset and activity begin to rise in late elementary and middle school. In 2015, young people aged 14–23 represented approximately 41 percent of Lincoln's documented gang population (with ages 14–18 constituting 8 percent and ages 19–23 constituting 33 percent). Youth aged 14–18 who are gang-involved are likely to enter pathways to involvement in these later years and beyond.

Opportunities for prevention and intervention for these at-risk youth have been and continue to be hindered because they are frequently removed from school and prosocial outlets, such as community sports and centers, because of behavioral issues, lack of parental support, and home responsibilities.

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39. Jeffrey Peterson, Crime Analysis Unit Manager, testimony prepared for the Appropriations Committee of the State Legislature, Lincoln, Nebraska, February 11, 2026.

40. U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Lincoln City, Nebraska," accessed September 28, 2026, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lincolncitynebraska; U.S. News & Education, "Lincoln Public Schools," K–12 School Districts, accessed September 28, 2026, https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/nebraska/districts/lincoln-public-schools-102918.

The Solution

In 2015, LPD Lieutenant Jeff Sorensen (formerly a sergeant) launched Tipping Point as a prevention and intervention program embedded with the Gang Unit. The program's goals, which remain in place today, are as follows:

- Providing youth with individual mentorship
- Building partnerships in the school system
- Identifying the specific needs of the child to assist in their success
- Complementing existing community resources that may be unknown or inaccessible to the youth being served

The program's primary staff are two nonsworn prevention and intervention specialists who mentor youth referred by district schools and Lincoln City/Lancaster County Human Services. The specialists mentor youth at schools, at alternative education centers, and in mentees' homes. Participation is voluntary and requires agreement from the youth and guardian. One of the prevention specialists was the first hire in 2015 and focuses on youth identified as at-risk (example indicators—on student lunch, drug use, gang nexus in their house or neighborhood) but not yet getting into trouble. This specialist mentors young people informally, mostly conducting biweekly group sessions and occasionally mentoring one on one.

In 2024, the LPD hired a second intervention specialist with funding support from the Lincoln Public School District. They work with young people who are actively gang-involved and, in many cases, who have already gotten into trouble. Some of these youth may have been suspended or expelled from school, be on probation, or be transitioning from detention or incarceration. This specialist provides them with up to four hours per week of one-on-one mentorship.

Program Structure

Tipping Point was initially kept partially separate from other police work because of confidentiality concerns. However, LPD found that Tipping Point specialists operate far more effectively when fully embedded in the Gang Unit and reporting to the sergeant, when clear information-sharing guidelines are in place.

Intra-Agency Information-Sharing

To enable interventions, officers may share information with specialists about youth identified as gang-affiliated but not yet gang-involved, as well as about those repeatedly involved in calls for service. However, they do not share case intelligence.

To maintain the youths' trust, specialists do not share mentees' information with Gang Unit officers except when a youth is involved in violence or poses safety threats. From the start, they inform youth that they must report any disclosures of abuse, intentions to harm themselves or others, or criminal activity, and they will notify them when they report such disclosures.

Specialists store data and case information on a server separate from the police department's. They provide data only to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice and will input it in real time for Nebraska State University evaluation as the planned study launches.

Everyone involved recognizes that, while the program's goals are violence prevention and intervention, suppression is also a possibility. Lieutenant Sorensen says suppression is "the end of the conveyor belt if prevention and intervention fail."

Staff Hiring and Policies

The prevention specialist and Lieutenant Sorensen, with support from the chief, developed trust with Human Resources (HR) and advocated changes to the usual hiring process for specialist roles. HR policies often disqualified candidates who didn't meet certain education or career criteria or who didn't score highest on assessments.

To address this difficulty, the lieutenant and specialist interviewed every applicant to identify and hire a specialist who would meet the position's specific skill set, which is not quantifiable or a set list of qualifications. Lived experience is extremely beneficial, although not essential. Tipping Point staff and partners said the minimum qualifications, which can be elicited through an interview, are as follows:

- Goal-aligned. Understanding the goal is to reduce violence through prevention and intervention, not locking youth up.
- Open-minded to a new approach. Specifically look for people who are not seeking to operate in systems like their past experience, e.g., social work, probation, juvenile detention.
- Culturally competent.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills.

Specialists must comply with all policies and written directives applicable to LPD employees and civilian staff. To maintain youth safety and limit liability exposure, specialists meet mentees in public places, e.g., schools, alternative education centers, and homes with guardians present.

Partnerships

At the outset, LPD formed a committee with social service organizations to involve them and gather their input. The initial committee shrank as some organizations weren't aligned on how to meet the goal or didn't want to dedicate resources to the program. However, those that remained have become strong collaborative partners, and Tipping Point has strong multi-agency involvement across a range of stakeholders:

- Public school system. Primary referral provider; site for mentorship, presentations, groups, etc.
- County Human Services. Sometimes refers youth to the program
- Alternative education center. For youth in transition back to school; site for classroom presentations and mentor sessions

- Culturally specific community centers. Sites for meeting kids where they are, group meetings, etc.
- Social service programs. Provide support for youth and their families
- Local sports programs and other group programs. Prosocial activities to insulate against group/gang affiliation
- Juvenile probation and courts. The intervention specialist supports youth in these settings

Funding

Tipping Point has been grant-funded since its inception in 2015 through annual awards from the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Office of Violence Prevention, which are federally funded by the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program.[41] In 2024, this grant funding was supplemented by direct funding from the LPS system.

LPD command staff are currently reallocating funds so the department's general operating budget can cover the specialists, reducing dependence on grant funding and increasing sustainability.

Overcoming Challenges

Building institutional presence in schools

Challenge

Initially, the LPS system was hesitant to allow personnel from a gang unit inside schools because of concerns about whether their presence would lead to increased detention of kids. They also worried about a gang-focused program having implications surrounding gang terminology, stigma, and dynamics.

Solutions

- The prevention specialist asked principals directly to refer their most challenging students and demonstrated success, which established school- and district-level leadership buy-in.
- LPD messaging was that the goal of the program is to mentor and support youth, not lock them up.
- The prevention specialist never uses the term "gang" with schools, youth, or families, as this term is irrelevant to changing mindsets and behavior; if necessary, they will use the term "group." The intervention specialist will use the word "gang," as the youth they work with are already gang-involved.

41. Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program" (see note 37).

Results

- Through sustained partnership, the school trust grew to the point where LPD's intervention and prevention specialists have permanent desks in the LPS district office and direct access in schools.
- In 2024, LPS began funding a full-time intervention specialist.

"I saw how kids reacted to [the specialist] when he left after classroom meetings; they were excited for him to come back. I also saw the benefit of having someone from LPD who could change the kids' perspective on the police. However, it's clear that he's not a police officer, and it helps that although LPD houses the program, it still operates separately."

— Ashley Dotson, LPS Coordinator

Developing trust and success with youth and families

Challenge

Youth and families have often already had bad experiences with these systems and need something new. Broader home-life dynamics affect youths' ability to succeed; mentorship alone is not enough.

Solutions

- Partner organizations introduce specialists to the kids and families.
- Beyond the referral process, the specialists do not talk to the kids about "police stuff" (e.g., not doing drugs, etc.)
- Meeting kids where they are—such as at school lunches, classroom presentations, and community center pick-up games—and providing ongoing support beyond traditional work hours.
- Referring families to services by addressing their needs and home-life dynamics to support youth's success.
- If a guardian does not want to engage with a specialist directly, but agrees to allow their child to participate, the specialist will work with the child at school or the community center.

Results

- The program serves more than 100 high-risk students per school year out of a total district size of around 42,000 kids.
- In 2026, the program has had more referrals from parents than in all previous years combined.
- Kids are self-recruiting; there are more interested kids than can be worked with, so schools must evaluate who is most in need and who is the best fit.
- A guardian has never declined their child's participation, and it is very rare that a child does.

- Participating youth have successfully re-enrolled into after-school programs from which they had previously been expelled.
- Specialists have assisted at-risk youth with job applications, résumé preparation, and securing summer employment.

