Reimagining Public Safety in Chicago

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This report is one in a series of research projects undertaken as part of the Policing Project's Reimagining Public Safety initiative.

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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Every day in the United States, hundreds of thousands of people call 911 for assistance. In most jurisdictions, police officers are the only available responders for a diverse set of service demands — from welfare checks to the needs of unhoused individuals, from animal control and noise complaints to mental health crises. Yet law enforcement professionals and community members largely agree on a fundamental point: we simply ask the police to do too much, without the necessary training or skill set. Overreliance on the police is problematic for everyone, including the police themselves. It leaves many underlying problems unaddressed, and policing always carries with it the possibility of using, or over-using, force and enforcement — both of which have an especially pronounced negative impact on Black and Brown communities. Unnecessary reliance on the police also takes them away from their central mission of addressing serious crime.

This report is one of a series of city reports by the Policing Project at New York University School of Law, as part of its project on Reimagining Public Safety (RPS). RPS helps communities deliver effective public safety services without overreliance on police. It's part of a national effort to learn from best practices, innovate, and facilitate dialogue among all stakeholders. Its goal is to help jurisdictions put in place comprehensive and integrated responses, so that a broad spectrum of community needs are met effectively, and traditional police resources can be focused where they are needed most. For those unfamiliar with alternative response and its tremendous potential to improve lives and communities, this short video from a convening the Policing Project co-hosted with Georgetown's Center for Innovations in Community Safety provides an introduction.

This report was commissioned by a philanthropic community in Chicago committed to social and racial justice. Begun in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests, the purpose of this city report is to assess and learn from the state of Chicago's innovation around public safety, by — among other things — interviewing community residents and municipal leaders. The other cities the Policing Project has studied are Denver, Tucson, and San Francisco. The reports on those cities are available at www.safetyreimagined.org.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, from The Policing Project at New York University School of Law's Reimagining Public Safety Initiative, explores the use of alternatives to traditional policing and police response. Funded by local Chicago philanthropy, the study not only analyzes the public safety challenges facing the city, but also identifies a series of solutions.

This report is based on the Policing Project's extensive engagement both with the City of Chicago and with alternative response programs around the country. The Policing Project has been involved for five years in implementing a community policing program for Chicago. In preparing this report it conducted extensive interviews with community members and municipal stakeholders connected with Chicago government and the Chicago Police Department (CPD). This report is the fourth in a series that also included reports on Denver, San Francisco, and Tucson.

The report recommends action on two facets of alternatives to traditional policing that would benefit Chicago and Chicagoans:

> 911 Alternative Response: By adopting alternative approaches, including sending non-police responders trained to meet the needs of 911 callers, many cities are taking a load off dangerously overburdened police forces, and better meeting the needs of communities. Chicago should do the same.
>
> Community Policing: This is an important, perhaps essential, alternative to traditional policing. Over the long run, fully implementing a comprehensive community policing program is the best, if not the only, way to build trust between the Chicago Police Department and the people it serves, allowing them to address violent crime together.

Over-Policing & Under-Protecting

In most jurisdictions, police officers are the only responders for a diverse set of needs — from welfare checks, animal control, and noise complaints to mental health crises. But law enforcement professionals and community members largely agree on a fundamental point: we simply ask the police to do too much, without the necessary training or skill set. Overreliance on the police leaves many underlying problems unaddressed. In addition, policing always carries with it the possibility of using, or over-using, force and enforcement — both of which have an especially pronounced negative impact on Black and Brown communities. Unnecessary overreliance on the police also takes them away from their central mission of addressing serious crime.

The relationship between the Chicago Police Department and the city's communities, particularly in Black and Brown neighborhoods, is long and troubled. The department has been accused of both over-policing and under-protecting its residents.

A consistent theme from the research was that police engaged in enforcement in particular neighborhoods without legitimate reason. Respondents discussed being searched and pulled over by police without just cause. One woman talked about how her son had been humiliatingly searched so consistently that "he automatically holds his hands up in the air" and "opens his legs up and sticks his tongue out."

At the same time as respondents described unnecessary and inappropriate enforcement, they also expressed the view that in their neighborhood's police also were under-responsive when people needed them. As one person stated, "You know, it depends on the area. Like, the area I moved out of was primarily Hispanic. A very high crime area and the responses were very slow. Like, took them forever to get there."

Chicago's Existing Alternative Approaches to Traditional Policing

CPD needs to build connections with the people it serves with a comprehensive community policing strategy: a citywide, neighborhood by neighborhood program that would serve as an alternative to the sort of traditional policing that long has been an issue in the city.

Chicago already has several alternatives to traditional policing in place upon which it could and should build. These include:

> Crisis Assistance Response & Engagement Program (CARE), a city-run and -funded program that sends multidisciplinary teams to respond to low-risk 911 calls relating to mental health and substance issues. It operates only in certain neighborhoods and during certain times of day, which limits its effectiveness.
>
> A range of non-profit programs and philanthropic efforts focused on gun violence, such as Create Real Economic Destiny (CRED), Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P), and Scaling Community Violence Intervention for a Safer Chicago (SC2). The city can learn a great deal from the successful best practices of these programs.
>
> Chicago Neighborhood Policing Initiative (CNPI) facilitates the co-production of public safety with community members by ensuring that officers have consistent neighborhood assignments and dedicated time "off the radio" so they can develop

relationships and engage in community safety problem solving with residents. Like CARE, CNPI only operates in a few neighborhoods within the city.

Community & Municipal Views on Community in Policing in Chicago

This report was informed by one-on-one interviews and community conversations with nearly 70 Chicagoans about their personal experiences with policing and public safety. The project also had more than two dozen meetings and interviews with current and former Chicago municipal officials and Chicago Police Department contractors and consultants. They discussed their views on the role of the police and barriers to implementing alternative response programs.

Chicago community participants struggled even to describe public safety, saying they *had never experienced it*. Their neighborhoods have been impacted by poverty and crime, and they have a very pessimistic view of government and its capacity to provide public safety. Respondents stated that public safety "doesn't exist" or "is a fantasy." Those who were able to define public safety emphasized bodily safety. They talked about safety as being able to run errands, go to work and generally navigate the city without taking precautions. Specifically, public safety was to "make the streets safe" enough that "communities can come together," "kids can play," and the "elderly can walk down the street."

Residents consistently reported that people of color see police officers as a threat, who do their work differently in Black and Brown neighborhoods. A community member said, "To be a young Hispanic boy growing up in this city, it's hard. Because you're automatically, you know, labeled a gang member, a bad kid. My kids don't look white at all. My son, I feel like they … he was always being targeted."

At the same time, community respondents expressed great empathy for the difficult job police officers in the city were asked to perform.

Municipal officials had similar concerns. Most were cognizant of the deep-rooted problems Chicago faces, including racial inequity and disinvestment, which impact public safety. They tended to emphasize the role of government both in creating and in undermining safe communities. These municipal respondents discussed a variety of challenges within and related to CPD — from mismanagement to outdated data systems — that served as obstacles to advancing public safety in the city. They also referred to CPD's strained relationship with the community and emphasized CPD's inability to proactively build connections with the people it serves. Finally, the municipal respondents expressed disappointment in a political system that often failed to enact real change and deliver genuine public safety.

Recommendations: Call for Action

Existing initiatives in Chicago, such as CARE and CNPI, although modest in scope, can serve as a foundation for progress. The report calls for expanding substantially the use of alternative responders not only to assist individuals experiencing behavioral health crises, but for a host of other more mundane matters from animal control to traffic collision response to online crime reporting. Similar successful models across the country offer practical guides to viable action and serve as proof of concept for implementing alternative response at a far greater scope and scale.

Based on research that identifies both issues of over-enforcement and under-policing from community and municipal respondents, as well as additional national research in other cities, the following are a set of recommendations:

- Expand CARE. CARE currently operates within a small geographic area during limited hours. Expanding its reach and operating hours would allow it to respond to many more calls.

