



**January 25, 2021**

TO: City of Toronto Executive Committee Members c/o Cathrine Regan

FROM: Rob Howarth, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

**RE: Jan 27 EX 20.1 Community Crisis Support Service Pilot**

Dear Executive Committee Members,

I am writing you on behalf of the Toronto Neighbourhood Centres, a network of 26 multi-service organizations that deliver programs and services to tens of thousands of Torontonians each year, mobilizing thousands of volunteers and local residents to improve the safety, health and well being of our neighbourhoods.

We are pleased that this Community Crisis Response Pilot is before you today, and are deputing to encourage you to move this and other community safety measures forward in a more robust manner.

The new pilot is transformative in intent. And many other investment and programming, steward by SDFA, SSHA and other parts of the City, are making a big difference in our communities. But we feel that you could try to do even more with the tools you have, and the choices you are making.

The scope of this proposal and the City's existing efforts in the area of community safety needs to be increased. There is no doubt the Province bears the primary responsibility for investing in such programs. And we will work with you on advocacy efforts in that regard. But we also need bolder efforts from the City at this time.

At stake is not merely the construction of community-led alternatives for creating safety, but also ceasing the harms that are sustained by Black, Indigenous, people of colour, people with disabilities, people without homes, youth and vulnerable community members across our City. One day longer than necessary is one day too many. And you have the capacity to initiate greater changes today.

City staff notified Budget Committee members last week that the proposed pace of implementing the Community Crisis Support Pilot is necessary, given the complex collaborations needed to get these new responses in place.

Even if this critical work cannot be accelerated, there is much more that needs to be done, and that can be done starting with this budget cycle, to expand program supports that will mitigate crises and violence in our communities.

For example, the report before you stresses that the success of the pilot models will also depend upon the existence of a **community investment stream** that can "support the broader service system within which the community crisis support service is situated."

We know that Provincial investments in "wrap-around" community-led mental health supports are woefully inadequate, but attempting to expand these services, and investing in MAD, Black, Indigenous, otherly-abled and 2SLGBTQ+ informed and directed programs should happen while the pilots are being developed.

It will take resources from all levels of government to make this happen, and the City must do its part - allocating much more than the \$500,000 /year beginning in 2022 that is imagined in this report.

There are other program expansion efforts that the City could support in ways that would make a real difference starting this year.

Three weeks ago Toronto Neighbourhood Centres sent you a report, assembled in collaboration with over twenty-two community partners, outlining a number of these opportunities. We have forwarded the "**Rethinking Community Safety - A Step Forward for Toronto**" report to the clerk with this submission.

Here are just a few examples from the report that could be acted on this year:

For those experiencing homelessness:

- Expanding street outreach staff to support everyone experiencing homelessness could be achieved for \$17 million per year.
- Doubling our 50 homeless drop-ins that currently give people a safe place to go and help them access supports and avoid conflicts with the law could be achieved for less than \$25 million per year.
- Adding a new safe-consumption site would cost \$4 million a year.

For youth:

- Doubling the number of Youth Hubs would cost \$9 million.
- Doubling the number of youth outreach workers would cost \$8 million, linking over 5,000 more youth to services, constructive activities and better long-term outcomes.
- Expanding the Game Changers programs could provide support and conflict resolution in every high school for less than \$6 million.

All of these examples, and many more outlined in our report, would improve community safety outcomes more immediately.

You will need to propose different budget choices to move forward in these areas. Here are three suggestions on how you might do that, starting this year:

1. Request the Police Services Board to direct their 2021 budget allocations for expanding their Mobile Crisis Intervention Teams and Neighbourhood Officers, to the proposed **Community Investment Stream** to support the pilots. **We estimate this amount to be \$2.5 - 3 million**
2. Assume additional revenues from the Provincial and Federal governments this year. Your draft budget already assumes \$860M to balance the budget. Given the Provincial and Federal responsibilities regarding mental health services and supportive housing, **why not assume another \$20M or \$30M to start making headway on these critical wrap-around services?**
3. Ask more of Torontonians who have more to contribute, and who have done well over the past years. Doubling the proposed residential property tax increase, with exemptions for homeowners on low or fixed incomes, would raise another \$23M. **This is the equivalent of requiring another \$22 a year per household.**

By taking these actions, you could signal that expanding community safety alternatives to policing is a project that you are tackling in an urgent and serious way.

Your 2021 draft budget does not yet send this message.

For the sake of all Torontonians, we urge you to allocate resources in this year's budget to expand supports for the safety of all those who are not safe in our city now.

Thank you.

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Toronto Neighbourhood Centres  
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# Rethinking Community Safety

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A Step Forward For Toronto



*In partnership with*



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# Rethinking Community Safety

There are widespread calls for fundamental changes in the way we think about and implement community safety. In the past, policy-makers treated policing as the answer to a wide range of community-safety issues, but that has not been borne out in practice. All too often, policing has deepened systemic injustices, harmed Black, racialized, and Indigenous communities, and failed to achieve its stated goal. In fact, both research and first-hand experience show that, in a broad range of settings, policing is the wrong tool for improving safety. It often has the opposite effect, and it does so at great expense, despite the availability of better alternatives.

In spite of growing consensus that community safety approaches need to be reimagined, the process of doing so has often stalled because of the scope and complexity involved. This report is intended as one step forward in the work of reimagining community safety.

This report presents a summary of research and discussions that have taken place in Toronto, in partnership with service agencies, advocacy groups, and community associations. The goal of this document is to outline some of the key challenges with the existing policing model and to identify areas where changes from the current model are already available and can be initiated now.

This document cannot address the full scope of community safety strategies nor all of the issues relating to policing and systemic discrimination. It aims to provide one small step forward by pointing out some specific areas where policing responses are problematic and where demonstrably more effective interventions already exist. It provides some immediate opportunities to step away from models of community safety that do not work, and replace those ineffective approaches with systems that are more appropriate to the challenges involved and can produce better outcomes.

# Racism and Policing

There is intense concern about the impact of policing on Black, racialized, and Indigenous communities. Recent events, including the deaths of Rodney Levi, Chantel Moore, D'Andre Campbell, Ejaz Ahmed Choudry, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and far too many others—including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Atatiana Jefferson in the US—have brought into stark relief the long-standing issue of disproportionate policing, violence, and death facing Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities.

## **Racialized People, Especially Black and Indigenous People, Are Overpoliced**

Studies, reviews, and analyses have repeatedly shown what many communities have known for a long time: police stop, arrest, and search Black and Indigenous people more often than they engage with white people.

Numerous studies in the US show that Black and racialized youths are more likely to be stopped, questioned, and arrested than whites.<sup>1</sup> This is also true in Canada. An analysis of policing in Halifax in 2019 showed Black people were six times as likely as white people to be stopped for street checks.<sup>2</sup> In 2017, Indigenous people accounted for over 16% of street checks in Vancouver, despite making up just over 2% of the population and Black people accounted for 5% of the checks despite making up less than 1% of the population.<sup>3</sup>

A Montreal study showed almost one in every six Indigenous people were stopped in street checks, and one in every seven Black people were stopped while the rate for whites was less than one in twenty.<sup>4</sup> Analysis of Toronto police statistics showed that Black people were

1. Robert Brown, "Black, White, and Unequal: Examining Situational Determinants of Arrest Decisions from Police-Suspect Encounters," *Criminal Justice Studies* 18, no.1 (2005): 51–68

Darlene J. Conley, "Adding Color to a Black and White Picture: Using Qualitative Data to Explain Racial Disproportionality in the Juvenile Justice System," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 31, no.2 (1994): 135-44

2. Scot Wortley, Halifax NS: Street Checks Report (Halifax, NS: Researched and Written for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, 2019), [https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/editor-uploads/halifax\\_street\\_checks\\_report\\_march\\_2019\\_0.pdf](https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/editor-uploads/halifax_street_checks_report_march_2019_0.pdf).

3. Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and British Columbia Civil Liberties Association to Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, 14 June 2018, Policy Complaint Concerning Street Checks by the Vancouver Police Department, <https://vancouver.ca/police/policeboard/agenda/2018/0926/SP-3-1.pdf>.

4. Jennifer Yoon and Jaela Bernstein, "Black, Indigenous People Four to Five Times More Likely than Whites To Be Stopped by Montreal Police," *CBC News*, 7 October 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/spvm-racial-profiling-report-recommendations-and-findings-1.5311589>



3.4 times as likely to be “carded” as white people and that brown people were 1.8 times as likely to be stopped.<sup>5</sup>

## **Policing Has Disproportionately Negative Effects on Black and Indigenous Communities**

Black and Indigenous communities are not only more likely to interact with police, they are also far more likely to face negative outcomes from that interaction. Black and Indigenous people are more likely than white people to be arrested, jailed, subjected to the use of force, and even killed, as a result of police interaction. The disproportionate impact of policing can be particularly pronounced for Black, racialized, and Indigenous individuals who also identify as part of other overpoliced communities, including youth, those who experience mental illness, and those without housing.