Remaining challenge—closing service gaps for girls

Girls have been identified as increasingly involved in gang dynamics and disturbances. The program plans to secure dedicated resources and staff to support interventions for girls.

Measurable Achievements

Quantifying achievements to illustrate the program's successes, particularly for funders, has been challenging because the program is tailored to each child's specific needs, which does not easily translate into consistent data points. It's also been challenging to balance the demands of data reporting for funders and researchers while working with the many children identified.

"Success doesn't always look like a kid passing a class or a course having a 90 percent completion rate. It may be that a kid got off probation, or didn't escalate to shooting someone, or didn't become gang-involved after three generations of family involvement, or got a four-year degree."

— Matt Baker, Tipping Point Prevention Specialist

However, the program has shown promising results:

- **Youth arrest reduction.** Contributed to a **50 percent decrease in overall youth arrests** in Lincoln since 2015.
- **Significant demographic shift in gang entry.** There has been a sustained reduction in youth entry into gangs. When the program started in 2015, young people aged 14–23 represented 41 percent of the total documented gang population (with ages 14–18 constituting 8 percent and ages 19–23 constituting 33 percent). **By 2026, this combined proportion had fallen steadily to 13 percent (ages 14–18 to 5 percent and ages 19–23 to 8 percent).** See table 2 on page 42 for yearly data on gang member numbers in Lincoln, Nebraska.
- In contrast, **gang membership among individuals aged 29–38 grew** (i.e., ages 29–33 increased from 14 percent in 2015 to 24 percent in 2026), confirming the demographic shift is driven by reduced youth recruitment rather than an overall drop across all age levels.
- **Reduction in gang-related incident reports.** Gang-related incident reports based on person involvement declined overall from **1,365** in 2015 down to **697** in 2024, reflecting a broader trend of reduced youth gang activity.
- **Mentee graduation rate.** Participating youth achieved a **100 percent graduation rate** (20 out of 20 youth) with long-term mentorship from middle school through high school completion under the original prevention specialist.

Table 2. Gang membership in Lincoln by age, 2015–2026

	2015		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
14–18	86	8	56	5	51	4	54	4	39	3	36	3	30	2	38	3	34	3	64	5
19–23	351	33	299	24	236	19	226	18	195	15	180	13	164	13	144	11	122	10	91	8
24–28	303	28	428	34	393	31	392	31	366	27	351	26	298	23	275	20	217	19	215	18
29–33	146	14	198	16	167	20	267	21	332	25	360	27	382	29	291	29	312	27	288	24
34–38	75	7	126	10	159	12	159	12	192	14	193	14	186	14	221	16	217	19	237	20
39–43	36	3	56	5	78	6	78	6	102	8	105	8	118	9	139	10	124	11	135	11
44–48	26	3	36	3	37	3	37	3	41	3	48	4	53	2	61	5	64	6	79	7
49–53	14	1	19	2	24	2	24	2	30	2	31	1	29	1	33	2	28	2	24	2
54–58	13	1	16	1	14	1	14	1	17	1	17	1	16	1	21	2	15	1	16	1
59–63	5	1	10	1	11	1	11	1	13	1	12	1	16	1	13	1	10	1	11	1
64–68	5	1	5	0	6	1	6	1	7	1	8	0	9	0	9	1	9	1	10	1
69–73	0	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	6	0	4	0	5	0

Ages 14–18 and 19–23 continue to age out.
The percent column is based on the age group of the gang population for that year.

Source: Assistant Chief Jason Stille, *Reducing Youth Disproportionality through a Restorative Justice Approach*, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/LincolnYouth.pdf; Peterson, testimony prepared for the Appropriations Committee (see note 39).



Matt Baker, Prevention Specialist, receives the Mayor's Award of Excellence from Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird on April 14, 2025.

Source: Alexandros Barbosa-Rewinkel, "Lincoln Police Specialist Honored for Gang Prevention Efforts," KHGI Nebraska TV, last modified April 15, 2025, https://nebraska.tv/news/local/lincoln-police-specialist-honored-for-gang-prevention-efforts.

Gang Prevention and Intervention Strategy: Takeaways and Implementation Steps

Key takeaways

- **Early, proactive interventions.** This program engages youth early—starting in elementary or middle school before the high school transition—to build trust and address behavioral root causes before young people enter the justice system for gang involvement.
- **Significant public safety and educational impact.** The initiatives demonstrates measurable community outcomes, including a 50 percent reduction in youth arrests, a 100 percent high school graduation rate among long-term mentored youth, and a dramatic decline in youth gang recruitment (ages 14–23 gang share dropped from 41 percent to 13 percent).

Implementation steps

Phase 1. Identify issue and collaboration

1. **Analyze data and establish baselines.** Collect and analyze data (e.g., numbers of gang members disaggregated by age, gang-related incident reports)—ideally in partnership with academic researchers or evaluators—to verify the problem, determine its scope, and establish a baseline. Assess elected officials' and city leaders' sentiment and which strategies will work within the frameworks they can support.
2. **Identify existing resources.** Identify existing organizations and resources to prevent duplication of efforts, assess where these efforts can be supplemented or complemented, and partner with these initiatives.
3. **Establish steering committee.** Convene stakeholders from the police department (command staff, including from the Gang Unit or equivalent), school district (superintendent, alternative education center directors), and community-based organizations. Create MOUs outlining partner roles, referral processes, and liability parameters.
4. **Develop relationships and align goals (concurrent with #3).** Create mission, vision, and values messaging that clearly communicates the outcomes you aim to achieve and why (e.g., non–enforcement based early intervention to prevent youth involvement or escalation in gang activity; to reduce gang violence to improve school and public safety overall; or to assist each individual youth), to build trust and shift partner ideology where needed.

Phase 2. Hiring and program development

5. **Adapt hiring processes.** Partner with Human Resources to remove traditional mandatory qualifications, such as specific degrees or career backgrounds, when hiring prevention and intervention specialists. Conduct background checks to mitigate risks of gang

involvement. Interview every applicant and prioritize candidates whose goals align with the program's principles and who demonstrate cultural competence, strong interpersonal skills, and clear communication.

6. **Define priority inclusion and exclusion criteria.** Establish eligibility matrices based on youth needs and environmental and behavioral risks:

    - **Prevention.** Inclusion indicators—Early gang exposure through family or neighborhood, tag-along behavior, repeat school disruptions, or eligibility for free school lunch. Disqualifiers—gang involvement, school or criminal incidents, or presenting immediate unmanageable community safety threats.
    - **Intervention.** Inclusion criteria/indicators—gang-involved (affiliating with group name, wearing gang-associated colors)

    (*Note – avoid participation and outcome disproportionality by basing criteria on data, not assumptions, and use for intervention, not suppression efforts.)*

7. **Structure tiered service delivery.**

    - **Prevention tier.** Conduct bi-weekly individual or group mentoring for youth who are not yet justice- or gang-involved but exhibit risk factors.
    - **Intervention tier.** Allocate up to four hours per week of intensive face-to-face mentorship for actively gang-involved youth.

8. **Establish confidentiality and privacy firewalls.** Draft explicit information-sharing policies that maintain a strict "one-way firewall"—enabling law enforcement to pass safety context and referrals to nonsworn staff while completely protecting specialist case notes, mentoring logs, and youth disclosures from police intelligence databases or court filings.

    Youth will be made aware of exceptions for imminent safety risks or disclosure of abuse or criminal activity.

9. **Institutionalize safety and operational boundaries.** Establish clear operational guidelines for specialists:

    - Mandate that city vehicles and phones be used for all youth transportation and communication.
    - Require that 1-on-1 meetings take place in public spaces, e.g., school, education center, community center, park, or home with caregiver present.
    - Set transparent directives regarding mandatory child abuse reporting rules and reporting of criminal activity.