- Expand into call areas beyond CARE. CARE primarily responds to low-risk 911 calls with a mental health component. Cities around the country use alternative approaches to respond to many other types of calls — in some cases tens of thousands of them — including welfare checks, traffic collisions, parking and towing issues, recovering stolen vehicles, burglar alarms, and animal control. Diverting these calls in Chicago would ease the burden on CPD and allow officers to focus on violent crime and other serious safety issues.

- Mediation response teams. Sending out trained mediators to deal with nonviolent complaints, such as noise and perceived misuse of public space, that may require a more nuanced understanding of legal and cultural issues, would better address community needs.

- Greater utilization of online reporting. Online reporting would allow the city to resolve residents' concerns without immediately dispatching police. The City of Chicago has an existing online reporting platform and a staffed 311 system upon which it can build.

- Focus on community policing and building trust. Community members and the CPD need to work together to "co-produce" public safety. Chicago's community policing strategy should have a structure that allows officers to spend time "off the radio" to get to know community members, and this structure should be

implemented at the highest levels of the CPD. Every member of CPD should be a community-oriented officer, but a true community policing program requires serious management and administrative efforts to implement effectively.

- Limiting traffic stops. Chicago relies heavily on traffic stops to fight crime. Many of the traffic stops are pretextual, meaning they are based on vehicle and driving violations but would not have been made but for the assumption that they help to fight violent crime. A large and growing body of literature calls into question the efficacy of these stops in fighting crime, yet they require a great amount of police resources that could be put to better use in other ways, including community policing.

Chicago is lacking neither in plans nor ideas for how to serve its citizenry. The stumbling block has been the political will, commitment to execution, and capacity to do so. This is where we urge the city to focus its attention.

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We are grateful for the research led by Drs. Tamara Leech, Monica Bell, and Sara Wakefield. We thank Rita Gonzalez and Katie Camp for their research work engaging with respondents. And we are appreciative of the editing and research support by Isabel Levin.

BACKGROUND ON CHICAGO

The relationship between the Chicago Police Department and the city's residents, particularly in Black and Brown communities, is long and troubled. The department has been accused of both under-protecting and over-policing citizens. This has bred a deep distrust of the police, which is both reflected in and amplified by the CPD's strained ability to perform a most basic and essential function: clearing cases. CPD solves roughly half as many cases in primarily Black neighborhoods than it does in white ones, putting the clearance rate for these cases far below the national average.[1]

This lack of trust is built on a long history of racialized policing and police violence in Chicago's Black and Brown communities, which has been documented extensively elsewhere, including in the Police Accountability Task Force Report.[2] High-profile killings of Black individuals continue to plague the city.[3] And there are significant disparities in enforcement. As late as 2022, 57% of traffic stops in Chicago involved Black people despite their only representing about 29% of the population.[4]

Reform and anti-violence efforts

In response to repeated expressions of profound concern about policing in Chicago, its municipal government, activist and advocate communities, vibrant non-profit and philanthropic entities, and CPD itself all have worked toward reform and new anti-violence efforts. Many take the form of alternatives to traditional policing, the focus of this report. However, structural reforms, in particular may bear upon the ability of the city to adopt, and the necessity of adopting, alternatives to traditional police response.

Structural reform

The challenges

Following the delayed release of the video showing Laquan McDonald's 2014 killing, then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel formed the Police Accountability Task Force (PATF), headed by then-Police Board President (and later Mayor) Lori Lightfoot. Prompted by the work of the PATF, the city completely re-worked its system of accountability and oversight for the Chicago Police Department and its officers. The Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA), suffering a profound lack of public trust, was replaced with the Civilian Office of Police Accountability

(COPA). PATF also recommended, and the city created, the new role of Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety, the office of which "exercises independent civilian oversight of COPA, the Police Board, and CPD, including its Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA), conducting inspections, evaluations, and reviews of the processes, functions, operations, and policies of all of those departments."[5]

The federal Department of Justice completed an investigation into the Chicago Police Department, which led to an eventual consent decree between the Illinois Attorney General's office and the city in 2019.[6] That decree called for extensive changes within CPD, among them that the city and CPD "integrate a community policing philosophy into CPD operations," as well as adopt responses to behavioral and mental health crises.[7]

Progress: Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability

After years of dedicated grassroots organizing by members of the Empowering Communities for Public Safety coalition (including the Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability, known as GAPA, and the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, known as CAARPR), in 2021 the Chicago City Council voted to establish the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability.[8] The purposes of the Community Commission include to "increase public safety," "ensure that Department activities are directed toward maximizing public health and safety while minimizing any harm to city residents," "ensure that Department resources are not used inefficiently to address public health or safety issues that other professionals are better equipped to address," and "encourage preventative, proactive, community-based, and evidence-based approaches to public safety." The Community Commission can set policy for CPD and weigh in on who is selected as Superintendent, as well as the Police Board and the Civilian Office of Police Accountability. It also is charged to "identify and recommend to the City Council ways to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the use of public safety resources," and to "collaborate with the Department regarding the CAPS program and other existing or future Department-led community policing programs." One of the most novel and important aspects of the Commission is its mission to foster community engagement and community voice in how Chicago is policed. Central to this task are the District Councils: three elected officials in each police district who work with and advise the Commission about community concerns.[9] Representatives from the District Councils also form a nominating committee for the selection of the Commission itself.[10]

Alternative response models: co-response & non-police response

Municipalities around the country are engaging in innovation designed to better address the needs of people who call 911 regarding individuals in crisis. One of the most frequently cited initiatives in this category is CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) in Eugene, Oregon, which has spurred numerous programs around the country, including Denver's STAR (Support Team Assisted Response), Albuquerque Community Safety's suite of alternative response programs, San Francisco's Street Crisis Response Teams, Olympia, Washington's Crisis Response Unit, and Atlanta's Policing Alternatives and Diversion program, among many others. While some of these new programs were in the planning stages prior to 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, a wide range of new models and novel approaches to non-police response have proliferated around the country.

There are a number of possible benefits to alternative response models. By sending professionals better equipped to address a crisis, the caller may have their concern taken care of more capably than if police arrived alone. Individuals can receive more customized care in the moment and more effective connections to follow-up services. Superior outcomes during a time of need also can improve trust in government. Alternative response also can help prevent harms and risks of harms caused by unnecessary police involvement, including uses of force and entanglement with the criminal legal system. Finally, by having non-police first responders address a range of different call types, police are freed up to focus on violent crime.

Alternative response tends to take one of two forms: "co-response," in which non-police responders such as social workers accompany police officers, and "non-police response"—sometimes referred to simply as "alternative response" — in which response teams do not include police at all. Although alternative response had its genesis in behavioral and mental health calls, it is expanding rapidly in some jurisdictions to encompass much more.

CHICAGO'S ALTERNATIVES TO POLICING PROGRAMS

These are some of Chicago's programs to adopt alternatives to traditional policing:

Crisis Assistance Response & Engagement Program (CARE)

Following years of sustained community advocacy, in 2021 Chicago began its Crisis Assistance Response & Engagement Program, or CARE, a city-run and -funded co-response and alternative response program. Under CARE, multi-disciplinary teams work to address calls for service around mental health and substance use.

The city's Mental Health System Expansion (MHSE) Working Group, a team established by the Treatment Not Trauma ordinance, recently published a report called "The People's Vision for Mental and Behavioral Health." The report calls for expanding mental health clinical services, non-police emergency response alternatives including CARE, and increasing awareness of available mental health resources.[11]

Chicago violence reduction programs

In the face of persistent and unacceptably high gun violence, the City of Chicago as well as the city's philanthropic and non-profit communities have stepped up to support a number of initiatives designed to reduce violence. One is CRED (Create Real Economic Destiny), which takes a holistic approach to violence prevention and offers therapeutic services and support to those seeking job placements, housing, and academic help. Researchers from Northwestern University found that individuals who completed the full CRED program were more than 73% less likely to have an arrest for a violent crime in the two years following enrollment compared to people who did not participate.[12] There is also a network of community violence intervention (CVI) programs that operate as part of the Communities Partnering 4 Peace (CP4P), which has demonstrated positive outcomes.