According to a study published by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in 2020, Black people are 3.9 times more likely to be charged by police than white people.<sup>6</sup> Although they represented only 8.8% of Toronto’s population in 2016 Census data, 42.5% of people involved in obstruction-of-justice charges were Black, making them 4.8 times more likely to be charged with obstruction-of-justice offences than their representation in the general population would predict.<sup>7</sup>

Rates of incarceration are also disproportionate. Black people make up 7.2% of the prison population in the Canada<sup>8</sup> but are only 3.5% of the overall population,<sup>9</sup> making them more than twice as likely to be incarcerated. Indigenous people are five times as likely as the rest of the population to be incarcerated, and constitute 25.2% of the prison population<sup>10</sup> though they make up only 4.9% of the population as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

5. Jim Rankin and Patty Winsa, “Known to Police: Toronto Police Stop and Document Black and Brown People Far More Than Whites,” *Toronto Star*, 21 August 2013, [https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2012/03/09/known\\_to\\_police\\_toronto\\_police\\_stop\\_and\\_document\\_black\\_and\\_brown\\_people\\_far\\_more\\_than\\_whites.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2012/03/09/known_to_police_toronto_police_stop_and_document_black_and_brown_people_far_more_than_whites.html).

6. Ontario Human Rights Commission, “A Disparate Impact: Second Interim Report: Inquiry on Racial Profiling and Racial Discrimination of Black Persons by the Toronto Police Service” (Toronto, ON: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020), <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/A%20Disparate%20Impact%20Second%20interim%20report%20on%20the%20TPS%20inquiry%20executive%20summary.pdf#overlay-context=en/disparate-impact-second-interim-report-inquiry-racial-profiling-and-racial-discrimination-black>.

7. Ibid.

8. Public Safety Canada, *Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview 2019*, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ccrso-2019/ccrso-2019-en.pdf>.

9. Statistics Canada, “Census Profile, 2016 Census,” 8 February 2017. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=01&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=canada&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>.

10. Public Safety Canada, *Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview 2019*.

11. Statistics Canada, “Census Profile, 2016 Census.” 8 February 2017. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=01&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=canada&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1>.

Black people are, according to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, also five times more likely to experience low-level use of force than white people<sup>12</sup> and made up approximately 29% of police use-of-force cases that resulted in serious injury or death, despite representing only 8.8% of Toronto's population.<sup>13</sup>

In Toronto 60% of deadly encounters with police, and 70% of fatal police shootings involved Black people, making them nearly 20 times more likely than a white person to be involved in a fatal shooting.<sup>14</sup>

While less data is available on policing Indigenous people, what is available is deeply troubling. For example, in Winnipeg, Indigenous people make up about 10.6% of the city's population, while constituting over 60% of the people who died in police encounters between 2000 and 2017.<sup>15</sup> Between 2007 and 2017, more than one-third of people shot to death by the RCMP were Indigenous, despite Indigenous people making up less than 5% of the total population.<sup>16</sup>

## **It's Time to Reconsider the Role of Policing**

These analyses leave no doubt that police interactions with Black and Indigenous communities show long-standing, serious, and deep-seated problems. These problems have persisted despite years of reform proposals, training initiatives, and public assurances of change. The issue is systemic and embedded enough to cause the United Nations to call systemic racism "endemic" to the Canadian justice system.<sup>17</sup>

Given that pattern, it seems appropriate to consider alternatives to policing as ways to improve public safety. This is a large task, but crucial steps forward can be taken now.

## **First Steps**

This report explores a number of specific areas that can be addressed as an initial step in reimagining safety. These are areas in

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12. Ontario Human Rights Commission, "A Disparate Impact: Second Interim Report: Inquiry on Racial Profiling and Racial Discrimination of Black Persons by the Toronto Police Service" (Toronto, ON: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020), <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/A%20Disparate%20Impact%20Second%20interim%20report%20on%20the%20TPS%20inquiry%20executive%20summary.pdf#overlay-context=en/disparate-impact-second-interim-report-inquiry-racial-profiling-and-racial-discrimination-black>.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Natasha Simpson, "Canada Has Race-Based Police Violence Too. We Don't Know How Much," *The Tyee*, 2 June 2020, <https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2020/06/02/Canada-Race-Based-Violence/>.

16. Colin Freeze, "More Than One-Third of People Shot to Death Over a Decade by RCMP Officers Were Indigenous," *The Globe and Mail*, 17 November 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-more-than-one-third-of-people-shot-to-death-over-a-decade-by-rcmp/>.

17. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Canada: UN Expert Panel Warns of Systemic Anti-Black Racism in the Criminal Justice System*, 21 October 2016, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20736&LangID=E>.

which there is extensive research available to clearly show that policing is excessive, problematic, and involves disproportionate use of force. These are also areas for which viable, proven alternatives exist now. Community-based services providers in Toronto are willing partners for initiatives that increase care and support in these communities, in place of police interventions, and they already deliver programs that can be scaled to fill these roles.

It is critical that further work continue, in order to generate the strategies needed to fully address the fundamental and systemic problems related to policing. Meanwhile, as a first step in considering alternatives, there are several areas of police activity that offer practical and achievable opportunities for change now. Processes to reallocate resources from policing models to community-based support models for providing safety in these settings should be initiated immediately.

# Areas of Immediate Action

## Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are intensively policed, but no one ends up safer as a result. Alternatives have been pursued successfully in other jurisdictions and Toronto has service providers who could deliver similar services here, if resources were applied to those interventions, instead of invested in a police response.

### People Experiencing Homelessness Are Overpoliced

Research shows that people without homes have, on average, 42 interactions with police per year,<sup>18</sup> just over ten times as often as everyone else.<sup>19</sup> In a city like Toronto, with 8,700 people experiencing homelessness,<sup>20</sup> that adds up to over 360,000 interactions every year, making up about 10% of all police contacts.<sup>21</sup> This intensive policing

18. Janey Rountree, Nathan Hess, and Austin Lyke, "Health Conditions Among Unsheltered Adults in the US," (UC Berkeley: California Policy Lab, 2019): 6, <https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Health-Conditions-Among-Unsheltered-Adults-in-the-U.S.pdf>.

19. Ibid.

20. City of Toronto, *Street Needs Assessment: Results Report*, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/99be-2018-SNA-Results-Report.pdf>.

21. The 2013 Mobile Crisis Team Coordination Steering Committee Report, MCIT Program Coordination in the City of Toronto (MCIT Report 2013) reports 3.6 million interactions took place in 2011 including all emergency and nonemergency calls, traffic stops, and community contracts. [http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/community/tps\\_response\\_to\\_edp.pdf](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/community/tps_response_to_edp.pdf).

has a greater impact on Black and Indigenous communities, who are massively overrepresented in this population. Black people are about 3.5 times more likely to be without housing than the rest of the population<sup>22</sup> and Indigenous people are 30 times more likely to experience homelessness in Toronto.<sup>23</sup> Indigenous people are also about 70 times as likely to be sleeping in encampments<sup>24</sup> and report higher rates of police harassment.<sup>25</sup> In Toronto almost 16,000 tickets have been issued to people experiencing homelessness in a single year.<sup>26</sup> Police and service providers agree that well over 90% of those tickets will never be paid,<sup>27</sup> but the cost of issuing and processing 16,000 tickets is significant. Municipal court costs and policing staff costs indicate that over \$2 million in community safety resources are spent on this,<sup>28</sup> and the problems and costs don't end there.

## **Overpolicing Has Significant Negative Consequences**

In some cases, people are ticketed too many times, or respond incorrectly to the tickets, which results in more serious charges. These community members find themselves facing charges such as breach of peace, failure to appear, and failure to comply. These petty infractions then become criminal offences and result in imprisonment. Prisons house a lot of people who are homeless. A 2010 study in Toronto showed that one in five people in jail was experiencing homelessness at the time of their arrest.<sup>29</sup>

## **Overpolicing People Who Are Experiencing Homelessness Does Not Make Anyone Safer**

We devote a large amount of resources to policing people who are living on the streets or in shelters when most observers, including the police, don't believe it helps increase safety in any significant way.<sup>30</sup> Policing of this population is mostly for "quality of life" infractions that are simply a consequence of people having nowhere else to go, such

22. City of Toronto, *Street Needs Assessment: Results Report*, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/99be-2018-SNA-Results-Report.pdf>.

23. Yale D. Belanger, Olu Awosoga, and Gabrielle Weasel Head, "Homelessness, Urban Aboriginal People, and the Need for a National Enumeration," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 2, no. 2 (2013): 4–33, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5663/aps.v2i2.19006>.

24. City of Toronto, *Street Needs Assessment: Results Report*, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/99be-2018-SNA-Results-Report.pdf>.

25. Jim Ward & Associates, "Dealing Effectively with Aboriginal Homelessness in Toronto: Final Report," 2008 <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/biw3xtal.pdf>.

26. Bill O'Grady, Stephen Gaetz, and Kristy Buccieri, "Tickets... and More Tickets: A Case Study of the Enforcement of the Ontario Safe Streets Act," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse De Politiques* 39, no. 4 (2020): 545, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23594731>.

27. Bill O'Grady, Stephen Gaetz, and Kristy Buccieri, *Can I See Your ID? The Policing of Youth Homelessness in Toronto* (Toronto: JFCY & Homeless Hub, 2011).

28. "Toronto 2018 Budget: Court Services" (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2018): 1-36, [https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/8b78-Courts-2018-Operating\\_Budget-v1.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/8b78-Courts-2018-Operating_Budget-v1.pdf);

Bill O'Grady, Stephen Gaetz, and Kristy Buccieri, "Tickets... and More Tickets: A Case Study of the Enforcement of the Ontario Safe Streets Act," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse De Politiques* 39, no. 4 (2020): 545, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23594731>.