Phase 3. Launch

10. **Engage community organizations.** Partner with trusted community organizations (e.g., local cultural centers) to manage family introductions and supply auxiliary resources (clothing, sports and prosocial activity access, emergency family aid).
11. **Embed staff in target school facilities.** Secure classroom workshop time and co-located office desks for specialists within district offices, high-need middle and high schools, or both to enable direct access to at-risk youth.
12. **Deploy standardized data tracking.** Partner with researchers to develop quantitative metrics (e.g., school attendance, graduation rates, trends in youth aging out of gang involvement) and qualitative metrics (e.g., emotional resilience, improved engagement with teachers). Create a method for specialists to track their data in real time within their independent database.

Ongoing. Evolution and sustainability

13. **Transition to sustainable funding streams.** Leverage successful outcomes to apply for additional funding streams, and shift costs to municipal or police general operation budgets where possible for long-term stability.
14. **Evolve program continuously.** In response to data, feedback, and emerging trends, adapt the program to maintain effectiveness in addressing the jurisdiction and community's needs.

Tiered Intervention Approaches

Tiered prevention and intervention approaches offer a structured framework for juvenile justice by aligning support and supervision levels with a youth's specific risk profile and needs. By providing early intervention and diversion for first-time, lower-level offenses while reserving intensive monitoring for higher-risk, chronic offenders, these frameworks can reduce youth recidivism, prevent crime escalation, and make more efficient use of supervision resources.

The St. Petersburg (FL) Police Department's (SPPD) Second Chance program achieved a 68 percent non-recidivism rate among youth with first-time misdemeanor offenses in a study of 142 participants. Its Habitual Offender Monitoring Enforcement Program contributed to a 52 percent decrease in the number of chronic offenders under intensive supervision between 2024 and 2025.[42]

The SPPD implemented the following programs as part of a tiered intervention approach, based on Chief Anthony Holloway's belief that guiding youth and providing opportunities are effective crime-prevention strategies. He recognized that parental involvement is crucial to any intervention program's success and that families need comprehensive services to move beyond mere survival and to collaborate effectively with law enforcement.

The Issues

Youth awaiting trial often waited up to six months for a court date. During that time, they received neither support nor consequences. The lack of intervention emboldened many youth to commit additional crimes before their trial for the initial offense. As a result, youth with no prior charges accrued larger criminal records.

Lack of opportunities for youth and unaddressed broader family dynamics and needs also impact youth's ability to continue their education and avoid further justice system involvement. However, youth with multiple charges or prior criminal records are ineligible for standard diversion programs that could also provide support needed.

Most of these youth are not habitual offenders. Only a small segment of the total youth population are prolific re-offenders. For chronic offenders, traditional probation hours (9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday) and guardian schedules frequently leave them unmonitored. In addition, they often commit crimes across jurisdictions, making it difficult for a single law enforcement agency to track the youth's movements, crime patterns, and networks.

42. Holloway, *St. Petersburg Police Department Youth Engagement Programs* (see note 10).

The Solutions

First intervention tier—Second Chance

In 2015, as the first intervention tier, SPPD established Second Chance, an immediate diversion program for youth (aged 9–17) with no prior criminal record charged with a misdemeanor. If the youth admits wrongdoing and their parents or guardians agree, they enter the program within days instead of going to trial months later.

> *"The Second Chance program started because we thought we've all done something that could be considered a crime, such as underage drinking; we've just never been caught. So, we looked at how we could address misdemeanors and found we couldn't prevent them, but we could stop youth from waiting six months for trial and racking up charges in the meantime".*
>
> ***— Chief Anthony Holloway, St. Petersburg (FL) Police Department***

As restitution, the youth completes a workday at the St. Pete Youth Farm. They also immediately receive clinician or coach support to discuss the underlying causes of their behavior (e.g., home dynamics and food insecurity) and behavioral change. The city's Community Impact and Safety Liaison also provides individualized support to their family to address these broader dynamics.

An additional benefit of the program is that the youth will not later be hindered in applying for jobs by a criminal record, which can affect their ability to access the financial support necessary for success.

Second intervention tier—Forward Together

SPPD recognized a need to fill a gap in service provision for youth ineligible for traditional diversion programs because of prior charges, as well as for their families. In 2024, they built on Second Chance to implement the Forward Together program.

Through partnerships, the program provides the following comprehensive wraparound services:

- Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS). Mental health coaches who help youth of all demographics and their families navigate the system and access resources.[43]
- Police Athletic League. After-school and summer break tutoring.)
- Clearwater for Youth. Eliminates financial barriers to youth engagement in sports through scholarships, equipment and team expenses, and water safety classes.[44]
- County public schools. Tutoring before and after school, school credit recovery options, and mentoring.

43. "Lives Uplifted," Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services, accessed September 28, 2026, https://gulfcoastjfcs.org/.
44. "Join a Mission that Matters," Clearwater For Youth Pinellas, accessed September 28, 2026, https://cfypinellas.org/.

- Arts Conservatory for Teens. Four-week session that incorporates drama and sound therapy, yoga, creative technology, financial literacy, and family bonding dinners.[45]

Officers track youth milestones (counseling, school attendance, credit recovery) throughout the pre-trial period so they can present progress to judges to advocate for program discharge or diversion.

Third intervention tier—Habitual Offender Monitoring Enforcement (H.O.M.E.)

To address the limitations of traditional probation, caregiver monitoring, and cross-jurisdictional tracking, SPPD implemented Habitual Offender Monitoring Enforcement (H.O.M.E.) in 2016. It's a targeted intervention strategy that focuses on SPPD's highest-risk chronic youth offenders: those with five or more felonies who are subject to court-ordered home detention.

The keys to its effectiveness are as follows:

- **Countywide cross-jurisdictional agency collaboration.** The H.O.M.E. Task Force operates within the broader Pinellas County RADAR (Response Against Delinquency and Recidivism) framework and comprises all 13 county police departments, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO), 25 county municipalities, and the regional probation program. The task force meets monthly to review each youth's status and maintain mutual accountability for the strategy's results. The PCSO deputizes officers, enabling them to cross municipal boundaries to track down youth.
- **Comprehensive services.** Like all SPPD's other youth intervention programs, it provides wraparound support services to help youth transition out of the system. The Juvenile Welfare Board's Unit for Personal Enrichment through Mental Health Services provides education support, assistance accessing housing and financial resources, enrollment in prosocial activities, and caregiver education and support.[46]
- **GPS and physical location verification.** Youth location is monitored via a GPS ankle monitor, complemented by frequent, unannounced home visits (several times a week or multiple times in a single night).
- **24/7/365 response and surveillance.** Officers actively search for youth if they are not at home during check-in or if their monitor alerts. Dedicated officers and crime analysts also provide nonstop surveillance support.

45. "Inspiring Change through Arts Education," Arts Conservatory for Teens, accessed September 28, 2026, https://www.artsconservatoryforteens.org/.
46. PCSO (Pinellas County Sheriff's Office), *H.O.M.E. Navigator Annual Recidivism Report July 1, 2018–June 30, 2019*, presentation at Juvenile Welfare Board meeting, Pinellas County, FL, September 23, 2019, https://www.jwbpinellas.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/V-Habitual-Offender-Monitoring-Enforcement-Unit-and-Early-Childhood-Court-Presentation.pdf.

Measurable Achievements

All three intervention programs significantly reduced recidivism and youth participants' risk levels through comprehensive tiered support and accountability structures.