On February 1, 2024, the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities and the Civic Committee announced a $400 million plan to scale CVI programming. This built upon over $70 million that had initially been invested by the Chicago business and philanthropic communities. Current CVI strategies to prevent violence before it occurs are street outreach, workforce development, legal aid, and organizational development. The recently announced plan to scale this approach will take place under a new program, Scaling Community Violence Intervention for a Safer Chicago (SC2). SC2 began in North Lawndale and will grow

to three additional areas before adding one neighborhood per year until all the city's communities that need these interventions have them. Over the next five years, the program seeks to offer support to a minimum of half of the approximately 20,000 Chicago residents at an elevated risk of being involved with gun violence.[13]

Chicago community policing program

Community policing is an important, perhaps essential, alternative to traditional policing. The consent decree requires that CPD "ensure that its community policing philosophy is a core component of its police services, crime reduction strategies and tactics, training, management, resource deployment, and accountability systems." It states further that *"[a]ll* CPD members will be responsible for furthering this philosophy and employing the principles of community policing, which include trust and legitimacy; community engagement; community partnerships; problem-solving; and the collaboration of CPD, city agencies and members to the community to promote public safety."[14]

In 2019, Chicago introduced the Chicago Neighborhood Policing Initiative (CNPI), a new approach to community policing modeled on the Neighborhood Policing structure in New York City but designed to address Chicago's unique circumstances and needs. The Policing Project, working with the support of a coalition of Chicago philanthropic organizations, was engaged to develop the community-oriented relationships and structures that are foundational to CNPI, and has maintained a role working with both the community and CPD ever since. It was developed with, and has maintained, consistent community engagement as to how it should operate.

If it were fully operational, it would easily meet most of the consent decree requirements regarding community policing. However, five years after the establishment of CNPI and the consent decree, Chicago still has no coherent community policing strategy, as has been made clear by the consent decree monitor.[15]

STUDYING PUBLIC SAFETY AND ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL POLICING IN CHICAGO

How we studied alternatives to police response in other cities

Chicago is the fourth city in which we conducted research around public safety and alternative response. Our work in these cities — Denver, San Francisco, and Tucson — involved structured interviews with municipal officials. That research, which also includes extensive community work in Denver and Tucson, can be found on our Reimagining Public Safety site.

In each city, the goal was to collect extensive input through a combination of focus groups and one-on-one interviews with community members, and interviews with individuals from mayor's offices, 911 dispatch centers, the police department, and alternative response services. These interviews covered a wide variety of topics, from high-level understandings of what constitutes public safety, to very specific questions about the implementation of specific city programs.

The approach in Chicago differed in two ways. First, the community research expanded. Second, as access to municipal stakeholders was more limited by city officials at the time, the research also included former officials and additional independent research.

Hearing from Chicago community members

In Chicago, community input took a two-part approach. The community research in Denver, Tucson, and Chicago was anchored by "community conversations," semi-structured day-long conversations led by Dr. Tamara Leech. In Chicago, there were also numerous one-on-one interviews with community members using a protocol developed by Drs. Monica Bell and Sarah Wakefield.

Dr. Leech's community conversations were intensive focus group-like engagements. Her research team included a five-person community advisory board from Chicago, five specially trained Masters and PhD-level facilitators who were Chicago residents, and five non-resident co-facilitators. Recruitment efforts focused on districts that had CARE and/or CNPI operating within them, and in part because they represent areas of the city impacted by both crime and policing. The principal investigator, facilitators, and advisory board members circulated information about the event to their personal and professional networks using a snowball recruitment method that prioritized people who lived in CPD districts 6, 7, 9, 10, 15 and 25. Ultimately, a group was formed of 28 participants. In the group, 23 participants were

Black and 5 Latinx; women made up 21 members of the group, and the remaining 7 were men. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 73, with an average age of 52. All were long-time Chicago residents. They ranged in income, from less than $20,000 per year (10 people) to more than $100,000 per year. Most resided in the city's South or West Sides. They reported a variety of employment statuses including full-time (10 people), homemakers (4 people), retired (3 people), and unemployed (5 people).

Their self-descriptions included:

- Former police officer
- Previously incarcerated
- City of Chicago employee
- Vietnam War veteran
- College student
- Retired teacher
- Block club president
- Block leader
- Former member of the CAPS team
- Aunt of a Chicago PD officer
- Mental health professional
- ACE Foundation volunteer
- Greater Chicago Food Depository volunteer
- Justice 2020 steering committee member

Attendees were asked about their recent engagement with 911 and 311. Of the 28 participants, 16 had called 911 recently, and 12 had recently called 311.

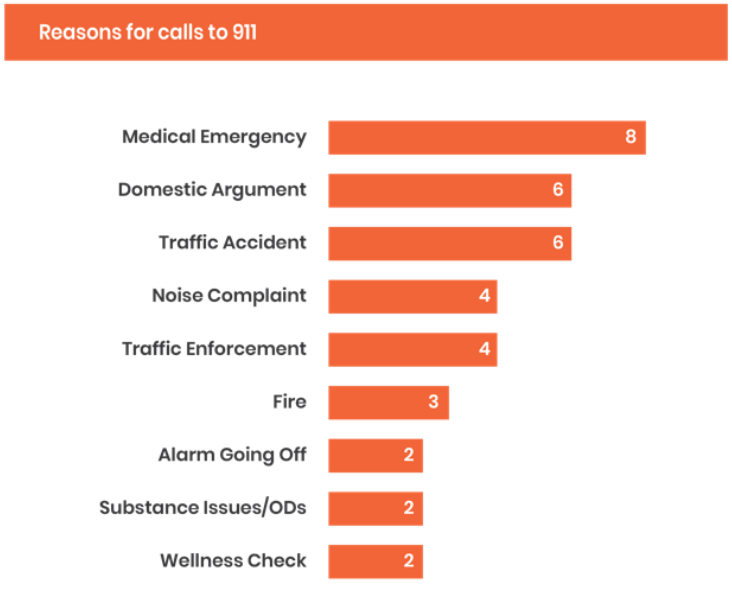

Figure 1 displays the distribution of reasons for participants' calls to 911.

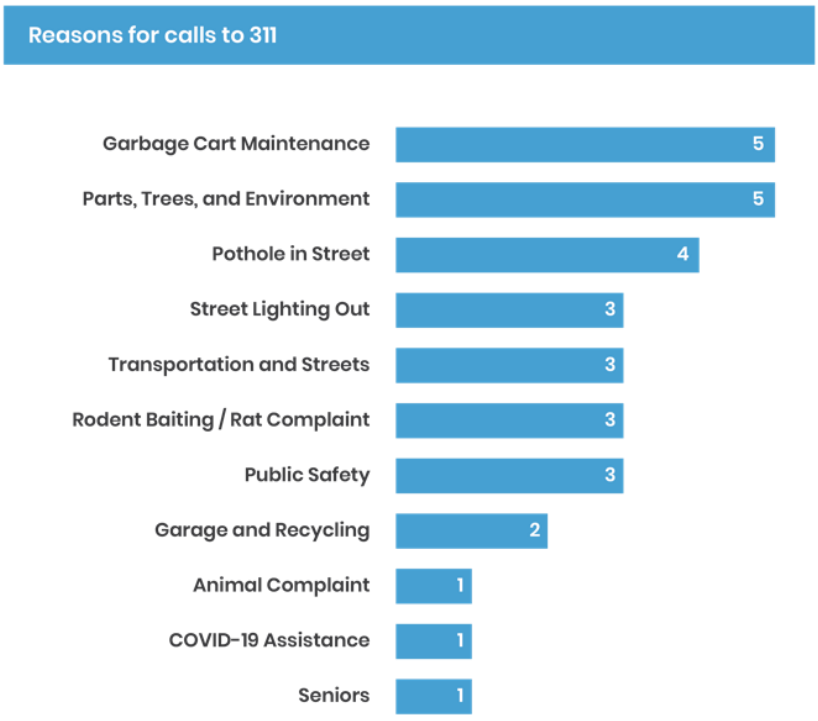

Figure 2 displays the distribution of reasons for participants' calls to 311.