29. Amber Kellen et al., "Homeless and Jailed: Jailed and Homeless," *The John Howard Society of Toronto*, 2010: 1-42, [http://johnhoward.on.ca/toronto/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2014/09/JHS-Toronto\\_Report-Homeless-and-Jailed.pdf](http://johnhoward.on.ca/toronto/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2014/09/JHS-Toronto_Report-Homeless-and-Jailed.pdf).

30. Robert Hartmann McNamara, "Policing the Homeless: Policy, Practice, and Perceptions," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 36, no. 2 (2013): 357-374.

as sleeping or drinking in public or trying to stay warm in cafés or malls.<sup>31</sup> Police and public officials express frustration at dedicating time to policing those experiencing homelessness, recognizing that it has little, if any, impact on serious criminal activity.<sup>32</sup>

## There Are Alternatives That Produce Better Outcomes

Other cities have implemented alternatives that work better, make their cities safer, and have more positive outcomes. Places like Olympia, Washington;<sup>33</sup> Honolulu, Hawaii;<sup>34</sup> Chicago, Illinois;<sup>35</sup> Denver, Colorado;<sup>36</sup> and Charleston, North Carolina<sup>37</sup> among others, have implemented programs that respond to homelessness very differently. These programs send civilian community-outreach workers to 911 calls relating to people experiencing homelessness, instead of using police as the primary response. The outreach workers focus not on charges or penalties but on linking individuals with the services they need to get off the street. In Darwin, Australia, homelessness within the Indigenous community is addressed using civilian Indigenous staff as first responders who link homeless and distressed people to services - a program that has served tens of thousands and spread to dozens of communities.<sup>38</sup>

The results of these approaches are impressive. Evaluations of these types of programs show that they succeed at moving homeless people from the streets to stable housing and in the process reduce arrests by 80% and incarceration time by 90%<sup>39</sup> (as well as cutting time in hospital emergency rooms by 60%).<sup>40</sup>

31. M. Lori Thomas et al., "Moore Place Permanent Supportive Housing Evaluation Study: Final Report," University of North Carolina, 2016: [http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Moore-Place-Evaluation-Project\\_Final-Report\\_4-28-15.pdf](http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Moore-Place-Evaluation-Project_Final-Report_4-28-15.pdf).
32. US, City and County of San Francisco Board of Supervisors Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office, *Policy Analysis Report: Homelessness and the Cost of Quality of Life Laws* (San Francisco, CA: Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office, 2016), <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/FileCenter/Documents/56045-Budget%20and%20Legislative%20Analyst%20Report.Homelessness%20and%20Cost%20of%20Quality%20of%20Life%20Laws.Final.pdf>;
- Robert Hartmann McNamara, "Policing the Homeless: Policy, Practice, and Perceptions," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 36, no. 2 (2013): 357-374.
33. Christie Thompson, "This City Stopped Sending Police to Every 911 Call: Riding Along with the Civilian 'Crisis Responders' of Olympia, Washington," *The Marshall Project*, 24 July 2020, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/07/24/crisisresponders>.
34. Natanya Friedheim, "Honolulu Police Try Building More Trust With The Homeless," *Civil Beat*, 27 December 2017, <https://www.civilbeat.org/2017/12/honolulu-police-try-building-more-trust-with-the-homeless>.
35. Chicago Mayor's Office, *Mayor Emanuel Announces Pilot To Address Chronic Homelessness With Viable Housing Options For Residents* (Chicago, IL: Mayor's Office, 2016), <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fss/provdrs/emerg/news/2016/april/mayor-emanuel-announces-pilot-to-address-chronic-homelessness-wi.html>.
36. Kevin Beaty, "A Long-Planned Program to Remove Police from Some 911 Calls Launched as Denver's Streets Erupted in Police Brutality Protests," *Denverite*, 8 June 2020, <https://denverite.com/2020/06/08/a-long-planned-program-to-remove-police-from-some-911-calls-launched-as-denvers-streets-erupted-in-police-brutality-protests/>.
37. "Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Lessons from Charleston, SC," (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2017): [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/encampment-case-study-charleston.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/encampment-case-study-charleston.pdf).
38. Andrea Booth, "Darwin Night Patroller Out to 'Help the People' Stay Away from Prison," *Special Broadcasting Service*, 15 September 2015, <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/09/14/darwin-night-patroller-out-help-people-stay-away-pris-on>.
39. M. Lori Thomas et al., "Moore Place Permanent Supportive Housing Evaluation Study: Final Report," University of North Carolina, 2016: [http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Moore-Place-Evaluation-Project\\_Final-Report\\_4-28-15.pdf](http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Moore-Place-Evaluation-Project_Final-Report_4-28-15.pdf)
40. Cheryl Forchuk, Jan Richardson, and Heather Atyeo, "Addressing Homelessness Among Canadian Veterans," edited by Naomi Nichols and Carey Doberstein, (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2016): [https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/3.8%20Forchuk%2C%20Richardson%2C%20Atyeo\\_0.pdf](https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/3.8%20Forchuk%2C%20Richardson%2C%20Atyeo_0.pdf).

Follow-up studies on people experiencing homelessness in Toronto showed that a full range of supports resulted in a dramatic decrease in addictions, a 56% reduction in arrests, and a 68% reduction in incarcerations (as well as a roughly 40% reduction in ambulance and emergency room use).<sup>41</sup> Helping people who are living on the streets get to drop-ins, shelters, and housing turns out to be better for both the housed and unhoused in our communities, and costs a lot less than sustaining punitive policing strategies.

## **Toronto Can Adopt Alternatives Now, Simply by Refocusing Resources**

Our current strategy of policing those who are homeless generates roughly 360,000 police interactions, as many as 16,000 tickets, and hundreds of incarcerations and court hearings. These interventions create over \$100 million dollars in costs, yet all this does little to reduce future problems or crime.

As an alternative, we could follow the lead of other cities and focus on supporting and housing people who need homes. Expanding street outreach staff could be achieved with limited funding. It costs roughly \$2,000 for an outreach team to support one person. With 8,700 people experiencing homelessness in Toronto, extensive engagement could be achieved for \$17 million per year.<sup>42</sup>

This transition would require both a shift in selection of first responders and an integrated model to route calls from the public to the most appropriate provider. Analysis of 911 systems across North America shows this is long overdue. Currently in Toronto, all 911 calls are first routed to the Toronto Police Service, which then determines whether the call needs to be transferred to fire or ambulance services, or retained for a police response. Research suggests that the vast majority of 911 calls do not involve violent situations or necessitate the capacity for the use of force, and that civilian personnel would be appropriate in at least 60% of all calls.<sup>43</sup>

Of course, outreach is of little help unless people have somewhere else to go, but Toronto has many models and systems for providing those supports.

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41. City of Toronto, *What Housing First Means for People: Results of Streets to Homes 2007 Post-occupancy Research* (Toronto: Shelter and Housing Administration, 2007).

42. City of Toronto, "Cost Savings Analysis of the Enhanced Streets to Homes Program," 19 January 2009, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-18574.pdf>.

43. Amos Irwin and Betsy Pearl, "The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call", Center for American Progress, October 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/10/28/492492/community-responder-model/>.

The Toronto Drop-in Network supports over 50 homeless drop-ins that give people a safe place to go and help them access supports and avoid conflicts with the law. Doubling the number of drop-ins would cost barely a quarter of what we now spend on policing people without homes.

Many of those experiencing homelessness are also facing challenges with addictions. Toronto provides a range of safe drug-consumption sites, and could expand those in both volume and scope. This would provide more people, across a broader range of substance use issues, with safe places to manage them, without impacting others. Adding a new safe-consumption site costs less than 4% of the cost of policing people experiencing homelessness and, according to research, saves over \$10,000 per person served by preventing more costly medical interventions.<sup>44</sup>

Peer-support programs also play a critical role in assisting people in accessing supports, retaining housing, and gaining employment. Peer-led models provide a more successful link to service and are a source of meaningful engagement, while being an inexpensive way to improve outcomes and reduce crises for homeless people.

Supportive housing is another critical component of eliminating the need to police people experiencing homelessness. Toronto has already set a target and made investments in expanding supportive housing and additional funding has been committed by the federal government. While provincial funds have not yet fully met their goals, the cost of waiting is high. We could maintain four supportive housing units, complete with staff, or two shelter beds, for what we now spend on holding a person in jail for a day.

In short, there are better strategies for supporting community members who are without homes that will deliver better long-term outcomes. These options cost less than what we already spend on a system that penalizes and harasses people without homes, and that drains resources from alternate strategies that would deliver on the stated goal of making our communities safer.

## Mental Health

Highly publicized stories of violent and even fatal police interventions with people experiencing mental health crises have led to increasing scrutiny. The results of that scrutiny strongly suggest that another

44. Eva A. Evans et al., "Potential Cost-effectiveness of Supervised Injection Facilities in Toronto and Ottawa, Canada," *Addiction* 111, no. 3 (2015): 475-489.

model would be better, and that people facing mental health crises, unlike people with other health concerns, are heavily overpoliced.