- **Reduced recidivism.** Intervention is immediate, so youth no longer accumulate new charges while awaiting consequences or a trial. An analysis of 142 youth enrolled in Second Chance between 2019 and 2021 found that 68 percent did not reoffend. These recidivism rates are lower than those for youth not enrolled in the program. Two years into Forward Together, the chief says 60 percent of participants aren't committing new offenses.[47]
- **Decreased monitoring and supervision.** The number of youth needing monitoring and supervision through H.O.M.E. decreased across all types; see table 3 for the full data on reductions by monitoring type. The number of youth offenders under intensive supervision was approximately 52 percent lower between 2024 and 2025, while the number subject to both supervision and RADAR monitoring decreased by 100 percent.
- **Improved education.** 77 percent of youth in the H.O.M.E. program with educational support needs were assisted and showed improvement through GED completion, earned school credits, or improved school attendance.[48]
- **Increased family stability.** 91 percent of families with a child in the H.O.M.E. program who had housing needs achieved stable housing with support. Every family needing increased support or caregiver involvement received assistance to achieve these goals. They received help with bills, accessed transportation for court appearances, became involved in their child's education, and implemented House Rules and Behavior expectations.[49]

Table 3. H.O.M.E. measurable outcomes, 2024–2025

Juvenile statistics	2024	2025
Intensive supervision	22	21
RADAR	246	240
Both supervision and RADAR	17	0
Electronic monitors	60	58
Curfew or compliance checks	1,415	1,055

Source: Holloway, *St. Petersburg Police Department Youth Engagement Programs* (see note 10).

47 . Holloway, St. Petersburg Police Department Youth Engagement Programs (see note 10), Tyler O'Neill, "St. Petersburg Police Chief Says Programs Have Kept Youth Crime Down," Spectrum Bay News 9, last modified February 22, 2026, https://baynews9.com/fl/tampa/news/2026/02/22/young-influencer-felony-prevention-program.

48 . PCSO, *H.O.M.E. Navigator Annual Recidivism Report* (see note 46).

49 . PCSO, *H.O.M.E. Navigator Annual Recidivism Report* (see note 46).

Funding

Forward Together won the city's $1 million Innovative Equity Project by resident vote, which provided the initial funding in 2024.[50] The following year, the city increased funding to $1.5 million, and JFCS provided additional grant support.

Tiered Intervention Approach: Takeaways and Implementation Steps

Key takeaways

- **Intervene early and prevent escalation.** Accountability and service provision must reach youth early before their behavior escalates.
- **Provide comprehensive family services.** Youth are significantly more likely to reoffend if their home and family life are in crisis. Wraparound support provides vital stability for families living in "survival mode" who otherwise cannot actively contribute to the support youth need to succeed in both voluntary and mandated programs.

  Engage siblings in prevention efforts by offering them positive opportunities to prevent multi-generational justice system involvement.

- **Prioritize accessibility.** Free, positive activities are essential and need transportation supplied to remain truly accessible.
- **Apply trauma-informed principles.** Young people who commit crimes have frequently experienced trauma; trauma-informed principles should be incorporated into programming, services, and mentorship.

Actionable implementation steps

Phase 1. Multi-agency alignment and planning

1. **Define eligibility criteria.**
    - 1st tier. Youth (ages 9–17) with first-time misdemeanor offenses and no prior record.
    - 2nd tier. Youth (ages 12–17) with nonviolent prior charges who are no longer eligible for standard diversion.
    - 3rd tier. High-risk, chronic offenders with a specific number of felonies (e.g., 5+), subject to court-ordered home detention.

50 . Ashley Morales, "City Votes to Fund Youth Crime Prevention Program," St. Pete Catalyst, last modified July 17, 2024, https://stpetecatalyst.com/city-votes-to-fund-youth-crime-prevention-program/.

2. **Build partner networks.** Partner with community organizations (e.g., mental health services, prosocial activity centers), school districts, youth services, and city entities to provide services to youth across all program tiers and to their families.
    - 1st tier program.: Develop collaborations with local organizations so youth can complete community service hours as restitution.
    - 3rd tier program. Convene countywide law enforcement partners to establish monthly review meetings and execute deputization agreements allowing officers to cross municipal boundaries.
3. **Secure funding.** Pursue funding through city allocations, federal and state grants, and nonprofit and foundation grants to maintain a diversified budget.

Phase 2. Protocol development and program preparation

4. **Define outcome measures.** Define how success will be measured (e.g., reduced recidivism, decrease in number of youth under court-ordered home detention) and set up a data collection system.
5. **Establish policy and rapid referral system (*1st tier*).** Establish policies and protocols for officers to check databases and route eligible misdemeanor cases to diversion within days. Include intake screening that requires youth admission of wrongdoing and caregiver consent to initiate coaching and service provision.
6. **Build 24/7 monitoring and surveillance team (*3rd tier*).** Assign dedicated officers and crime analysts to operate continuous GPS ankle monitoring and conduct unannounced physical check-ins (several times weekly or multiple times per night).

Phase 3. Service delivery and sustainability

7. **Provide youth and family support.** Employ clinicians and coaches to identify underlying home dynamics, trauma, or food insecurity during sessions with youth and families.
8. **Advocate for youth in the judicial process (*2nd tier*).** Track youth milestones (counseling, school attendance, credit recovery) throughout the pre-trial period so officers can present progress to judges to advocate for program discharge or diversion.
9. **Use data for adaptation and sustainability (ongoing).** Gather data, feedback, and information on emerging trends so the programs can be responsive and adjust to current needs. Leverage programs' success to advocate for additional funding.

Intelligence-Led Targeted Prevention Strategy

As programs in this report demonstrate, youth engagement and pre-deflection can meaningfully reduce youth recidivism and crime rates. However, suppression and enforcement strategies still have a place in stopping a crime before it occurs and in holding youth accountable for serious offenses.

Shootings involving youth at parties have increasingly made national news in the years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.[51] Police have traced the origins of some of these parties, which frequently escalate to violence, to party promoters and mass invitations to "instant parties" sent through chat apps to random users.[52] Strategies like the Phoenix (AZ) Police Department's Youth Violence Prevention Program proactively use intelligence to identify hosts and locations and break up parties before they begin or escalate.

The Issue

Community context

Phoenix is the state capital and largest city in Arizona, with 1.7 million residents in a land area of 518 square miles.[53] Its population is estimated to be 46.4 percent White, 7.7 percent Black, 2.5 percent American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN), 4.8 percent Asian, and 11.8 percent some other race; the other 26.8 percent of the population—approximately 450,000 people—identify as being of more than one race. Across all races, the city is 42.7 percent Hispanic or Latino, more than twice the national average of 20.0 percent. Of the approximately 163,000 Phoenix households with children under 18, 36.8 percent are headed by single parents (27.5 percent by single mothers) or by no adults at all—also higher than the national average of 31.4 percent (22.5 percent single mothers). The same share of people in Phoenix (12.0 percent) as nationwide (12.1 percent) live in poverty, but more (16.6 percent) of Phoenix's poor people are children than the

51. Michael Tarm, "Analysis: Mix of Impulsivity, Access to Guns Contribute to Shootings by American Teens," PBS NewsHour, last modified June 24, 2023, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/analysis-mix-of-impulsivity-access-to-guns-contribute-to-shootings-by-american-teens.
52. Ryan Whalen, "Violent Fourth of July Overnight in City of Buffalo," Spectrum News 1,last modified July 5, 2026, https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/buffalo/news/2026/07/05/violent-fourth-of-july-overnight-in-city-of-buffalo; CNN, "Police: 7 Teenagers Shot at Texas 'Instant House Party' Organized on Snapchat," *WBAL-TV 11*, August 18, 2019, https://www.wbaltv.com/article/police-7-teenagers-shot-at-texas-instant-house-party-organized-on-snapchat/28744003.
53. "Population and Demographics," City of Phoenix, accessed September 29, 2026, https://www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/pdd/growth-infrastructure/city-wide-census-data.html; Commander David Saflar, *Phoenix PD Youth Violence Reduction Program*, presentation given at PERF meeting on Innovative Strategies to Proactively Address Youth Crime, Hanover, MD, June 10, 2025.

national average (15.5 percent). More than one-third (36.3 percent) of Phoenix residents speak a language other than English at home, with 13.3 percent speaking English less than "very well"—both figures higher than the national average (23.0 percent and 9.0 percent, respectively).[54]

The Phoenix Police Department, authorized for 3,125 sworn officers, currently employs 2,514.