In addition to the community conversation, in January 2023 the RPS research team partnered with CNPI staff to recruit Chicago residents to participate in individual interviews about public safety in Chicago. We completed interviews with 39 Chicago residents in a variety of neighborhoods, chosen once again because these were communities impacted both by crime and policing. Each interview lasted up to 90 minutes and was conducted by a trained team member via Zoom. Respondents were compensated with a $75 gift card for their time.[16]

Individual interview respondents likewise were geographically focused on the South and West Sides and had a diverse set of characteristics. Some had lived in their current neighborhoods for as little as two years and others for their entire lives (a number of respondents indicated that they had been "born and raised" in their current neighborhood). Interview respondents largely identified as Black or Latinx and ranged in age from 18 to their late 50s. The sample favored women (64%) relative to men. Respondents varied in terms of their educational attainment, from not finishing high school to reporting a post-graduate degree. The median reported income was $50,000 per year but ranged substantially from zero earnings or small disability payments to someone in the "$200+ range." Occupations reflected a variety of industries and job classifications. In short, interview respondents comprised a small but broad cross-section of Chicago residents who felt strongly enough about public safety to participate in an interview about these issues.

In both these engagements with community members, the topics included:

- Definition of public safety
- Who should be responsible for public safety
- Perceptions of public safety changes
- Threats to public safety
- State of available safety services
- Vision for a reimagined system
- Role of the police

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN CHICAGO

Here are findings from community participants regarding their understandings of public safety in Chicago and their beliefs about what facilitates or prevents it.

What is public safety?

In other cities, when asked what public safety meant, community members referred to freedom from crime and violence, but also took a more holistic view. They also referred to issues like housing and medical care. In Chicago, things were somewhat different.

In Chicago, most community participants struggled to describe public safety, saying they *had never experienced it*. They said that public safety "doesn't exist" or "is a fantasy." Those who were able to define public safety emphasized bodily safety. They talked about being able to run errands, go to work and generally navigate the city without taking precautions. Specifically, public safety was to "make the streets safe" enough that "communities can come together," "kids can play" and the "elderly can walk down the street."

One respondent reported:

". . . you could be sitting in the house watching one of your programs or reading a book and a teenager with an AK shoots and it goes through your wall. You were in the house. You weren't even visible. So, that's the kind of stuff we see, or we live with, or we have to deal with on a regular basis. Black mothers are seen on the ground crying over their kids. This happens on a regular basis. That's something that we're plagued with. So, public safety is really a fantasy to the average African American individual."

People associated this lack of safety with particular areas within the city. One individual said, "In some places, I may feel secure. In some places, I'm watching over myself. Some places I just won't go. Because there is no public safety to me."

What are the greatest threats to public safety?

When asked to explain the greatest threats to public safety, the most common response was guns, followed closely by the police (and then drugs). People said that not only were police unable to protect people from crime, they were a threat to residents in and of themselves. When describing the police, one participant called the police "the largest gang in the city," and another characterized the force as "terrorizing the people who are already being

terrorized." They emphasized the contradiction between the police's duty to protect, and the fear they instilled in the community, expressing uncertainty about how interactions with officers might go when people were in need of help.

Racialized policing

People consistently reported that police were a greater threat to people of color in neighborhoods inhabited by Black and Brown people. One person witnessed first-hand the difference in police treatment experienced by white and Black people. He explained that his white father, if stopped by the police, would "want us to know their badge number, what they were stopping him for" and the police would tell him, or else he would tell the police to "shut the blank up and just give me the ticket." He explained, "you cannot do that as a Black man." Another echoed this, saying they thought the police were "Mr. Officer Friendlies" until seeing the discrimination that their three Black sons received.

In response to this racial bias, community members described strategies to avoid police or interact with them as safely as possible. Respondents said there were areas people stayed clear of completely. One person stated, "I stayed not too far from this area, Evergreen Park, and a lot of people, if you're African American, say, stay away from the area 'cause they pull a lot of Black people over." Other participants talked about how if they encountered the police, there were ways to minimize risk. A community member discussed advising children in her community: "I explained to them as a young, Black boy, with the policemen … when the police stop you, you don't put your hands in your pockets, don't make certain moves, stand there. If you have your phone, say, 'May I record this?' Um, show them your hands, say, 'Yes, sir.'"

In discussing how to talk to police safely, people frequently mentioned that the police presume people of color are guilty. A community member said, "To be a young Hispanic boy growing up in this city, it's hard. Because you're automatically, you know, labeled a gang member, a bad kid. My kids don't look white at all. My son, I feel like they … he was always being targeted. Another respondent tied police aggression to how police view community members, saying, "They see us as a threat. So, they want to try to be almighty and stuff, you know, they want to have their guns out and be aggressive towards us 'cause they know we a threat."

People emphasized that one could expect better policing in the city's whiter North Side neighborhoods: "If you at the Gold Coast [on Chicago's North Side], you gonna get that proper police officer. If you're on Michigan Avenue [on the North Side], you're gonna get that. But we're not gonna get that."

Overpolicing

A consistent theme was that police engaged in enforcement in particular neighborhoods without legitimate reason. Respondents discussed being searched and pulled over by police without just cause. One woman talked about how her son had been searched consistently, stating that when he sees the police, "he automatically holds his hands up in the air. He opens his legs up and sticks his tongue out. And my daughter makes fun of him. She said, 'they haven't even asked you to do anything.' But he's traumatized!"

This comment closely resembled an anecdote from another respondent: "They pulled me over because the taillight was not broken but their premise was that it was. They asked me to stick my tongue out and they asked my sons to stick their tongue out…" According to those interviewed, nobody was exempt from excessive policing.

Underpolicing

At the same time as respondents described unnecessary and inappropriate enforcement, they also expressed the view that in their neighborhoods police also were under-responsive when people needed them. As one person stated, "You know, it depends on the area. Like, the area I moved out of was primarily Hispanic. A very high crime area and the responses were very low. Like, took them forever to get there. And when they did get there, it wasn't, 'Okay. Let me deescalate the situation and then figure things out.' It was just, 'Everybody on the floor. Put them all in cuffs.'" This issue of police being unable or unwilling to provide the type of help that was needed was raised by respondents numerous times.

Community reluctance to call 911

Community respondents expressed reluctance to call 911 because they feared harm — both from retaliation for providing information to the police, and from the police.

This fear of retaliation has evident implications for the ability of the police and community members to work together to fight crime. Residents feared retaliation from criminals or backlash from the community itself for calling 911, and did not trust police to keep information confidential. One individual stated, "People want to come forward but … nobody wants their family shot." Participants specified that they believed the information they gave when calling 911 would be shared and used against them, saying, "Usually you can't give them information about what happened. There are just people just watching," and "The police do not care, they will put your information out there. So, most people don't call."