## **Policing Is Not the Appropriate Way to Respond to Mental Health Crises**

Criminalizing mental health conditions is a fundamental problem, made worse by the impact policing has had on the community. Toronto police respond to over 30,000 calls for service specifically relating to mental health crises making up 3% of police calls, but those calls account for 11% of the use of force—more than twice the use-of-force rate for calls involving robberies and more than three times the amount involved in apprehending people wanted on charges.<sup>45</sup> 40% of all Taser use is on people in a mental health crisis.<sup>46</sup> The Ontario Human Rights Commission also notes intersections between race, Indigenous identity, and increased use of force for people with mental health issues.<sup>47</sup>

Research, inquests, and studies indicate that this higher level of violence results in part from the approach police take in these settings. Studies note that police culture tends to emphasize forceful responses that quickly and definitively assert and maintain control. Unfortunately, this approach inhibits the potential for de-escalation. People involved in crisis respond poorly to force and pressure, and fare better with time, space, and positive engagement.<sup>48</sup>

A less forceful approach is indicated by much of the research and by police data. Police data show that calls to intervene with “emotionally distressed persons” or “persons in crisis” rarely involve any violent activity and often no criminal activity at all.<sup>49</sup> Officers themselves often report frustration with their inability to effectively resolve these calls successfully.<sup>50</sup> This pattern led the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to suggest

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45. Toronto Police Service, *Corporate Risk Management: Annual Report 2018* (Toronto, ON: Toronto Police Service, 2018), <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/crm2018annualreport.pdf>.

46. Mark Saunders, Chief of Police, *Annual Report 2019: Use of Conducted Energy Weapons*, 13 February 2020, included in Toronto Police Services Board Agenda, May 2020, [https://tpsb.ca/images/agendas/PUBLIC\\_AGENDA\\_2020May21\\_virtualmeeting.pdf](https://tpsb.ca/images/agendas/PUBLIC_AGENDA_2020May21_virtualmeeting.pdf).

47. Ontario Human Rights Commission, *A Collective Impact: Interim Report on the Inquiry into Racial Profiling and Racial Discrimination of Black Persons by the Toronto Police Service* (Ontario: Ontario Human Rights Commission, November 2018), <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/public-interest-inquiry-racial-profiling-and-discrimination-toronto-police-service/collective-impact-interim-report-inquiry-racial-profiling-and-racial-discrimination-black>.

48. Frank Iacobucci, *Police Encounters with People in Crisis* (Toronto, ON: Prepared for the Toronto Police Service, 2014), [https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/police\\_encounters\\_with\\_people\\_in\\_crisis\\_2014.pdf](https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/police_encounters_with_people_in_crisis_2014.pdf);

Ontario, Office of the Chief Coroner, *Verdict of Coroner's Jury: Andrew Loku* (Toronto, ON: Office of the Chief Coroner, 2017), <https://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/DeathInvestigations/Inquests/VerdictsandRecommendations/OC-CInquestLoku2017.html>;

S.L. Jones and T. Mason, “Quality of Treatment Following Police Detention of Mentally Disordered Offenders,” *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 9, no. 1 (2002): 73–80, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1351-0126.2001.00445.x>; IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, “Responding to Persons Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis” (Alexandria, VA: 2018), available at <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/MentalIllnessBinder2018.pdf>.

49. Krystle Shore and Jennifer A.A. Lavoie, “Exploring Mental Health-Related Calls for Police Service: A Canadian Study of Police Officers as ‘Frontline Mental Health Workers,’” *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 13, no. 2 (2019): 157–171, <https://doi.org/10.1093/policing/pay017>.

50. Frank Iacobucci, *Police Encounters with People in Crisis* (Toronto, ON: Prepared for the Toronto Police Service, 2014), [https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/police\\_encounters\\_with\\_people\\_in\\_crisis\\_2014.pdf](https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/police_encounters_with_people_in_crisis_2014.pdf);



that people other than police would be best placed to effectively address mental health crises.<sup>51</sup>

## **Alternatives Are in Place in Other Jurisdictions That Produce Better Results**

In other cities, civilian-led strategies for addressing mental health crises have been implemented with very good results. The widely praised CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon, uses mental-health outreach workers as first responders. They take 20% of all police calls and resolve the issues with referrals to service, de-escalation, and support.<sup>52</sup> Similar programs have been set up in Washington, DC;<sup>53</sup> Baltimore, Maryland;<sup>54</sup> Houston, Texas;<sup>55</sup> Olympia, Washington;<sup>56</sup> and Denver, Colorado.<sup>57</sup> Civilian first responders are able to handle 99.6% of all calls without any police support, and have a near zero record of any harm or injury coming to anyone involved.<sup>58</sup>

## **Toronto Has Options That Could Be Implemented Now**

We have civilian-led mental health crisis responses already in place in Toronto, but they are not called on as first responders when a 911 call is made. The Gerstein Crisis Centre answers over 40,000 mental health crisis calls per year and conducts over 1,900 mobile visits. They take in over 900 people who stay in facilities that include “safe beds” for people in crisis. Hundreds more are supported through crises in safe beds operated by CMHA and COTA. The Distress Centres of Greater Toronto fields another 100,000 calls. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams help provide comprehensive supports to people facing significant mental health challenges, and Intensive Case Management programs help link people to appropriate supports. These programs do a great deal to manage and prevent the kinds of crises that currently engage the police.

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51. Johann Brink et al., “A Study of How People with Mental Illness Perceive and Interact with the Police” (Calgary, Alberta: Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2011): [https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/Law\\_How\\_People\\_with\\_Mental\\_Illness\\_Perceive\\_Interact\\_Police\\_Study\\_ENG\\_1\\_0\\_1.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/Law_How_People_with_Mental_Illness_Perceive_Interact_Police_Study_ENG_1_0_1.pdf);

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, *CAMH Statement on Police Interactions with People in Mental Health Crisis*, June 2020, <https://www.camh.ca/en/camh-news-and-stories/camh-statement-on-police-interactions-with-people-in-mental-health-crisis>.

52. Omar Villifranca, “An Alternative to Police: Mental Health Team Responds to Emergencies in Oregon,” *CBS News Online*, 23 October 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mental-health-team-responds-to-emergencies-oregon-alternative-to-police-2019-10-23/>.

53. DC Department of Behavioral Health, “Community Response Team,” available at <https://dbh.dc.gov/service/community-response-team>.

54. Baltimore Crisis Response Inc. “Mobile Crisis Team,” available at <https://bcresponse.org/our-work/mobile-crisis-team.html>.

55. Houston Police Department, “Crisis Call Diversion Program (CCD),” available at <https://www.houstoncit.org/ccd/>.

56. Christie Thompson, “This City Stopped Sending Police to Every 911 Call: Riding Along with the Civilian ‘Crisis Responders’ of Olympia, Washington,” *The Marshall Project*, July 24, 2020, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/07/24/crisisresponders>.

57. Kevin Beaty, “A Long-Planned Program to Remove Police from Some 911 Calls Launched As Denver’s Streets Erupted in Police Brutality Protests,” *Denverite*, 8 June 2020, <https://denverite.com/2020/06/08/a-long-planned-program-to-remove-police-from-some-911-calls-launched-as-denvers-streets-erupted-in-police-brutality-protests/>.

58. “Mobile Crisis Teams and Frontline Staff Safety: An Analysis of Existing Data,” Prepared by the Reach Out Response Network.

The Reach Out Response Network has developed an alternative civilian-led mental-health-crisis-intervention option as well, and engaged providers, consumers, families, and the community in the development of the program. Research and public response show that civilian first responders are a more appropriate and safer option than police.<sup>59</sup>

These models succeed in linking more people to service, increasing their wellbeing, and reducing healthcare needs and conflict with the justice system. Unfortunately, these programs have lengthy waiting lists, with thousands of people who need supports left unserved and at risk. Given the amount spent on policing mental health crises, the resources are certainly there to respond more appropriately. In fact, interviews with service providers indicate the costs of addressing these shortages fall far below the amount currently spent on policing.

Toronto could double its “safe beds” for only \$4 million. Ending wait lists for ACT teams would cost about \$7 million and wait lists for intensive case management could be eliminated for \$10 million per year. A service the size of the Gerstein Centre costs \$5 million annually. Supportive housing units, with staff, cost on average \$2,000-\$2,500 per month. Shifting mental health interventions from police to community services can make those costs manageable. Statistics Canada found that almost 20% of police interactions involve a person with a mental illness or substance use disorder,<sup>60</sup> an estimate widely seen as conservative. The CAHOOTS program in Oregon costs only a fraction of what policing the same calls used to cost.<sup>61</sup> Assuming even roughly similar patterns in Toronto, a civilian-led program would free up over \$150 million each year to provide the services people with mental health crises need—far more than the cost of the programs described here.

In short, civilian-led community services are able to provide more apportioned responses to people experiencing mental health crises, prevent the escalation and violence that has caused concern with police responses, better link people to proper care, and in the process save enough from the interventions to contribute significantly to funding the care. While mental health services overall will still require significant investment from the health care system, this reallocation would significantly alter the crisis response environment.

59. Amos Irwin and Betsy Pearl, “The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call,” Center for American Progress, 28 October 2020;

Reach Out Response Network, “Final Report on Civilian-Led Crisis Response Alternatives for Toronto,” 2020.

60. Jillian Boyce, Christine Rotenberg, and Maisie Karam, “Mental Health and Contact with Police in Canada,” *Juristat* 34, no.1 (2012): <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14176-eng.pdf?st=NXqDGly>.