Identified problems

Phoenix has long had a problem with house parties attracting large numbers of young people and becoming unruly. Some of the situations at issue are ordinary parties—held in teenagers' homes with the knowledge and approval of their parents—that get out of hand. Many more of the uncontrolled events are hosted by promoters; advertised online; and held in vacant houses, warehouses, or short-term rentals like VRBO or Airbnb. But no matter who is responsible for organizing such an event, the city notes that they "often lead to excessive noise and traffic, obstruction of public streets, public drunkenness, underage drinking, fights, and littering, among other problems."[55] The city code was revised in 2020 to establish a schedule of financial liabilities for responsible individuals hosting parties to which the police respond and find dangerous situations,[56] but nevertheless—as gatherings resumed around 2021, following the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic—the problem persisted.

The largest parties are concentrated in the troubled and relatively impoverished Maryvale/Estrella precinct in the southwest area of Phoenix,[57] which represents about 15 percent of the city's area; it is home to about 18 percent of its residents and handled by about 8 percent of the police department's sworn officers, but it is responsible for about 20 percent of the radio calls the police department receives.[58] In addition to the loud music, traffic disruption, public disturbance, potential underage drinking, littering, vandalism, and other complaints, as the city website noted, many parties end in serious violence.

54. American Community Survey, "2024: ACS 1-Year Estimates Selected Population Profiles: Phoenix city, Arizona; United States," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed September 29, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2024.S0201?q=phoenix&t=-01:-02:001:400:Age+and+Sex:Race+and+Ethnicity&g=010XX00US.
55. "Event/Loud Party Ordinance FAQ," City of Phoenix, accessed September 29, 2026, https://www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/police/community-resources/laws-ordinances/loud-party-faq.html.
56. "Recovery of Costs at Events Requiring Response by Police," Phoenix City Code ORD. NO. G-6674, § 1 (2020), https://phoenix.municipal.codes/CC/2-22.
57. William Pitts, "Maryvale Used To Be the Place to Be. Then Everything Changed," NBC12News, last modified September 30, 2022, https://www.12news.com/article/money/economy/boomtown-2040/maryvale-used-to-be-the-place-to-live-then-everything-changed/75-73a4d5c5-bdb1-4e89-a278-fecb3d492fa1.
58. Maryvale Precinct 76 square miles, city of Phoenix 518 square miles (76/518=0.147); Maryvale Precinct approx. 305,000 residents, city of Phoenix approx. 1.7M residents (305,000/1,700,000=0.179); Maryvale Precinct 198 officers assigned, Phoenix PD 2,514 officers (198/2,514=0.078); "Maryvale takes approx. 20% of the radio calls for the city." Saflar, *Phoenix PD Youth Violence Reduction Program* (see note 53).

On October 28, 2023, the matter of out-of-control youth parties rose to greater prominence in local affairs when a 16-year-old was beaten to death outside a Halloween party in Queen Creek, 35 miles southeast of downtown Phoenix.[59] And beyond melee fighting, there are also shootings; in the spring of 2024, six months after the Queen Creek murder, the Phoenix Police Department was responding to two to three party-related shootings each weekend.

The Solution

The program

Politicians and police executives from around the area held multijurisdictional town hall meetings to discuss the issue of youth violence in their various communities and work to develop a solution. Stakeholders included police departments; city and county prosecutors' offices; juvenile court personnel; elected leaders such as city council members; community leaders such as clergy; and city employees representing departments like Zoning, Neighborhood Services, and Child & Family Resources. Together they agreed that the traditional method of breaking up a loud party with underage drinking—surround it and make as many arrests as necessary—is no longer practical, nor is it desirable.

Under the Youth Violence Prevention Program, it still falls to the police department to respond to large parties and restore order, but they field a dedicated squad that does so with five objectives in mind:

- **Limit** potential for injuries, personal crimes, and property crimes, as well as number of potential victims, by shutting down large parties that impact neighborhoods.
- **Enforce** felony crimes, such as random gunfire, drug-related crimes, vehicle theft, and warrant violations.
- **Leverage** available technology to anticipate events and make pre-emptive contact.
- **Focus** attention on problems that can be solved with current staffing levels. Low staffing levels and subsequent safety concerns may preclude detaining large groups for liquor enforcement alone.
- **Follow up** with property owners to prevent further incidents.[60]

59. "Queen Creek Police Department Investigating Death of Teen," Arizona Independent News Network, last modified November 1, 2023, https://arizonadailyindependent.com/2023/11/01/queen-creek-police-department-investigating-death-of-teen/; Brent Corrado, "Preston Lord's Cause of Death Ruled a Homicide by Medical Examiner," Fox10 Phoenix, last modified February 15, 2024, https://www.fox10phoenix.com/news/preston-lord-cause-of-death-ruled-homicide; Alexis Cortez and David Baker, "Judge Sets Trial Date for Defendant in Preston Lord's Death," Arizona's Family, last modified September 15, 2026, https://www.azfamily.com/2026/09/16/judge-sets-trial-date-defendant-preston-lords-death/.
60. Saflar, *Phoenix PD Youth Violence Reduction Program* (see note 53).

Methodology

The squad's methodology is preventive rather than reactive. Previously, said Assistant Chief Jeffrey Benza in an interview with PERF, when neighbors called about a party, the normal practice (even after the old "surround it with 80 cops" days) was that the communications department would broadcast the incident and a patrol car would respond when one became available. So by the time officers arrived, a party that was already loud or wild enough to prompt someone to call the police to help settle it down might have escalated even further—and violence had often already taken place. "That didn't stop the shootings," Benza noted. Now, the squad works to anticipate large, disruptive parties and address the problems that often occur as a result of them. They scout social media sites and public bulletin boards during the week for flyers advertising and posts discussing weekend parties so they have time to try to contact the hosts and determine whether, for example, they own or are renting the property where the party will be taking place. Benza described how they establish a visible presence in the area before the party begins to discourage the kind of behavior that will lead to a greater response including arrests later. And because it's a dedicated party interdiction squad, they come to know not just the hosts and the primary locations but also many of the people who attend a lot of the same parties and where the parties often relocate after the police initially break them up. Officers have also found, as they handle more and more events, that they begin to recognize many of the partygoers at drag races and street takeovers,[61] which are also that squad's responsibility.

Staffing, training, and equipment

The dedicated party interdiction squad necessarily works weekend nights. For that reason, they have had their greatest success recruiting from the third shift: officers who were already accustomed to overnight work and for whom joining the squad did not represent an unpleasant change in schedule. This squad became those officers' regular assignment, so it was not necessary to budget for a significant amount of overtime.

What was necessary was training. Because the dedicated squad is a new concept, the officers working on it come to it with different backgrounds and areas of expertise—especially if they've been recruited directly from their probationary period out of the academy. This squad and the communities it serves benefit from its taking a proactive approach to the problem it was established to solve, unlike some other squads that really cannot deploy until a crime has actually been committed. By training with various other specialized units (see sidebar), the dedicated officers can be prepared to respond much more quickly than ordinary patrol officers could in the past when a party gets out of control or descends into violence—and often their presence may keep the party from reaching that point in the first place.

61 . PERF has written about takeovers in recent publications; PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), "Street Takeovers," *The Current State of Traffic Enforcement*, Critical Issues in Policing Series (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), 57–64, https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Traffic.pdf; Wexler, "How Police are Addressing Juvenile Takeovers" (see note 4).

A specialized squad also needs specialized equipment. To deter raucous behavior at a neighborhood party, it can be valuable to station a couple of marked police cars in visible locations on partygoers' approach to their destination; but squad members also have unmarked cars for use when necessary. Drones and automatic license plate readers (LPR) can help them track stolen or suspect vehicles. They have access to department-issued smart phones for social media searches to keep track of where parties are or where they are going; they also have a dedicated channel so Dispatch can keep their radio traffic separate from the rest of the department's and to avoid distracting them with other calls.