At the same time, respondents believed officers would be ineffective or, worse, escalate a situation. For example, one respondent said, "Like, if I call them, I don't know what's going to happen, if it's going to be worse than if I didn't call them." Other participants agreed, stating, "I wouldn't wanna call the police, either, 'cause I feel like the situation would go way further … and then I wouldn't feel safe" and "We have had prime examples of people who have called the police and end up dying as a result of that." In general, community members feared that the police would harm the subject of the 911 call and increase the net harm of the situation. People noted the phenomenon that when there was a call, too many officers would respond. A community member said, [When a crime is called in and police respond] "they swarm" or "use 20-30 squad cars, and it doesn't take all of that."

Finally, there was repeated dissatisfaction about how long it takes the police to respond. One individual said, "You call the police, they may come, they may not," while another questioned the "utility" of calling the service, asking, "How long is it going to take?" Instructively, a respondent explained that because of slow response times, they have been doing gunshot response trainings "to learn how to help people that have been shot and be first responders because it takes them a while to get an ambulance or cops out here. And even then when there's cops out here, they're like, 'Oh, I haven't been trained to stop bleeding on a gunshot wound, or I haven't been trained to do this and that.'"

Ineffectiveness

In general, people were pessimistic about the ability of CPD to address the violence that plagues Chicago. One respondent captured this sentiment, saying, "I think we put a lot of ownership on the police department as if the police are somehow going to stop somebody from doing something to you. They're not. It's impossible." People described how police presence does not translate to crime prevention. Regarding the police station and police vehicles in her neighborhood, one person said it was "like they want to instill some type of overall sense of fear or terror. Of just like, 'we're always watching, we're always around.'" But this resident found this "hypocritical," because there were so many shootings in the blocks around the station.

Some respondents offered insight into why they believed the police were ineffective at preventing violent crime. One person discussed how the police were risk averse: "We're acting as if an officer is going to take a bullet for you, they're not going to do that." Another suggested that police saw preventing crime before it happens as being outside of their job description. When asked why police were not sufficiently present in high-crime areas, one individual offered, "Why would the police be there? It's the enforcement, they're only used for enforcement."

People were also skeptical about the efficacy of cameras and CPD's use of the technology to address crime. For example, one person claimed, "So many instances happening and cameras are right there. And you say, 'Okay well you got a camera?' 'Oh but we didn't see that part on the camera.' So, what are these cameras actually doing?" Individuals believed that the cameras do not capture key footage and/or the CPD use the tools they have poorly. People viewed cameras as a futile replacement for police presence, with one participant saying, "That one street is just troublesome and [police] don't stay there, they don't. They just install cameras to watch, I guess?"

Empathy for police

Despite their frustrations and negative interactions with the police, it is extremely important to stress the degree to which community members expressed empathy for officers, noting the difficulty and danger of the job. One respondent, who characterized the police as a threat still said, "I don't envy the police. It's an extremely dangerous job, especially in Chicago." Another person noted how challenging psychologically the role police officers are asked to play can be, saying, "With the police department, the mentality and experiences, you saw a lot of suicides among the police."

Some respondents recounted positive interactions with police and appreciation for their help. For example, a resident who contracted COVID-19 and experienced lingering symptoms due to long COVID-19 described officers helping as she adjusted following her long recovery: "And I said, 'Oh, I'm better. I'm getting ready to go out to the store.' She said, 'No, you're not.' So she sent the police. They went, picked up my medicine and my groceries and brought them to me." Another respondent described how, years ago, they had a positive relationship with a police officer: "It is strange because I grew up in the DARE program and I had a friendly officer at my neighborhood school, and that officer was the only friendly officer in the neighborhood. The people would stop and actually say, 'Oh chill out that's Officer Joe, oh no Officer Joe told you to get off the corner, man that's Officer Joe, move around.'"

People also noted that they knew or encountered fair and supportive officers; this just was not the norm they experienced. One person explained, "I have had a few policemen that really were on my side. I knew it. But they were with policemen that weren't on my side," while another stated, "There is also distrust because I believe that the police sometimes try to protect themselves, even over you. But I know it's not all of them." A violence interrupter explained their evolving views of the police, saying, "It's always gonna be a few police that's gonna mess it up for those … You got some fair police. Growing up, I didn't like no police at all." But as he got older and came into contact with more police, he was surprised: "Doing my job, a couple police came up to me and shook my hand and told me, 'Thank you, man. I wanna thank you for the work y'all are doing, man. Y'all helping us out a lot.'" Officers who were

collaborative, supportive, and helpful made an important impression on community members.

Who is responsible for providing safety?

Chicagoans' view of who was responsible for providing public safety — and with it their view of government — was telling.

Feeling alone

When Chicagoans were asked who was responsible for delivering public safety in their communities, they gave a very distinct response: *All I have is myself.* One participant described public safety as a personal duty, stating, "When you think about safety, for me, safety starts with me first. It doesn't start with anybody outside of me … Safety starts with me first, not the police."

Given the need for self-reliance, respondents consistently stated that to feel secure, they had to isolate from the outside world in certain troubling ways. One person said explicitly, "I just think about being inside and closed away or isolated at times," while another said "being at home" is what allows them to feel safe. Another way people talked about ensuring their own well-being was through "situational awareness," or as one individual put it, "My experience growing up in the community and knowing and basically being able to tell certain situations that might gonna occur or something, knowing I need to exit this situation before, 'cause it look like something will happen." Respondents also mentioned the need to use security doors or alarms for security.

A small minority of respondents discussed purchasing and carrying weapons for protection. One person said, "I don't feel safe. So when I walk my dog, I keep a knife on me, but a knife is not gonna do anything." Another interviewee who discussed weapons as a method of self-protection stated, "I mean, I own a gun, but I'm tragically sad that I gave [in] to that. My wife wanted to get a gun during COVID and all that stuff, and I'm like, 'Sure.' Because I don't really think that makes me safer."

Even though people said relying on themselves for protection was their sole option, some acknowledged that *in concept*, public safety should be provided by a combination of the community, effective policing, and the government. Emphasizing that "what should be and what is are two different things," one person said, "Now, you don't know your neighbor, so you don't wanna get involved, 'cause if you step in, you might be the one who gets shot, get killed. You know, you wanna help, you should be able to help, but you can't help." Of police and city

officials, one respondent said, “We have nobody—we have no judges that come from where we come from. We have no prosecutors that come from where we come from. And, we may have a few police officers, but maybe it’s just not enough.”

Distrust of government

According to respondents, it was not just police who let people down—it was municipal government itself. Community respondents felt that elected officials were full of empty promises and politically motivated. One respondent said, “Once the election’s over, if you pay attention, you never hear nothing else. They make all these thousand promises, and don’t follow through … Soon as they get voted in, you never see these people again” [Spanish translation]. Another echoed this and questioned the officials’ motivations, saying, “It’s too many times where something negative has happened with the police and here comes the mayor’s office coming to etch up something to smooth things out. But then you’re just smoothing it out with the public to keep your voters keeping you in office, and you’re getting kickbacks from these guys.”

Respondents also were fair in taking their own responsibility, in not holding public officials accountable. “Elected officials are responsible for our communities and we do not hold them accountable. They are responsible for our communities, and they are responsible for how police act in our communities. And they don’t do anything, and I guess it’s part like our fault because we don’t hold them responsible.”

MUNICIPAL STAKEHOLDERS FEEDBACK ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN CHICAGO

Offering additional color to the conversations with community members were discussions with municipal stakeholders. There were 26 engagements, including informational meetings and 15 interviews. These engagements occurred between summer 2022 and spring 2023.

Those we spoke with included:

- Current city officials, including those holding positions in City Hall, Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC), and Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- Former city officials, including those holding positions in City Hall and CPD
- Current and former members of city oversight bodies
- CPD contractors and consultants

Respondents' willingness to offer a candid critique of the city's approach to public safety and policing is reflected throughout this report.

The topics that we covered in these conversations included:

- Definition of public safety
- Motivations for changes to first response
- Role of the police
- Goals of alternative response
- Barriers to implementation

In addition, there was a round of vetting in the field with public safety policy and oversight officials, many whom are part of Chicago's new community-driven public safety landscape created by the ECPS ordinance. This provided important feedback that helped to further refine the recommendations in this report.