61. Zusha Elinson, “When Mental Health Experts, Not Police, Are the First Responders,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 November 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-mental-health-experts-not-police-are-the-first-responders-1543071600>.

# Youth

## Youth Are Overpoliced, and the Impact Is Severe

Youth are the most intensively policed age group, with Black youth and Indigenous youth policed most of all.

Repeated studies done in the GTA show that Black and Indigenous residents and, in particular, Black youth are disproportionately policed, stopped, carded, and charged.<sup>62</sup> Various studies show Black youth are two to three times more likely to be stopped, searched, and arrested in Toronto than their white counterparts.<sup>63</sup>

Although Canadian data is less comprehensive on policing by age group, US studies show over 38% of all police contact with individuals was with young people between the ages of 16 and 24.<sup>64</sup> Youth in US traffic stops are two to three times more likely to be arrested, and three to four times as likely to be searched than drivers over 40.<sup>65</sup> These numbers are far worse for BIPOC youth.<sup>66</sup> US studies also show that the use of force is five times as likely against someone under 25 than against someone over 50.<sup>67</sup>

Most disturbingly, youth, and especially Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth, are more likely to face deadly force at the hands of police. Analysis in June of 2020 showed that 62% of the last 100 people who died at the hands of police officers in Canada were between the ages of 15 and 35 and that Black and Indigenous people were overrepresented.<sup>68</sup>

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62. Kanika Samuels-Wortley, "Youthful Discretion: Police Selection Bias in Access to Pre-Charge Diversion Programs in Canada," *Race and Justice* (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368719889093>;  
Ontario Human Rights Commission, Second Interim Report: Inquiry on Racial Profiling and Racial Discrimination of Black Persons by the Toronto Police Service;  
Jim Rankin and Patty Winsa, "As Criticism Piles Up, So Do the Police Cards," *The Toronto Star*, 27 September 2013, [https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/known\\_topolice2013/2013/09/27/as\\_criticism\\_piles\\_up\\_so\\_do\\_the\\_police\\_cards.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/known_topolice2013/2013/09/27/as_criticism_piles_up_so_do_the_police_cards.html);  
David Tanovich, *The Colour of Justice: Policing Race in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Law, 2006);  
Carol La Prairie, "Aboriginal Over-representation in the Criminal Justice System: A Tale of Nine Cities," *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 44 no. 2 (2002): 181-208;  
Carol Tator and Frances Henry, *Racial Profiling in Canada: Challenging the Myth of a Few Bad Apples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
63. Yunliang Meng, Sulaimon Giwa, and Uzo Anucha, "Is There Racial Discrimination in Police Stop-and-Searches of Black Youth? A Toronto Case Study," *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth* 7 no.1 (2015): 115-148 <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/cjfy>;  
Jim Rankin and Sandro Contenta, "Toronto Marijuana Arrests Reveal 'Startling' Racial Divide," *The Toronto Star*, 6 July 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2017/07/06/toronto-marijuana-arrests-reveal-startling-racial-divide.html>.
64. DC, Development Services Group, Inc., *Literature Review: Interactions Between Youth and Law Enforcement* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2018),
65. Christine Eith and Matthew Durose, *Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2008* (US Department of Justice, 2011), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpp08.pdf>;  
Robert Brown, "Black, White, and Unequal: Examining Situational Determinants of Arrest Decisions from Police-Suspect Encounters," *Criminal Justice Studies* 18, no.1 (2005): 51-68.
66. Robert Brown, "Black, White, and Unequal: Examining Situational Determinants of Arrest Decisions from Police-Suspect Encounters," *Criminal Justice Studies* 18, no.1 (2005): 51-68.
67. Christine Eith and Matthew Durose, *Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2008* (US Department of Justice, 2011), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpp08.pdf>.
68. Ryan Flanagan, "What We Know About the Last 100 People Shot and Killed by Police in Canada," *CTV News*, 19 June 2020, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/what-we-know-about-the-last-100-people-shot-and-killed-by-police-in-canada-1.4989794>.

This heavy policing occurs even though Canadian studies show youth were responsible for only 13% the Criminal Code violations,<sup>69</sup> and the violations for which youth are charged also tended to be less serious offences even where arrests are made.<sup>70</sup>

## **Intensive Policing Has Negative Effects on Many Other Long-term Outcomes for Youth**

This intensive policing is not without consequence. It results in what many refer to as the “criminalization” of youth behaviours and contributes to the “school to prison pipeline,” by transforming unremarkable youth behaviour among racialized populations into criminal acts with serious consequences.<sup>71</sup> Youth involved with the justice system are widely known to face serious long-term adverse impacts on employment, education, housing, and income.<sup>72</sup> US studies show that youth who have been arrested have drop-out rates that are 22% higher, postsecondary enrolment that is 16% lower,<sup>73</sup> future income that is 20% lower,<sup>74</sup> and higher rates of future involvement with the justice system.<sup>75</sup> Even when youth are found not to be guilty, youth that have been arrested are more likely to live in poverty, and be less inclined to engage in civic participation than similar youth who have never been arrested.<sup>76</sup>

## **Overpolicing Youth Does Not Make Communities Safer**

Less well known are the problems overpolicing creates for public safety. Evidence shows that overpolicing is more likely to increase crime rather than reduce it. Studies find that “get tough” and “scared straight” programs aimed at youth usually fail, and often create larger safety problems.<sup>77</sup> Targeting youth with those programs actually

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69. Public Safety Canada, *A Statistical Snapshot of Youth at Risk and Youth Offending in Canada* (Canada: National Crime Prevention Centre, 2018), <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ststclsnpsh-t-yth/index-en.aspx#fn48>.

70. Ibid.

71. Wanda Thomas Bernard and Holly Smith “Injustice, Justice, and Africentric Practice in Canada,” *Canadian Social Work Review / Revue canadienne de service social* 35, no. 1 (2018): 149–157.

72. Robin S. Engel et al., *Deconstructing the Power to Arrest: Lessons from Research* (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), Retrieved from [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/CPRP\\_Deconstructing%20the%20Power%20to%20Arrest\\_FINAL.PDF](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/CPRP_Deconstructing%20the%20Power%20to%20Arrest_FINAL.PDF).

73. Ibid.

74. Sam Allgood, David Mustard, and Ronald S. Warren, “Impact of Youth Criminal Behavior on Adult Earnings,” University of Georgia, 2007, Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228713289>.

75. Dinand Webbink et al., “Why Are Criminals Less Educated Than Non-Criminals? Evidence from a Cohort of Young Australian Twins,” *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 29, no. 1 (2013): 115–44; Thomas J. Mowen, John J. Brent, and Kyle J. Bares, “How Arrest Impacts Delinquency Over Time Between and Within Individuals,” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 16, no. 4 (2018): 358–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204017712560>.

76. Robin S. Engel et al., *Deconstructing the Power to Arrest: Lessons from Research* (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), Retrieved from [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/CPRP\\_Deconstructing%20the%20Power%20to%20Arrest\\_FINAL.PDF](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/CPRP_Deconstructing%20the%20Power%20to%20Arrest_FINAL.PDF).

77. Anthony Petrosino, Carolyn Turpin-Petrosino, Meghan E. Hollis-Peel, and Julia G. Lavenberg, “Scared Straight and Other Juvenile Awareness Programs for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency: A Systematic Review,” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 9, no. 1 (2013): <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2013.5>

James Finckenauer, *Scared Straight and the Panacea Phenomenon* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982).

Roy V. Lewis, “Scared Straight—California Style: Evaluation of the San Quentin SQUIRES Program,” *Criminal Justice & Behavior* 10, no. 2 (1983):209–226.

promotes anti-social attitudes that cause youth to “push back.”<sup>78</sup> They increase youths’ image of themselves as criminals,<sup>79</sup> and tend to produce higher crime rates than occur when aggressive policing is not employed.<sup>80</sup>

Even police-led youth-diversion programs (where police require youth they have arrested to enter programs to avoid charges) have been shown to offer less positive outcomes than community-led efforts. Police-led diversion programs often broaden the scope of justice system involvement, fail to identify the most relevant and productive interventions, and provide little long-term support, leading to fewer long-term positive outcomes.<sup>81</sup>

Overpolicing also undermines community relations, making efforts to address real safety issues more difficult.<sup>82</sup> Canadian research in October 2020 showed that young people, people of colour, and Indigenous people were more likely to have had negative interactions with police than other groups and also more likely to have negative views of police and to feel unsafe with increased police presence.<sup>83</sup>

These findings reflect extensive international research showing that previous negative interactions were significant drivers of attitudes toward police and willingness to engage police.<sup>84</sup>