Training and partnerships with other specialties and departments

The Phoenix Police Department's dedicated party interdiction team operates in partnership and with training support from several other specialties both in the department and in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

- Violent Crimes
  - Homicide
  - Nonfatal Shooting Team
  - Crime Gun Investigations
- Title 4/Liquor violations and fake IDs
- Gang Enforcement for traffic stop safety
- Street Racing Task Force to observe Crime Suppression Unit
- Special Assignments Unit for close quarters battle (hand-to-hand fighting), building searches, breaching techniques, drones
- Real Time Operations Center for social media intelligence gathering
- Maricopa County Attorney's Office—Juvenile Division
- Arizona State Probation and Juvenile Corrections

How it all works

According to Assistant Chief Benza and Commander David Saflar of the Phoenix Police Department, the squad operates by getting ahead of potential problems. They research social media and other advertising to find where large parties will be held and arrive at the location themselves at or before the party begins. They determine who is running the party, whether any private security is present, whether anyone in the crowd is armed, and whether anyone among the party staff or guests is engaging in "obvious criminal behavior" such as distribution of drugs or assault with or without weapons.

Sometimes just letting the party promoter know that the squad is nearby is enough to keep the party from spiraling out of control. But if situations do arise that require police response, having the squad in the neighborhood assures prompt attention. The squad will have cars ready to make traffic stops if people leaving the party are driving dangerously (they also pay particular attention to vehicles they know are connected to the party organizers) or to take arrested individuals back to the station. And if they break up a party, particularly if they do so because it was becoming violent, they know always to be prepared for a secondary meet-up at another location like a gas station, parking lot, playground, or other empty space. The party may not reconvene, but the fight probably will.

Afterward, if there is evidence of neighborhood disturbance or a commercial enterprise rather than a private party, the squad will have the Neighborhood Services and Zoning Departments contact the property owner to make them aware of the incident (if they were not present, such as if the party was held at a short-term rental like an Airbnb or VRBO) and work to ensure nothing similar happens in the future. People under 18 who were injured or detained at the party are transferred to the Arizona Department of Child Services.

Growing Pains or Lessons Learned

At first, there was some reluctance to adopt this dedicated-squad model, because organizations are always resistant to change and people are comfortable with processes they already know and understand. Commander Saflar notes that responses to the new model included "But this is the way we've always done it." Nevertheless, the evolution was both necessary and possible for the following reasons, so it was time to make the change.

- **Staffing.** Today's police departments are leaner than they were in the days when the way to break up a teen party was just to surround the house with officers.
- **Technology.** Drones, license plate readers, and unmarked cars make it easier than it used to be to spot where rowdy groups may re-form after a party is dispersed.
- **Communications.** In this age of social media, promoters and youth can make and communicate their plans at the speed of the internet. Waiting to begin responding until an incident has already occurred is much too slow.
- **Community relations.** People who live in the neighborhoods where the parties are often held were also unsatisfied as the parties got larger, louder, and more violent. The prevalence of short-term rentals may have contributed to this issue as party promoters were able to move out of empty buildings in commercial districts and into private homes.

In the first three months the program was run, the department learned that the proactive approach was best; the "Top 10 List" or frequently arrested suspects from other disciplines were often also associated with illegal activity at out-of-control parties, so the squad could work with other teams to develop leads rather than starting from scratch. The most junior team was unaccustomed to having a citywide responsibility rather than a local beat, so more training and direct supervision is necessary to keep them focused. Ultimately, key to the success of the program were the partnerships with outside agencies, allowing for follow-up with Zoning and Neighborhood Services Departments, as well as follow-up with property owners and primary suspects.

Measurable Achievements

The program has been highly successful. In the spring of 2024, before the program was implemented, the department responded to **2–3 party-related shootings each weekend.** In the summer of 2024 (June, July, and August), when they normally expect a spike in violence, using

the proactive method of specifically tasking a team to address loud party calls, the team responded to 31 parties—a little more than two parties each weekend—and saw only **three party-related shootings in the entire three-month period.**

The lieutenant, two sergeants, and 12 officers were recommended for the department's Distinguished Service Award, and the program was implemented again in the summer of 2025 because of its excellent results.

Intelligence-Led Targeted Prevention Strategy: Takeaways and Implementation Steps

Takeaways

- **Proactive and intelligence-led approach.** The dedicated party interdiction squad shifts away from reactive, enforcement-heavy tactics—such as surrounding large gatherings after violence occurs—to a preventive model using social media monitoring, public bulletin board tracking, and pre-emptive site contact.
- **Specialized training.** Officers partner with and undergo joint training with specialized units (e.g., Special Assignments, Violent Crimes, Street Racing Task Force, and Real Time Operations Center).
- **Interagency partnerships.** The squad partners with outside entities such as Child & Family Services, Zoning, and Neighborhood Services for comprehensive follow-up.
- **Leveraging advanced technology.** The squad uses modern technology, including drones, automatic license plate readers (LPR), department smartphones for intelligence gathering, and a dedicated dispatch channel to maintain focused radio communication.
- **Dramatically reduced violence.** During its summer 2024 implementation, the proactive squad responded to 31 parties across three months while party-related shootings dropped to just 3—down from 2–3 shootings *per weekend* prior to the program.
- **Property owner accountability.** Following large or rowdy gatherings, the squad collaborates with Zoning and Neighborhood Services to hold property owners accountable, preventing repeat incidents at problematic locations.

Implementation steps

Phase 1. Stakeholder alignment and target identification

1. **Convene stakeholders.** Hold meetings to identify primary issues and solutions with community stakeholders—police departments, city and county prosecutors, juvenile court staff, elected officials, community leaders, and city employees of relevant departments.
2. **Define scope and focus areas.** Identify high-risk target zones (such as specific police precincts or commercial or residential hotspots) and establish high-risk event criteria (e.g., uncontrolled promoter parties, street takeovers).

3. **Establish intelligence tracking systems.** Set up dedicated monitoring protocols for the squad to track online flyers, public bulletin boards, and social media channels to spot upcoming gatherings before they occur.

Phase 2. Stand up and equip squad

4. **Staff dedicated unit.** Select dedicated squad members (e.g., a lieutenant, sergeants, and officers) primarily from overnight or third shifts who are already accustomed to weekend night schedules, minimizing the need for extensive overtime spending.
5. **Conduct cross-specialty interdisciplinary training.** Train officers alongside specialized units, including Violent Crimes, Gang Enforcement, Street Racing Task Forces, Special Assignments Units (for close-quarters battle and building searches), and Liquor Control officers.
6. **Procure equipment.** Equip the team with marked and unmarked vehicles, drones, automated license plate readers (LPR), dedicated smart devices for intelligence gathering, and a dedicated dispatch radio channel to keep communications clear during operations.

Phase 3. Proactive operations, follow-up, and evaluation

7. **Gather and proactively act on intelligence.** Research social media and other advertising to identify where large parties will be held. Deploy units preemptively on weekend nights to party sites or hot spots before events start, establishing a visible presence to deter disorderly behavior and contacting party hosts or promoters directly.
8. **Implement targeted enforcement and contingency dispersal plans.** Focus on high-level or felony enforcement (weapons, drug distribution, stolen vehicles) rather than mass detentions for minor infractions, and position teams to intercept secondary re-groupings at nearby parking lots, gas stations, or parks if a party is broken up.
9. **Conduct post-incident follow-up.** Follow up after incidents by having Zoning and Neighborhood Services hold property owners accountable, while transferring any unhoused or injured minors to child protective services.
10. **Evaluate strategy outcomes.** Partner with researchers or internal analysts to evaluate performance metrics (e.g., reduction in weekend party-related shootings and calls for service) to refine tactics and secure long-term municipal funding.

Conclusion

The rising complexity of youth crime—driven by earlier involvement, escalating behavior, social media conflicts, family crises, and group dynamics—calls for a transformation in how communities and law enforcement approach juvenile justice. Traditional models that rely on ticketing, formal arrests, and court processing may be warranted for juveniles who commit serious crimes or chronic offenses, but that is not the case in most circumstances. These models are administratively burdensome and costly for less serious issues and often fail to curb recidivism or resolve the underlying causes of juvenile misconduct.