Defining public safety in Chicago

Most of these municipal stakeholders were cognizant of the deep-rooted problems Chicago faces regarding public safety, and their relation to the city's lack of racial equality. As one person said, "There is a deep sense of separation and segregation and racial inequity in Chicago, and this is a hindrance to successful community safety."

Although everyone in Chicago was focused on physical safety, municipal officials sometimes described it in somewhat broader terms than community members. One respondent described public safety as "having the freedom to go about my life without fear of violence—going from point A to point B safely." But another reflected a somewhat broader view of public safety by saying, "We often think of a lack of violence when it comes to public safety, but what it really should be is the existence of peace." Another initially defined public safety as "being able to interact and walk around and be part of my community in a way that I'm not hypervigilant," but then elaborated by saying that public safety went "beyond physical safety" and included knowing how to access resources to meet individuals' full range of needs."[17]

Municipal respondents emphasized the role of city services in achieving public safety. One characterized safety by saying, "Am I going to call 911 for a concern and will it be resolved in a manner that I feel good about?" Besides referencing 911, municipal respondents discussed mental health response programs helping people outside of the "crime-fire-injury" categories. One individual deemed the police the cornerstone of public safety but still stressed that police were only "one part of what needs to be a broader ecosystem around safety," which should include "individuals responding to calls that they're better equipped to handle," along with "community violence intervention" and "community policing focused crime strategy, problem solving focused crime strategy, procedural justice focused crime strategy."

A constant theme was the need to do more to produce real public safety. A number of respondents referenced preventing crime before it occurs, with one individual saying, "We need to move forward with more prevention," which includes "learning from the past" and "making things better for the future." Others discussed the value of providing follow-up services to ensure that problems do not persist. As one respondent said, "One of the best things about programs that involve clinicians is that there is follow-up and care after the fact." They also stressed the importance of "overall safety" including people being "treated humanely" when receiving "all those different services that make up the social safety net."

There was a hope that with an adequate social safety net in place, there would be a reduced reliance on 911, saying that the city should "focus on building a real safety net in the community" where people could "go for help without calling 911." Another echoed this sentiment, saying, that "first response only gets us so far," and unless we "really start to figure out how to tackle the system issues, we are going to keep having the same problems over and over again."

The police

Organizational challenges

Municipal respondents discussed a variety of challenges within and related to CPD that serve as obstacles to advancing public safety in the city. These included organizational issues such as management, staffing, and data systems, as well as community relationships and leadership. And, it is worth noting, these were raised five years into implementation of the consent decree.

Management issues

Some people with whom we spoke cited mismanagement of the Chicago Police Department as a hindrance to providing public safety. They expressed an overall dissatisfaction with CPD leadership, from "putting people in positions that they're really not qualified for" to failing to clarify CPD's organizational priorities. As one respondent put it, "This is a department that has not been led by somebody who understands what crime strategy is. And so these folks don't know what the strategy is even at the district level."

Municipal respondents spoke about the challenge staffing changes posed for the city's public safety systems, both with police and with emergency communications staff. As one individual said, "Officers were seemingly almost randomly having their regular days off revoked and put on 12-hour schedules." This was resulting, they said, in "a demoralized, exhausted police department because it's poorly managed and poorly run" and was eroding "any concept of beat integrity." Another respondent stated that "at the district level, the commanders don't necessarily know what personnel they are going to have from shift to shift to shift. And so they have to see who shows up." In reference to the 911 call center staff, one respondent observed that they struggled with "having enough bodies or people to manage things."

Systems and data barriers

Interviewees expressed concern about CPD's systems and data and cited them as barriers to the department's ability to perform at a high level and implement change. One person said the "department itself can't even find its own records." This organizational difficulty was due to the department's approach to systems and data being "patch and glue," with one person revealing, "half of its [the CPD's] records are still analog paper." The department's lack of

digitization and comprehensive record-keeping was raised as a challenge to implementation of alternative response in particular, in that when someone was experiencing a mental health issue, CPD lacked the "ability to get the technology or get the information to the right people to activate that process in an effective or fluid way."

Strained community relations

Municipal respondents also referred to CPD's strained relationship with the community. They emphasized CPD's inability to proactively build connections with the people they served. One respondent was critical of CPD's approach toward treating only some officers as community police officers, saying that the community policing wing of CPD was "not integrated into really the rest of the department function. It's sort of the community policing people are like, 'Well, they do the community stuff.' And I was like, 'Like all of the things that are public safety?'" However, another respondent reflected on their conversations with officers involved in the Neighborhood Policing Initiative and reported that officers felt a positive dynamic with the community because their "hypervigilance" goes down when they are "just interacting in the community" rather than responding to a 911 call with "no procedural justice" for the caller.

General barriers to government contribution to public safety

Echoing community views about the failures of city government, municipal respondents did the same in their discussion of everything from disinvestment to lapses on the part of the CPD. They believed the ability to enact real change and deliver genuine public safety depended significantly on the leadership and political calculus of elected officials. In discussing the city's limited approach to alternative response, one respondent said they thought leadership in both the department and the city had a "stranglehold" on information because they want to "control the narrative. And the narrative means like we don't want to let people know that we're not doing this well. Like it's always seemed to be a little bit about image management." And when asked what the biggest barrier to public safety in Chicago was, another person said, "Leadership. Leadership and I put it right there because first off, we're in a bad place because of the state of leadership, and people, people would long say, 'Look, things are the way they are here because they've always been that way,' and I've never bought that. That's a choice to allow it to be that way. Leadership can actually have a huge impact, and, but not merely just in terms of the programmatic or the transactional changes, but in terms of vision."

CHICAGO'S PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE PROGRAMS: CARE and CNPI

In addition to the general conversations with community and municipal stakeholders, special attention was also devoted to the city's primary alternative response program, CARE, and to its ostensible alternative to traditional policing, CNPI. Community and municipal respondents discussed the value of these programs as well as challenges with their implementation and operations.

CARE: Primary system of Chicago's alternative response

CARE is the City of Chicago's primary system of alternative response. The program encompasses three types of response teams that work in different areas of the city. Alternative Response Teams, comprised of a Chicago Fire Department (CFD) paramedic and a Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Mental Health Clinician, respond to low-risk 911 calls with a mental health component. Opioid Response Teams, composed of a Chicago Fire Department Community paramedic and a certified Peer Recovery Specialist, conduct 24-72 hour follow-up with people who have experienced a non-fatal overdose. Neither of these two teams includes a police officer. Finally, Multidisciplinary Response Teams, made up of a CFD Community Paramedic, CDPH Mental Health Clinician, and Chicago Police Department Crisis Intervention Team Officer, respond to low- and moderate-risk 911 calls with a mental health component.

Each of the teams is assigned to a set of Chicago neighborhoods. None of the teams operate citywide. CARE operates Monday through Friday from 10:30 am to 4:00 pm. According to the most recent data available, the teams collectively have responded to 1,413 calls made to 911 from September 14, 2021, when the program was launched, to May 24, 2024, the most recent date with data available at the time of collection.[18] Thus far the Multidisciplinary team, which was the first team to launch, has responded to the most calls. An external evaluator is conducting an analysis to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Impetus and goals for CARE

Municipal stakeholders discussed a range of motivations for the launch of CARE, ranging from political to community-driven to legal. Some municipal respondents credited a combination of aldermen and community advocates, as well as inspiration from other cities, with laying the groundwork for CARE. One respondent said CARE came from "the diligent insistence of some progressive alders, aldermen, and city councilors, who were pushing for alternative

response under the broad rubric of treatment, not trauma," drawing upon Eugene's CAHOOTS as well as Denver's model. Others said that the consent decree, with leadership from the Health Department, led to the creation of CARE.