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78. Larry K. Brendtro, “From Coercive to Strength-based Intervention: Responding to the Needs of Children in Pain,” presentation at Children and Youth: Their Needs, Our Commitment, a conference of the Alliance for Children and Families, Naples Beach, FL, 15 January 2004, retrieved from <https://cyc-net.org/profession/readarounds/ra-brendtro.html>;
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79. Stephanie A. Wiley and Finn-Aage Esbensen, “The Effect of Police Contact: Does Official Intervention Result in Deviance Amplification?” *Crime & Delinquency* 62, no. 3 (2016): 283–307;
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80. Anthony Petrosino et al., “Scared Straight and Other Juvenile Awareness Programs for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency: A Systematic Review,” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 9, no. 1 (2013): 1–55, <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2013.5>;
- James O. Finckenauer, *Scared Straight and the Panacea Phenomenon* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982);
- Roy V. Lewis, “Scared Straight—California Style: Evaluation of the San Quentin Squires Program,” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 10, no. 2 (1983): 209–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854883010002005>;
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81. Jane B. Sprott, Anthony N. Doob, and Carolyn Greene, *An Examination of the Toronto Police Service Youth Referral Program*, Toronto, ON: Centre of Criminology University of Toronto, Prepared for the Department of Justice Canada, 2004, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/yj-yj/exam/index.html>;
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82. American Public Health Association, “Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue” (Washington: 2018), available at <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2019/01/29/law-enforcement-violence>;
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83. Angus Reid Institute, Policing in Canada: Major Study Reveals Four Mindsets Driving Current Opinions and Future Policy Preferences (October 2020): [http://angusreid.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020.10.09\\_Policing.pdf](http://angusreid.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020.10.09_Policing.pdf).
84. Rod K. Brunson, “‘Police Don’t Like Black People’: African-American Young Men’s Accumulated Police Experiences,” *Criminology and Public Policy* 6, no. 1 (2007): 71–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2007.00423.x>;
- Andres F. Rengifo and Jennifer Fratello, “Perceptions of the Police by Immigrant Youth: Looking at Stop-and-Frisk and Beyond Using a New York City Sample,” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 13, no. 4 (2015): 409–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204014547591>;
- Anna Clancy et al., *Crime, Policing and Justice: The Experience of Ethnic Minorities* (London, UK: Home Office, 2001), Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242623007\\_Crime\\_Policing\\_and\\_Justice\\_the\\_Experience\\_of\\_Ethnic\\_Minorities\\_Findings\\_from\\_the\\_2000\\_British\\_Crime\\_Survey](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242623007_Crime_Policing_and_Justice_the_Experience_of_Ethnic_Minorities_Findings_from_the_2000_British_Crime_Survey).

## **Alternatives to Policing Produce Better Outcomes**

In place of intensive policing, communities are increasingly addressing youth issues with more community-based, asset-oriented approaches. These programs assess risk factors, facilitate access to protective factors, create stable relationships, and proactively link together services and supports rather than simply referring youth to programs. These positive interventions promote youth well-being, address conflict through conflict resolution, and establish positive relationships with youth that focus on support and guidance rather than punishment and control. These nonpolice models have helped reduce gun violence by 27% in Sacramento,<sup>85</sup> and cut incidents in the UK by 28% where they were applied, despite rising crime overall.<sup>86</sup>

## **Toronto Has Programs That Could Be Expanded to Better Address Safety Issues**

Toronto has over 70 youth outreach workers who engage youth. These staff have common cultural, racial, and Indigenous backgrounds, roots, and relationships in the communities where they work, and have shared lived experience with the youth they engage which enables them to act as “credible messengers” and trusted supports for youth in crisis. When placed on the front line as the primary response to low-level youth crimes, youth outreach workers proved to be a more effective intervention than standard policing. Staff at local youth hubs use similar approaches as “Game Changers” and “Peacebuilders” staff do in local high schools. These programs have been able to divert youth away from criminal activity and toward services that are relevant to their immediate needs. Trauma supports in response to gun crime have also helped youth facing serious crises. Supportive youth interventions not only help connect youth to programs, they also sustain this engagement by supporting youth to identify their own plans and actions to get their lives on track. However, these programs exist in a modest number of neighbourhoods and are not available in most of the city. Funding for program expansion has been delayed several times.

An estimated 5% of police calls are dedicated to nonviolent, noncriminal policing of youth, but the \$65 million that represents is more than enough to dramatically expand more effective youth

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85. Jason Corburn and Amanda Fukutome-Lopez, “Outcome Evaluation of Advance Peace Sacramento, 2018-19,” UC Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, 2020, <https://www.advancepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Corburn-and-F-Lopez-Advance-Peace-Sacramento-2-Year-Evaluation-03-2020.pdf>.

86. International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC), *International Report on Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Trends and Perspectives* (Montreal, QC: ICPC, 2008): 1-254, Retrieved from [https://cipc-icpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/International\\_Report\\_on\\_Crime\\_Prevention\\_and\\_Community\\_Safety\\_ANG.pdf](https://cipc-icpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/International_Report_on_Crime_Prevention_and_Community_Safety_ANG.pdf).

interventions. The number of Youth Hubs could be doubled for \$9 million, facilitating access to supports, mentorship, and healthy food for young people. Game Changers programs could provide support and conflict resolution in every high school for less than \$6 million annually. The number of youth outreach workers could be doubled for \$8 million, linking over 5,000 more youth to services and constructive activities and engagement, and better long-term outcomes.

## Gender-Based Violence

Despite decades of policy reform on gender-based violence (GBV), existing solutions still largely focus on police and courts, acting to punish and rehabilitate perpetrators, despite compelling evidence that shows that focusing on the support of survivors is the most effective tool for ensuring safety and reducing harm.<sup>87</sup>

### The “Criminal Justice” Approach Is Not Working

The dominant response to GBV—a police-led, criminal-justice-oriented model—shows a number of significant weaknesses.<sup>88</sup> Pro-arrest policies often do more harm than good,<sup>89</sup> frequently penalizing survivors themselves<sup>90</sup> and deterring reporting.<sup>91</sup> Survivors in racialized and vulnerable populations are particularly reticent about police involvement,<sup>92</sup> dissuaded by fear of being arrested, or having their partner arrested,<sup>93</sup> and concerns over language barriers, racist treatment, and even deportation.<sup>94</sup>

A 2008 survey of survivors’ experiences with the Toronto police substantiates such fears. In 11% of the cases, the woman was charged,<sup>95</sup> despite the primary aggressor, in all instances, having been the male partner.<sup>96</sup> The same survey suggested police were

87. Emilomo Ogbe et al., “A Systematic Review of IPV Interventions Focused on Improving Social Support and Mental Health Outcomes of Survivors,” *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 6 (2020): 20-21, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235177>.

88. Rashmi Goel, “Aboriginal Women and Political Pursuit in Canadian Sentencing Circles,” in *Restorative Justice and Violence Against Women*, edited by James Ptacek (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010): 72.

89. Thomas S. Whetstone, “Measuring the Impact of a Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Team,” *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 24, no. 3 (2001): 375, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510110401735>.

90. The Women Abuse Council of Toronto, “Documenting Women’s Experiences with the TPS in Domestic Violence Situations,” compiled by Stephanine Lanthier (Toronto: The Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2008): 2.

91. Eve S. Buzawa, Carl G. Buzawa, and Evan D. Stark, “Chapter 12: Community-Based and Court-Sponsored Diversions,” in *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (California: SAGE, 2015): 320.

92. Amanda V. McCormick, Irwin M. Cohen, and Daryl Pleas, “Chapter 1: Intimate Partner Violence in Canada: Policies, Practices, and Prevalence,” in *Domestic Violence in International Context*, edited by Diana Scharff Peterson and Julie A. Schroeder (New York: Routledge, 2017): 21-22.

93. Eve S. Buzawa, Carl G. Buzawa, and Evan D. Stark, “Chapter 12: Community-Based and Court-Sponsored Diversions,” in *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (California: SAGE, 2015): 320.

94. Amanda V. McCormick, Irwin M. Cohen, and Daryl Pleas, “Chapter 1: Intimate Partner Violence in Canada: Policies, Practices, and Prevalence,” in *Domestic Violence in International Context*, edited by Diana Scharff Peterson and Julie A. Schroeder (New York: Routledge, 2017): 23;

Ryan C. Shorey, Vanessa Tirone, and Gregory L. Stewart, “Coordinated Community Response Components for Victims of IPV: A Review of the Literature,” *Aggressive Violent Behaviour* 19, no. 4 (2014): 372.

95. The Women Abuse Council of Toronto, “Documenting Women’s Experiences with the TPS in Domestic Violence Situations,” compiled by Stephanine Lanthier (Toronto: The Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2008): 2.

96. *Ibid.*, 13.

uniquely slow to respond to the incidents reported by an Indigenous woman.<sup>97</sup> Such negative experiences add to a large body of evidence that “the criminal justice system tends to be limited in what it can provide to women survivors.”<sup>98</sup> Studies have also found survivors were 64% more likely to have died if their partners were arrested and jailed and that results were even more dramatic when disaggregated by race, with Black survivors 98% more likely to face lethal retaliation.<sup>99</sup> Given this pattern, it is not surprising that women infrequently report GBV. Research shows less than half of incidents are reported to police,<sup>100</sup> and that police policies play a significant role in minimizing women’s willingness to report.<sup>101</sup>

Attempts to resolve inadequacies of the traditional police response have inspired the popularization of a “community coordinated response” (CCR) with multiple service providers and agencies joining together to provide survivors with necessary resources.<sup>102</sup> Despite the intention of filling in gaps in service provision for survivors, victims’ advocates tend to be sidelined<sup>103</sup> in a dynamic dominated by law enforcement officers who prioritize institutional objectives over the voice of the survivor.<sup>104</sup> Police-led CCRs typically remain narrowly focused on the criminal justice system<sup>105</sup> emphasizing increased rates of perpetrator arrest, prosecution, and sentencing<sup>106</sup> while neglecting discussion of longer-term outcomes for survivors. There is little evidence that the tools of the justice system make survivors safer.<sup>107</sup> For example, in spite of the widespread reliance on Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) in the US and Partner Assault Response (PAR) programs in Canada as part of sentencing and plea bargains, the efficacy of court-mandated treatment plans is

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97. *Ibid.*, 15.