As multiple jurisdictions demonstrate, shifting to a proactive, comprehensive framework yields significant benefits. Key programmatic takeaways include the following:

- **Leveraging multidisciplinary partnerships.** Effective youth programming does not always require massive budgets; rather, success relies on strong cross-sector collaboration, which lightens the workload on law enforcement.
- **Implementing proactive engagement programs.** Targeted educational and community initiatives—such as police-led youth summits, drivers' education programs, parent workshops, and mentorship activities—provide alternatives to criminal behavior and foster positive police-youth relationships before any negative law enforcement contact occurs.
- **Embracing pre-file deflection and tiered support.** Providing wraparound support in all prevention and intervention tiers—while intercepting lower-level offenders before formal charges are filed—can dramatically reduce school-related arrests by more than 80 percent and recidivism (decreases ranging from 10 percent to 68 percent).[62] This enables police departments to reserve their resources for monitoring high-risk or chronic offenders.
- **Addressing underlying causes through wraparound services.** Sustainable outcomes require tackling the family crises, trauma, and economic barriers that push families into "survival mode." Providing culturally competent, accessible, and inclusive programming, and partnering with trusted local community organizations increases participation and builds community trust.
- **Achieving measurable success at lower costs.** Deflection and restorative justice models consistently reduced recidivism while offering substantial financial relief. In Colorado, annual state incarceration costs are roughly $132,000 per youth (in 2020, the national annual average was $214,620).[63] However, Longmont's (CO) pre-file deflection program

62. Garcia, *REWiND* (see note 10); Holloway, *St. Petersburg Police Department Youth Engagement Programs* (see note 10).
63. Garcia, *REWiND* (see note 10), Justice Policy Institute, *Sticker Shock: Calculating the Full Price Tag for Youth Incarceration* (Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute, 2020), https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Sticker_Shock_2020.pdf.

costs only $1,500–$39,000 annually per youth.[64] Lincoln Police Department's Project Restore had systemic financial impacts, reducing diversion fees from $135 to $60 and enabling families to pay at least part of the fee.[65]

Ultimately, when police departments shift from being solely enforcement providers to collaborating with partners to proactively prevent and intervene before youth engage in or escalate criminal behavior, they conserve public safety resources, reduce youth entry into the justice system, and provide at-risk youth with the structural support they need for long-term success.

64. Garcia, *REWIND* (see note 10).
65. Lincoln Police Department, *RESTORE: Disrupting the School-to-Prison Road*, presentation, September 26, 2025.

Appendix. Signed Memorandum of Understanding between Lincoln, Nebraska; Lancaster County; Lincoln Police Department; and Lincoln Public Schools Establishing Project Restore

Interagency Memorandum of Understanding
on
Targeted School-Based Offenses

Purpose and Scope

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines an agreement between the Lancaster County Attorney; City of Lincoln, Lincoln Police Department (LPD); the Lincoln Public Schools (LPS); and the Lincoln/Lancaster County Human Services (LLCHS) on the handling of certain delinquent behavior by students at the Lincoln Public Schools. This MOU is designed to provide an opportunity for pre-referral diversion from court involvement for students ages 12 to 15 inside any LPS high school, Bryan Community, or the Yankee Hill Program who would otherwise be referred to the County Attorney for UCR Part 2 assault or disturbing the peace.

This MOU outlines a pre-referral diversion program, Project Restore. This program will hold youth accountable for their behavior through restorative justice practices and encourage behavior change through interventions and referrals to appropriate programs. The ultimate goal is avoiding unnecessary entry into the justice system. This is a voluntary program.

Eligibility

As defined in this agreement, "eligible youth" are those students ages 12 - 15 where the incident occurred inside a structure designed as a LPS high school, Bryan Community, or the Yankee Hill Program who would otherwise be referred for USCR Part 2 type of assault or disturbing the peace, excluding:

- Students involved in incidents leading to serious bodily injury as defined under Nebraska law, or any conduct that rises to the level of felony assault;
- Students involved in conduct that would qualify as a domestic or sexual assault under Nebraska law;
- Students who were referred to court for a current or prior law violation;
- Students who were referred to diversion for a current or prior law violation for disturbing the peace or any type of assault;
- The assault or disturbance arises as a result of gang conflict.

Terms

Referrals to Project Restore

- When LPD responds to an incident involving eligible assaults or disturbances, LPD may conduct an investigation and prepare all necessary reports.
- For eligible incidents, LPD may issue a Juvenile Arrest Referral/Parent Notification Form, and code the referral as a potential Project Restore case in the records management system pending screening and potential completion of the Project Restore program. LPD will make the coding determination on the following factors:
    1. The assault is not a UCR Part 1 crime requiring reporting as an arrest;
    2. The offense occurred inside a structure known to be used as a LPS high school, Bryan Community, or Yankee Hill Program.
    3. At the time of the incident, the person was 12-15 years of age.
    4. The person was known to be a student of LPS.
- Ideally, each business day, the LPD Family Crimes Senior Office Assistant will forward potential Project Restore cases to the County Attorney's Office for final determination of eligibility for the program.
- Ideally, within one working day, the County Attorney's Office will notify the Project Restore Case Manager of any identified eligible youth for the program, or will notify the LPD Family Crimes Senior Office Assistant that a youth is not eligible for Project Restore.
    - Upon notification that a youth is not eligible for Project Restore or the youth did not successfully complete the program, the LPD Family Crimes Senior Office Assistant will change the coding.
- Nothing in this agreement shall limit the ability of LPS to suspend or expel eligible youth at its discretion.

Project Restore Terms and Timelines

- LLCHS shall provide case management services for Project Restore. Case Managers shall have skills in conducting interviews, experience working with youth to change behavior, and knowledge about available community-based resources.
- Ideally, within one business day of receipt of the list of eligible youth from the County Attorney's Office, the Project Restore Case Manager shall attempt to make telephone contact with the youth and his or her family to explain the program and its benefits and schedule a face-to-face meeting.
- Within 3 business days of the initial telephone contact with youth and his or her family, the Project Restore Case Manager shall schedule a face-to-face meeting. During this first meeting, the Project Restore Case Manager will complete the Nebraska Youth Screen and identify the

issues underlying the disruptive or assaultive behavior. The Project Restore Case Manager shall encourage family involvement in this meeting, but a family member's refusal to attend shall not render a youth ineligible for the program.

- The Project Restore Case Manager may work with LPD Victim/Witness to contact the victim(s) and his/her family to determine whether they are willing to participate in mediation or other restorative justice techniques and whether there is any restitution owed to them. LPD Victim/Witness may provide ongoing support and assistance to any victims and their family members.
- If there is restitution owed, the Project Restore Case Manager will work with the designated county agency to insure payments are recorded and disbursed to the identified victim(s).
- The Project Restore Case Manager shall engage the youth with restorative justice techniques that are designed to repair harm with the victim. The Project Restore Case Manager shall arrange for mediation or other appropriate restorative justice services within 30 calendar days of the incident unless extenuating circumstances warrant additional time. Victims shall not be required to participate in mediation services, and surrogate victims shall be provided, when appropriate.
- The Project Restore Case Manager shall also require the youth to participate in an additional three one-on-one sessions with the Project Restore Case Manager within 60 calendar days of the incident. The Project Restore Case Manager may conduct these meetings at school after coordination with the school administrators. During these sessions, the Project Restore Case Manager shall help the youth identify and practice strategies to avoid engaging in disruptive or assaultive behavior in the future. The Project Restore Case Manager may include the school resource officer and/or the school administrator in formulating the strategies.
- During the final one-on-one meeting, the Project Restore Case Manager shall review the incident, the results of the programming, discuss future appropriate strategies that the student can employ, as well as any identified needs and any appropriate referrals to community-based programming.
- LLCHS shall provide reasonable translation and interpretation services for youth and family members who require such accommodations.