Respondents described varied goals for CARE, falling into three main categories: more efficient use of police resources, providing better care to people in crisis, and reducing harm from police response. Many referred to how CARE was "better equipped," the "right response," or a "public health way" to address community-based issues. We heard that CARE would provide a better response because police could "escalate" a situation, the presence of the police uniform could "negate" an officer's attempts to diffuse the scene, and having police respond could lead to a "deeper crisis." Several stressed the need for follow up to CARE services.

Implementation of CARE

CARE's implementation has been slow. Since its launch in September of 2021 through May 24, 2024, CARE had responded to only 1,413 calls to 911, and nearly a third of these responses (31%) resulted in no contact made with the individual in crisis.[19]

That was reflected in the critiques municipal respondents had related to its scale and scope. Respondents noted the limited hours, pointing out that daytime hours did not sufficiently cover the time period of greatest volume of mental health calls.

Municipal respondents expressed a strong preference for expanding non-police response, and shifting to alternative responders for "anything that appears nonviolent on the surface or more socially driven, as opposed to criminally driven." They identified this list of possible calls to which police need not be used: mental health, drug use and overdoses, disputes that could be resolved with mediation, damaged property, wellness checks, homelessness, trespassing while having a mental health crisis, panhandling, parking enforcement (although it was acknowledged that most parking enforcement was done by the Department of Finance), and family conflicts, such as those in which a parent is struggling with a child who will not listen or go to school. One respondent pointed out that CARE's structure, which has involved a co-response in the vast majority of incidents, was not relieving the call burden.

Community views on CARE

Given CARE's limited scope, community conversation participants had little familiarity with the program—only three had heard of it.

When informed about CARE, community respondents were supportive. They believed CARE could benefit public safety in two related ways: avoiding the practice of sending the police to situations like mental health crises, where they could cause harm, and freeing those officers up to address violent crime. About mental health emergency calls, a community member said, "Like, for the police department, what is the need? We have ambulance, we have firemen, we have healthcare professionals and urgency care. Why would the police be there?" Another respondent echoed this sentiment, stating, "And it's like, it's the enforcement that they're [the police are] used for. Enforcement. And it's like a lot of the times you don't need force to do anything."

Community members had views about how CARE should operate. They expressed a preference for the fully non-police CARE team, rather than the co-response team, which includes a police officer. Most were glad to learn that CARE operated out of the 911 call center rather than a different phone number, so that they would not have to choose the appropriate response themselves in a moment of crisis. One respondent said, "Why do I have to evaluate the situation and choose who to call? Why can't it be if you feel like there's an emergency, you call 911 and when you tell the operator what's going on, they dispatch the right people versus us trying to figure out who to call?"

Community members did express concern about overlapping functionality between CARE and the statewide Illinois Department of Human Services Program 590 Crisis Care System.[20] That program funds local non-profit grantees to respond to a person having a mental health crisis with mobile crisis level services. Community members worried that CARE was "reinventing the wheel" in the sense that the program was offering services redundant with those provided by the nonprofits funded through the 590 Crisis Care System. One individual asked, "What– what are we doing? Are we competing against each other instead of working together?" while another stated, "We should all be working together instead of constantly developing all of these different systems." One community respondent shared a worry that besides overlapping in scope, the programs might require the same resources: "Everybody's fighting for the same staffing here."

Taking note: Current efforts in Chicago and Illinois

There have been some recent developments that seek to expand services and adopt greater alternative response.

Treatment Not Trauma

After years of advocacy, the Treatment Not Trauma ordinance was passed by the City Council in 2023. The ordinance establishes the Mental Health System Expansion (MHSE) Working Group to develop a framework and roadmap to expand mental health clinical services, non-police response for mental and behavioral health calls, and community awareness.[21]

In its report published May 31, 2024, the MHSE Working Group recommended the expansion of clinical services, shifting more mental health 911 calls to alternative responders by expanding CARE and improving community awareness of mental health resources. The MHSE Working Group proposed rolling CARE out citywide, extending hours to 24/7, and ending CPD and CFD involvement in the program. Although CARE's expansion is expected to take three years, the city has already begun work. The city has begun developing a Community Care Corps, a program that hires people directly from affected communities.[22]

Community Emergency Services and Supports Act (CESSA)

In 2021, CESSA, the Community Emergency Services and Supports Act, became state law. CESSA requires that mental health-related calls receive a behavioral health response rather than a police response. CESSA was to go into effect by January 1, 2023, [23] but this work is still underway as of April 2024.[24]

First-response Alternative Crisis Team (FACT)

First-response Alternative Crisis Team (FACT) was created in 2022 under a state pilot program. Run thorough non-profit Trilogy, the service operates on the north side of the city, specifically in Rogers Park, Edgewater, Uptown, and West Ridge, as well as in nearby suburbs Skokie and Evanston. In 2023, the service responded to more than 4,400 calls. It hopes soon to respond to calls directed from 911.[25]

Community policing model: Chicago Neighborhood Policing Initiative

Purpose and goals of CNPI

The Chicago Neighborhood Policing Initiative (CNPI) serves as the city's community-driven alternative to traditional policing. As noted at the outset, the consent decree requires the city to center community policing in its policing strategy. For a decade or more, CAPS performed that function well, and then fell into relative disuse.

Starting in 2019, two administrations (Emmanuel, Lightfoot) and three Superintendents (Johnson, Beck, Brown) pledged enthusiastic support and commitment to CNPI. Neither the current Chicago mayor nor superintendent have committed to CNPI — instead the Civic Consulting Alliance has been charged with evaluating what community policing model the city should adopt. Because it is five years into the consent decree, however, and CNPI has been operating to a greater or lesser degree in that period, that is what was discussed with community members and what is explained here. The recommendations address what directions Chicago might take with community policing.

The goal of CNPI is to allow CPD officers to focus on problem solving and relationship building, and to provide community members with a voice in how public safety is achieved in their community.

Under CNPI, patrol officers are supposed to remain in and become very familiar with specific, consistent geographic areas, and are tasked with working alongside community members on strategies to co-produce public safety, rather than simply answering 911 calls. Specifically, 30% of officers' time is off the radio and devoted solely to collaboration with residents. At the heart of CNPI are District Coordination Officers (DCOs), who work in each district to coordinate problem solving and safety-related partnerships, and uncompensated Community Ambassadors, who serve as volunteer liaisons from the neighborhood. The Policing Project played a significant role in recruiting Community Ambassadors, building relationships between DCOs and Community Ambassadors, and working with both sets of stakeholders to facilitate community problem solving. Once the District Council members assumed their new roles under the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability ordinance, the Policing Project shifted its focus to helping District Councilors engage in these community problem-solving efforts. It remains up to the District Councilors and the Community Commission on Public Safety and Accountability, however, whether they will perform a liaison role with DCOs.

Were CNPI implemented, it would meet the city's consent decree obligations for community policing

Despite enthusiasm for CNPI, including among many CPD officers and many, many community residents, CNPI has never achieved its potential, occupying a relatively small

footprint within a department that has not demonstrated a broader organizational commitment to community policing.

CNPI began formally as a pilot initiative in January 2019, rolling out first in CPD District 25, which includes the Humboldt Park, Avondale, Dunning, Montclare, Belmont Cragin, Hermosa, Logan Square and Austin neighborhoods.[26] By the end of the year, the Policing Project and CPD began work to expand CNPI to the 15th District, bringing CNPI to more areas of the Austin community.