98. *Ibid.*, 4.

99. Lawrence W. Sherman and Heather M. Harris, “Increased Death Rates of Domestic Violence Victims From Arresting Vs. Warning Suspects in the Milwaukee Domestic Violence Experiment (MildVE),” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 11, no. 1–20 (2015): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-014-9203-x>.

100. Eve S. Buzawa, Carl G. Buzawa, and Evan D. Stark, “Chapter 12: Community-Based and Court-Sponsored Diversions,” in *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (California: SAGE, 2015): 320;

Andrew R. Klein, “Practical Implications of Current Domestic Violence Research: For Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, and Judges” (Washington: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2009): 5–6.

101. Eve S. Buzawa, Carl G. Buzawa, and Evan D. Stark, “Chapter 12: Community-Based and Court-Sponsored Diversions,” in *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (California: SAGE, 2015): 320.

102. Ryan C. Shorey, Vanessa Tirone, and Gregory L. Stewart, “Coordinated Community Response Components for Victims of IPV,” 365.

103. Karen Cleaver et al., “A Review of UK-based Multi-agency Approaches to Early Intervention in Domestic Abuse: Lessons To Be Learnt From Existing Evaluation Studies,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 46 (2019): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2019.02.005>.

104. Sarah L. Stewart, “Enacting Entangled Work: Interagency Collaboration in Domestic and Family Violence Work,” *Violence Against Women*, 26 no. 2 (2020): 205;

Gemma Hamilton, Lisa Harris, and Anastasia Powell, “Policing Repeat and High Risk Family Violence: Police and Service-Sector Perceptions of a Coordinated Model,” *Police Practice and Service* (2019): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2019.1697267>.

105. Sandra M. Stith et al., “Systemic Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence Treatment,” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 38, no. 1 (2012): 223, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2011.00245.x>.

106. Gemma Hamilton, Lisa Harris, and Anastasia Powell, “Policing Repeat and High Risk Family Violence: Police and Service-Sector Perceptions of a Coordinated Model,” *Police Practice and Service* (2019): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2019.1697267>.

107. Laura Johnson and Amanda Stylianou, “Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature,” *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* (2020): 2, [doi: 10.1177/1524838020957984](https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838020957984).



dubious.<sup>108</sup> Evaluations of BIP outcomes yield poor results<sup>109</sup> finding treatment effects small to nonexistent,<sup>110</sup> and sometimes reporting adverse effects: offenders who were incarcerated and participated in a court-mandated BIP were significantly more likely to re-offend.<sup>111</sup> Research on Canadian PAR programs generates similar concerns.<sup>112</sup>

## Social Supports Improve Outcomes

Improving Toronto's GBV response will require moving towards an approach that is survivor-centred and community-based and shifting away from an overreliance on policing and the courts. While organizing an adequate volume of effective programs in Toronto will inevitably prove a significant challenge, evidence suggests that this model is the most promising means of providing survivors with a comprehensive and enduring network of support. The Dallas Domestic Violence Task Force (DDVTF) is one exemplary model of an urban coordinated response. Unlike many CCRs, the DDVTF has the police take a decidedly back-seat role, with law enforcement organizations constituting a mere 13% of responding participants.<sup>113</sup> The majority of organizations involved in the DDVTF CCR are victim-oriented nonprofits<sup>114</sup> with 63% focused on victim services, advocacy, and counselling;<sup>115</sup> 29% focused on emergency shelter and transitional housing;<sup>116</sup> and 8% working on job training and educational support for survivors.<sup>117</sup> Similar success is evident in survivor-centred multi-agency programs such as MARAC<sup>118</sup> and Safe at Home.<sup>119</sup> Social support mediated interventions also appear to be a critical component of an effective response to GBV. Whether in the form of peer support, counselling interventions, or the provision of resources and information, evidence suggests positive outcomes for survivors,

108. Thomas S. Whetstone, "Measuring the Impact of a Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Team," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 24, no. 3 (2001): 375, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510110401735>.

109. Eve S. Buzawa, Carl G. Buzawa, and Evan D. Stark, "Chapter 12: Community-Based and Court-Sponsored Diversions," in *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (California: SAGE, 2015): 331; Sandra M. Stith and Eric E. McCollum, "Conjoint Treatment of Couples Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Violence," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 16, no. 4 (2011): 315, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2011.04.012>.

110. Sandra M. Stith et al., "Systemic Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence Treatment," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 38, no. 1 (2012): 223, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2011.00245.x>.

111. Laura Johnson and Amanda Stylianou, "Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* (2020): 11.

112. Katreena Scott and Laura-Lynn Stewart, "Attitudinal Change in Participants of Partner Assault Response (PAR) Programs: A Pilot Project" (Department of Justice: Canada, 2004), retrieved from [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/crime/rr06\\_fv2-rr06\\_vf2/rr06\\_fv2.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/crime/rr06_fv2-rr06_vf2/rr06_fv2.pdf).

113. Denise Paquette Boots et al., "Coordinated Community Response: Toward a More Systematic Response to Domestic Violence in an Urban Setting," *Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance* 23 (2018): 32; Karen Cleaver et al., "A Review of UK Based Multi-Agency Approaches to Early Intervention in Domestic Abuse: Lessons To Be Learnt From Existing Evaluation Studies," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 46 (2019): 152, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2019.02.005>.

114. Denise Paquette Boots et al., "Coordinated Community Response: Toward a More Systematic Response to Domestic Violence in an Urban Setting," *Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance* 23 (2018): 39.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, 2020, <http://www.womanact.ca/marac.html>.

119. Karen Crinall, Jenny Hurley, Lucy Healy, "'Safe at Home' Programs in the Context of the Victorian Integrated Family Violence Service System Reforms: A Review of the Literature," SAFER Research Program, 2014, <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2014-09/apo-nid41467.pdf>.

including: a reduction in the experience of abuse and partner aggression;<sup>120</sup> increased service-seeking behaviour;<sup>121</sup> and reduced rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression.<sup>122</sup>

Evidence indicates that online therapeutic interventions lead to the same outcomes as an “in person” delivery.<sup>123</sup> This is especially welcome news given the realities brought on by COVID-19 with quarantine leading to an increase in rates of domestic abuse,<sup>124</sup> while simultaneously presenting new-found practical challenges to in-person treatment.<sup>125</sup> This finding is also especially promising for helping survivors in hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations who might otherwise be unwilling to access care.<sup>126</sup>

Community-based interventions, with community members themselves acting as a resource for the intervention, also have promising outcomes<sup>127</sup> and appear especially well-suited to addressing survivors in marginalized groups.<sup>128</sup> Community members can be trained and mobilized to help tackle GBV. Results of such training indicate lower rates of GBV among the intervention community.<sup>129</sup> Network-based interventions and community-based restorative justice programs are also especially valuable for their capacity to ensure sustained access to ongoing social support as well as more effective prevention.<sup>130</sup> Existing models of community-based GBV intervention include the work of faith-based institutes such as Shimtuh,<sup>131</sup> as well as INCITE!, the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, and the Chrysalis Collective.<sup>132</sup>

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120. Emilomo Ogbe et al., “A Systematic Review of IPV Interventions Focused on Improving Social Support and Mental Health Outcomes of Survivors,” *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 6 (2020): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235177>.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid.

124. Nicole Bogart, “Advocates Scramble to Help Domestic Abuse Victims As Calls Skyrocket During COVID-19,” *CTV News*, 3 May 2020, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/advocates-scramble-to-help-domestic-abuse-victims-as-calls-skyrocket-during-covid-19-1.4923109>.

125. Kasia Proce, “Domestic Violence Calls Reach an All Time High,” *The Medium*, 28 September 2020, <https://themedium.ca/news/domestic-violence-calls-reach-an-all-time-high/>.

126. Emilomo Ogbe et al., “A Systematic Review of IPV Interventions Focused on Improving Social Support and Mental Health Outcomes of Survivors,” *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 6 (2020): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235177>.

127. Ibid.

128. Amanda V. McCormick, Irwin M. Cohen, and Daryl Pleas, “Chapter 1: Intimate Partner Violence in Canada: Policies, Practices, and Prevalence,” in *Domestic Violence in International Context*, edited by Diana Scharff Peterson and Julie A. Schroeder (New York: Routledge, 2017): 22-23;

Eve S. Buzawa, Carl G. Buzawa, and Evan D. Stark, “Chapter 12: Community-Based and Court-Sponsored Diversions,” in *Responding to Domestic Violence: The Integration of Criminal Justice and Human Services* (California: SAGE, 2015): 320-321;

Mimi E. Kim and Ann Rhee Menzie, “Models of Collaboration Between Community Service Agencies and Faith-based Institutions,” in *Religion and Men’s Violence Against Women*, edited by A.J. Johnson (New York: Springer Science and Business Media, 2015): 437-438.

129. Emilomo Ogbe et al., “A Systematic Review of IPV Interventions Focused on Improving Social Support and Mental Health Outcomes of Survivors,” *PLoS ONE* 15, no. 6 (2020): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235177>.