Successful and Unsuccessful Completions of Project Restore

- Youth who complete restorative justice activities and participate in the four required in-person sessions with the Project Restore Case Manager shall be designated as "successful completions." For successful completions, the Project Restore Case Manager shall submit a letter to the youth's family and to the school administrator of the youth's home school indicating that the youth has successfully completed the program within 5 business days of the final in-person meeting. This shall include any plans to address the identified behavior and the final outcomes of any agreements. Project Restore Case Managers shall also notify LPD and the County Attorney's Office of the successful completion within five business days.

- Youth who decline to participate in Project Restore and youth who do not successfully complete the restorative justice activities and attend the four required in-person sessions with the Project Restore Case Manager shall be designated as either "declined" or "unsuccessful completions," respectively. Within five business days, the Project Restore Case Managers shall notify the youth, family member, LPD, and the County Attorney's Office of the decision to decline or unsuccessful completion.
- If, prior to the youth's successful completion of the Project Restore program, the Project Restore Case Manager determines that a youth is or will be unable to complete Project Restore requirements due to circumstances either within or outside of the youth's control, the Project Restore Case Manager shall inform the youth, family members, LPD and the County Attorney's Office of the youth's failure to complete the program, and shall designate that as an "unsuccessful completion." Notification shall be made within five business days.
- Once a youth has entered the Project Restore program, as long as the youth continues to actively participate in the Project Restore program, he or she should not be removed from the Project Restore program solely due to new truant, ungovernable, or criminal behavior by the youth.

Miscellaneous

Independent Contractor. It is the express intent of the parties that this MOU shall not create an employer-employee relationship. Employees of a party shall not be deemed to be employees of the other parties. The parties shall be responsible to their respective employees for all salary and benefits. The employees of a party shall not be entitled to any salary or wages from the other parties or to any benefits made to their employees, including, but not limited to, overtime, vacation, retirement benefits, workers' compensation, sick leave, or injury leave. Each party shall also be responsible for maintaining workers' compensation insurance, unemployment insurance for its employees, and for payment of all federal, state, local, and any other payroll taxes with respect to its employees' compensation.

Hold Harmless. Each party agrees to indemnify and hold harmless, to the fullest extent allowed by law, the other parties and their principals, officers, and employees from and against all claims, demands, suits, actions, payments, liabilities, judgments and expenses (including court-ordered attorneys' fees) resulting from or arising out of the acts or omissions of its principals, officer, or employees in performance of this MOU. Liability includes any claims, damages, losses, and expenses arising out of or resulting from performance of this MOU that results in any claim for damage whatsoever including any bodily injury, civil rights liability, sickness, disease, or damage to or destruction of tangible property, including the loss of use resulting therefrom. Further, each party shall, at its own expense, maintain a policy or policies of insurance (or a self-insurance program), sufficient in amount and coverage to pay any judgments or related expenses from or in conjunction with any such claims. Nothing in this MOU shall require any party to indemnify or hold harmless the other parties from liability for the negligent or wrongful acts or omissions of said other parties or their principals, officers or employees.

Insurance. Each party shall maintain, at its own cost throughout the duration of this MOU a policy or policies of insurance or a self-insurance program sufficient in coverage and amount to fully satisfy any

judgments and pay any and all liabilities, judgments and related expenses that may arise in connection with performance of this MOU. At a minimum, such insurance or self-insurance shall include:

A. Workers' Compensation Insurance: Workers' compensation insurance fully insuring its employees as required by law. Said insurance shall be obtained from an insurance company which is authorized to do business in the State of Nebraska.

B. General Liability Insurance: General liability insurance or self-insurance, including coverage of bodily injury, wrongful death, personal injury, property damage, contractual liability, and products/completed operations liability. The minimum acceptable limits of liability to be provided by such insurance or self-insurance shall be as follows:

Bodily Injury/Property Damage	$1,000,000 Each Occurrence
	$2,000,000 Aggregate
Personal Injury Damage	$1,000,000 Each Occurrence

Each party shall not commence work under this MOU until it has obtained all insurance required under this section.

C. Each party is required to notify the other parties with thirty (30) days notice of cancellation, non-renewal or any material reduction of insurance as required by this MOU.

Nondiscrimination. Each party agrees to comply fully with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and the Nebraska Fair Employment Practices Act, as amended, in that there shall be no discrimination in the provision of services or against any employee, any applicant for such employment, or any other person because of age**,** race, color, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, disability, sex or marital status. This provision shall include but not be limited to the following: employment, promotion, demotion or transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training including apprenticeship.

Confidentiality. All records related to this MOU shall be kept confidential and maintained in accordance with applicable standards depending upon their type. All parties agree that records related to performance under this MOU will be confidential and will not be released by either party without the express written consent of all other parties, or as required by law.

Nonassignment. The parties agree that they shall not assign their duties or responsibilities under this MOU without receiving prior written permission of all the other parties.

Choice of Law. This MOU shall be governed by and construed under the laws of the State of Nebraska, which shall be the forum for any lawsuits arising from and incidental to this MOU.

Severability. Each paragraph of this MOU is severable from all other paragraphs. In the event any court of competent jurisdiction determines that any paragraph or subparagraph of the MOU is invalid or unenforceable for any reason, all remaining paragraphs and subparagraphs will remain.

Duration and Modification. This MOU shall become effective immediately upon its execution by signature and shall remain in force and effect until such time as terminated by any party to the MOU. Any party may terminate this MOU by written notice to the other parties at least 30 days in advance of the effective date of termination. The MOU may be modified at any time by written amendment to the MOU that is agreed upon by all parties.

Supercession. This MOU hereby rescinds and replaces the Project Success MOU (City Directorial Order 14013) covering the similar subject matter of Targeted School-Based Offenses, executed on November 2, 2015.

MOU Signed by:

County Attorney, Lancaster County

Chief, Lincoln Police Department

Student Services Director, Lincoln Public Schools

Human Services Director, Lincoln/Lancaster County

Police Executive Research Forum

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is an independent think tank and research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Since its founding in 1976, PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as reducing police use of force; developing community policing and problem-oriented policing; using technologies to deliver police services to the community; and developing and assessing crime reduction strategies. Over the past decade, PERF has led efforts to reduce police use of force through its Guiding Principles on Use of Force[66] and Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training program[67].

PERF strives to advance professionalism in policing and to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership; public debate of police and criminal justice issues; and research and policy development. The nature of PERF's work can be seen in the reports PERF has published over the years. Most of these reports are available without charge online.[68] All the titles in the Critical Issues in Policing series can be found on the PERF website.[69] Recent reports include Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents: Guidelines to Achieve Consistency, Transparency, and Fairness,[70] The First Six Months: A Police Chief's Guide to Starting Off on the Right Foot,[71] and Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff to Advance Modern Policing.[72] In addition to conducting research and publishing reports on our findings, PERF conducts management studies of individual law enforcement agencies; educates hundreds of police officials each year at the Senior Management Institute for Police,[73] a three-week executive development program; and provides executive search services to governments looking to conduct national searches for their next police chief.

All PERF's work benefits from its status as a membership organization of police officials and its access to police executives, who share information and open their agencies to research and study. PERF members also include academics, federal government leaders, and others with an interest in policing and criminal justice. All PERF members must have a four-year college degree and subscribe to a set of founding principles, emphasizing the importance of research and public

66. PERF, *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2016), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/guidingprinciples1.pdf.
67. PERF, "ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics," accessed October 14, 2026, https://www.policeforum.org/icat.
68. PERF, "PERF Reports," accessed October 14, 2026, http://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents.
69. PERF, "Critical Issues in Policing Series," accessed October 14, 2026, https://www.policeforum.org/critical-issues-series.
70. PERF, *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManagingOICIs.pdf.
71. PERF, *The First Six Months*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/FirstSixMonths.pdf.
72. PERF, *Embracing Civilianization*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2024), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Civilianization.pdf.
73. PERF, "Preparing Police Executives for the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow," accessed October 14, 2026, https://www.policeforum.org/smip.

debate in policing, adherence to the Constitution and the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and accountability to the communities that police agencies serve.

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