130. Ibid.

131. Mimi E. Kim and Ann Rhee Menzie, “Models of Collaboration Between Community Service Agencies and Faith-based Institutions,” in *Religion and Men’s Violence Against Women*, edited By A.J. Johnson (New York: Springer Science and Business Media, 2015): 435.

132. Heather L. McCauley et al., “Advancing Theory, Methods, and Dissemination in Sexual Violence Research to Build a More Equitable Future: An Intersectional, Community-Engaged Approach,” *Violence Against Women* 25, no. 16 (2019): 1918.

## Toronto Has More Effective Models That Can Be Expanded Now

Toronto police responded to 20,355 domestic violence calls in 2019,<sup>133</sup> making up 2% of total calls at a cost of roughly \$25 million. These and other justice system approaches cost \$545.2 million across Canada in 2009,<sup>134</sup> including investments into specialized domestic violence court systems,<sup>135</sup> police units, and funding for offender treatment<sup>136</sup> despite scant evidence that these tools rehabilitate offenders, or increase survivor safety.

However, programs that provide women with support and safe alternatives are difficult to access. A Hamilton study in 2015 found that service demand for GBV survivors exceeded service access by more than nine to one.<sup>137</sup> This shortfall has a particularly negative effect on Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, who tend to rely more heavily on these supports. Indigenous people are about three times as likely to use women's shelters as the population as a whole, and racialized people are significantly overrepresented as well.<sup>138</sup> Refocusing existing resources on supports for survivors is likely to yield better outcomes.

## 911 Dispatch

Ensuring that the right person intervenes to promote public safety requires a process for dispatching responses that reflect the real safety needs of communities.

### Most 911 Calls Aren't Really About Policing

As retired Maj. Neill Franklin, who served as head of training for the Baltimore Police Department, notes "Many calls don't involve a crime. And when they do, many of those crimes are minor and related to quality-of-life issues such as homelessness, mental health disorders, or substance misuse. We need to stop expecting police to do social work and start sending the right trained professionals to address low-level crimes and noncriminal calls for service."<sup>139</sup> These

133. Meredith Bond and Faiza Amin, "Domestic Violence Numbers Rising Across the GTA: Police," *City News*, 22 January 2020 <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2020/01/22/domestic-violence-numbers-rising-across-the-gta/>.

134. Tim Zhang et al., "An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009" (Canada: Department of Justice Canada, 2009): [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/tr12\\_7/tr12\\_7.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/tr12_7/tr12_7.pdf).

135. Amanda V. McCormick, Irwin M. Cohen, and Daryl Pleas, "Chapter 1: Intimate Partner Violence in Canada: Policies, Practices, and Prevalence," in *Domestic Violence in International Context*, edited by Diana Scharff Peterson and Julie A. Schroeder (New York: Routledge, 2017): 29-30.

136. *Ibid.*, 20.

137. Deirdre Pike, Meghan Fox, and Heather Bamsey, *Violence Against Women Services in Hamilton: Assessing Gaps and Barriers in Service*, Prepared for the Woman Abuse Working Group by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, April 2016, retrieved from <http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Violence-Against-Women-Services-in-Hamilton-Assessing-Gaps-and-Barriers-in-Service.pdf>.

138. City of Toronto, *Street Needs Assessment: Results Report*, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/99be-2018-SNA-Results-Report.pdf>.

139. Amos Irwin and Betsy Pearl, "The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call," Center for American Progress, 28 October, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/10/28/492492/community-responder-model/>.

police-led, and even police-involved responses are not only often unnecessary, they can also create challenges when not appropriate to the situation. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, “the mere presence of a law enforcement vehicle, an officer in uniform, and/or a weapon ... has the potential to escalate a situation” when a person is in crisis.<sup>140</sup> For these calls, studies indicate that civilian response by staff, such as clinicians, crisis intervention specialists, or peer navigators, can provide valuable skills and perspectives on the call.<sup>141</sup>

Dispatchers at 911 could be dispatching civilian responses in a significant number of calls. Recent analysis conducted by the Center for American Progress (CAP) and the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) examined 911 police calls for service from eight US cities and found that 23% to 39% of calls were low priority or nonurgent, while only 18% to 34% of calls were life-threatening emergencies.<sup>142</sup> In Toronto, 911 calls are predominately lower priority and non-urgent and non-emergency calls. Over 58% of all 911 calls involve no police dispatched, and almost half are classified as non-emergency.<sup>143</sup> A recent US study found top-priority, life-threatening emergencies made up the smallest portion of 911 calls, from 18% in Seattle to 34% in Hartford.<sup>144</sup>

## **Non-police Responses to 911 Calls Make Sense**

Clearly, 911 can dispatch more appropriate personnel in far more situations than is currently the case. Unfortunately, even in jurisdictions with highly effective civilian response services, the 911 service, which is managed by the police, continues to primarily dispatch police to circumstances where civilian response is appropriate.<sup>145</sup> Marginalized communities are increasingly disinclined to call 911 because of their concerns about police response.<sup>146</sup> Realigning 911 dispatch will be a significant component of any process to ensure the most appropriate staff intervene with the public to promote community safety.

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140. IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, “Responding to Persons Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis” (Alexandria, VA: 2018), available at <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/MentalIllnessBinder2018.pdf>.

141. Calgary Homeless Foundation, “Dimensions of Promising Practice for Street Outreach Supports in Ending Homelessness” (Calgary, AB: 2013), available at <http://calgaryhomeless.com/content/uploads/Outreach-Dimensions-of-Promising-Practice-Oct-2013.pdf>.

142. Amos Irwin and Betsy Pearl, “The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call,” Center for American Progress, 28 October, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/10/28/492492/community-responder-model/>.

143. Toronto Police Service, *2018 Annual Statistical Report*, 2018, [www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/2018statsreport.pdf](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/2018statsreport.pdf).

144. Amos Irwin and Betsy Pearl, “The Community Responder Model: How Cities Can Send the Right Responder to Every 911 Call,” Center for American Progress, 28 October, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/10/28/492492/community-responder-model/>.

145. Christie Thompson, “This City Stopped Sending Police to Every 911 Call: Riding along with the Civilian ‘Crisis Responders’ of Olympia, Washington,” The Marshall Project, 24 July, 2020, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/07/24/crisis-responders>.

146. Matthew Desmond, Andrew V. Papachristos, and David S. Kirk, “Police Violence and Citizen Crime Reporting in the Black Community,” *American Sociological Review* 81 no. 5 (2016): 857–876, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312241666349>.

## Effective Alternatives Already Exist

211 and 311 are already in operation in Toronto. They currently manage hundreds of thousands of calls<sup>147</sup> for a wide variety of service needs. 911 staff have already begun to explore reallocating calls to these services.<sup>148</sup> Ensuring calls go to a dispatcher whose primary goal is to send the right staff to the right task seems like the best option.

# Opportunities For Action

The areas of activity described provide immediate and compelling opportunities for action. More appropriate interventions are available—at a lower cost, with better outcomes—when we send support workers to address issues with vulnerable people instead of sending police. Since the overwhelming majority of these settings do not require the use of force or the power to arrest, support workers are more logical as first responders, and civilian-first responses in other jurisdictions demonstrate the safety and reliability of these models.

Addressing systemic discrimination and other issues with policing requires our ongoing, diligent, and dedicated efforts. The areas of activity outlined here provide an immediate opportunity to begin to move to models that better serve marginalized communities—reallocating resources to support vulnerable people, improve community safety, and produce better outcomes in the short and long term. Toronto should take action on them now.

## Consequently, We Recommend That:

1. The City reaffirm its commitment to models of community safety that increase the safety of all Toronto's diverse communities.
2. The City recognize that policing is not the most appropriate means of addressing community safety in all settings, and shift responsibility and resources to more appropriate strategies as follows:
  - a. Initiate the necessary processes to plan and implement the reallocation of approximately \$100 million in funds currently

147. Find Help, *Find Help 211 Central 2018-2019 Annual Report*, <http://www.findhelp.ca/sites/default/files/Findhelp%20-%20211%20Central%20-%20Annual%20Report%202019%20%28ENG%29.pdf>; Toronto, "2018 Budget: 311 Toronto" (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2018): <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/910e-311-2018-Op-Public-Book.pdf>.

148. Ibid.

used to police people experiencing homelessness and invest those funds in civilian interventions including homeless outreach, drop-ins, safe consumption sites, and transitions to supportive and affordable housing.

b. Initiate the necessary processes to plan and implement the reallocation of approximately \$150 million in funds currently used to police people with mental health challenges and invest those funds in the expansion of civilian crisis response programs, safe beds, ACT teams, Intensive Case Management, and other crisis services.

c. Initiate the necessary processes to plan and implement the reallocation of approximately \$65 million in funds currently used to police youth and invest those funds in the doubling of Youth Hubs and Youth Outreach Workers and providing peer mediation and alternative conflict-resolution supports in all Toronto secondary schools.

d. Initiate the necessary processes to plan and implement the reallocation of approximately \$25 million in funds from criminal justice interventions in gender-based violence to programs that support survivors in navigating their safety needs and the implementation of transformative justice programs to prevent future violence.

3. To implement these changes in responses to safety issues, the City initiate the necessary processes to plan and implement the reassignment of 911 services to an accountable, independent, non-police emergency-response provider tasked with assigning the most appropriate personnel and services to calls and concerns from the public.