An evaluation by Northwestern University, published in July of 2020, found that at the start of the program, police and community members expressed optimism that building relationships between them could enhance public safety.[27] The study also concluded that after the program was in place for a full year, DCOs and residents noticed positive changes such as new levels of engagement among police officers. Nonetheless, it found challenges associated with CPD's ability to realign police duties with the more community-oriented objectives of the program, and lack of buy-in among beat officers.[28]

Despite cautionary concern from the Policing Project and its CNPI staff about capacity, the mayor and superintendent decided to roll out a version of CNPI throughout the entire city. Given obvious challenges to doing so, the city, CPD, and the Policing Project eventually agreed there would be four "gold standard" districts — the 7th, 10th, 15th, and 25th districts — in which (ideally) the program would be implemented with fidelity to the full CNPI model and with close project management by both the Policing Project and CPD. As it has expanded geographically, CNPI has been primarily focused on areas of the city that experience higher crime and poverty levels.

Still, even in the gold standard districts, CPD has not managed to achieve fidelity to the CNPI model. Leadership instability — three mayors and five superintendents since the inception of CNPI — has undermined progress of DCOs and community relationship-building during this time. The most recent evaluation by Northwestern's CORNERS is a full documentation of how CPD and the city failed to take the necessary steps for CNPI to take hold:

"At the individual district level, DCOs [District Coordination Officers] and community stakeholders—including formal Community Ambassadors—remain invested in the interpersonal impacts of the initiative and continually stress the importance of relationship-building and problem-solving as key components of public safety strategies in their communities. However, departmental and institutional challenges continue to impede implementation of the model consistently throughout the evaluation districts and remain a barrier to effectively implementing CNPI as a citywide strategy."

Later this year, the Policing Project will issue a final report on its work on CNPI to provide the resources necessary to make CNPI work should the city and CPD's current administration decide to adopt the model. In the absence of CNPI, and with CAPS in its current state, Chicago essentially has no citywide community policing model.[29] Again, as of this writing, the city has engaged the Civic Consulting Alliance to develop a community policing model for the Chicago.

Community and municipal views on community policing in Chicago

A consistent theme in the conversations with municipal respondents and community members alike was the deep need for better police-community relations. Municipal stakeholders said explicitly that the police were disconnected from the populations they were meant to protect. They indicated a serious part of the problem was due in part to officers' not being assigned the same beats consistently, hindering their ability to develop relationships with neighborhood residents.

Municipal respondents suggested CPD should function in a way that aligned with CNPI's central goal of forging police connections with residents. For example, one interviewee posed the rhetorical question, "What are you [police] doing when you're not being dispatched to a call?" The interviewee then answered the question: "You ought to be out walking the community, talking to businesses, talking to residents, you know, establishing those relationships, working the same geography every day so people get used to … seeing you, you get used to seeing them." This belief was echoed by another respondent: "I think they're driving around waiting to get dispatched to a call. When they get dispatched to a call, they go, they do it, whatever the job requires, and then they go back to driving around. Sometimes they'll stop for a hand waver obviously, but it's not, you know, sort of the proactive community policing style that I think we'd want to see." A final respondent offered a pithy summary: "What they're doing when they're not dispatched is more important than what they do sometimes when they are dispatched … a trust building exercise with the community."

Community respondents thought that CNPI, via its Community Ambassador structure, could help to build trust between police and community. They said, for example, "I think it would begin to develop trust towards the police" [translated from Spanish] and, "It would be a chance for people to start trusting the police." Others liked how Community Ambassadors could solve problems, saying they could "bring these problems to the people who can actually solve them" and "community has some people who feel more comfortable coming and bringing these matters to." Another talked about how Community Ambassadors could help address "a lot of the misunderstanding when it comes to dealing with law enforcement."

Implementation and awareness of CNPI

Municipal stakeholders provided insight into why community policing has not taken hold as a strategy within the department. They explained that the concept of community policing was not integrated into the overall operations or culture of CPD. The "community stuff" was siloed through its assignment to certain officers, rather than shaping department-wide practice. In the words of one respondent, community policing "was never implemented truly as a philosophy." Instead, this person went on to say, community policing was largely managed as "an ugly stepchild tactic" that was "not part of what officers were trained to do, how they were trained to go about policing, relationship building was not part of what went on."

Among community respondents, awareness about CNPI was mixed. Some knew about CNPI due to direct involvement in the program, while others were unfamiliar with it. Several people questioned whether CNPI even existed. One person asked, "Is this the real program, or is it just a piece of paper?" and another said, "Don't nobody come out to the neighborhoods and form relationships or anything. So that one I don't believe." Another interviewee spoke on the dissonance between a program's ostensible existence and community members' experience of it: "The thing is, if it's been in place and we don't know about it, then that's a problem. And then that means they not doing it."

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents areas for improvement relating to broader alternative response, to the CARE program, and to fostering a culture within the CPD that permits true community policing. It is based both on interviews, RPS's work in other jurisdictions in the country, and on RPS's familiarity with and involvement in the broader alternative response movement.

Increase CARE response activity

CARE, the city's current effort to provide alternative response, is well intentioned, but has lagged significantly behind those of peer jurisdictions, and as such has not delivered on the program's goals. The program has thus far failed to remove police from non-violent calls for which they aren't needed, while missing opportunities to provide better responses to people in need. The city's recent Mental Health System Expansion Working Group report has put forward a vision for a more robust CARE program. As the city moves forward with this important work, it is recommend that the city learn from the many jurisdictions that employ alternative response more robustly.

Since its implementation, CARE has responded to relatively few calls. The Chicago Police Department was dispatched to over 33,000 calls that had either a mental or behavioral health component in 2023. Although it is possible that some of these calls would not meet the substantive criteria for CARE, data from other cities suggest that many of them would. Despite all those requests for service that involved a mental or behavioral health issue, the program only responded to 779 calls, and most were met with a co-response, meaning that a Chicago Police Officer still was dispatched.

The rate at which CARE has responded to calls for which it is qualified to assist is small both intrinsically and compared to the response-rate of similar programs in other cities. For example, in its first two years, from October 3, 2021, to September 1, 2023, the Albuquerque Community Safety Department responded to more than 46,000 calls.[30] San Francisco's Street Crisis Response Team responded to more than 34,000 calls in its first three years, from November 2020 to November 2023).[31] Comparatively, in the last two years (from May 24, 2022, to May 24, 2024), CARE has addressed only 1,207 calls, despite Chicago's population being nearly five times that of Albuquerque and about three times that of San Francisco.[32] The Person in Crisis Team in Rochester, New York responded to more than 1,500 calls during a recent three-month period.[33] In contrast, during a recent six-month period, CARE responded to just 221 calls, even though Chicago has a population about 13 times that of Rochester.[34]

The number of calls to which CARE responds may be due in part to its limited hours of operation and geographical scope. CARE teams work only Monday to Friday from 10:30 am to 4 pm and in 11 pilot areas, making CARE's hours and geography more restricted than corresponding programs in other jurisdictions. The Dayton Mediation Response Unit (MRU) operates from Monday through Friday from 10 am to 6 pm,[35] 2.5 more hours per day than CARE, and works all around the city. The Support Team Assisted Response (STAR) Program in Denver operates daily from 6 am to 10 pm,[36] 8.5 more hours per day than CARE, and serves the full city. Atlanta's Police Alternatives & Diversion (PAD) program operates Monday through Friday from 7 am to 7 pm citywide.[37] In San Francisco, Rochester, Albuquerque, and Eugene, Oregon, the alternative response programs operate around the clock every day of the year.[38] Although Eugene's CAHOOTS has been operating since 1989, all these other programs are, like CARE, of fairly recent vintage.

Expand into call areas beyond CARE

The city should identify more call types for alternative responders, whether they are part of the CARE program or handled another way.

Responding to additional call types

Currently, CARE utilizes alternative, non-police response to address "low-risk 911 calls with a mental health component" and co-response involving a police officer to respond to "low and moderate risk 911 calls with a mental health component." In some neighborhoods, CARE responds to calls relating to drug overdoses.

The national movement that initially centered on behavioral health crisis calls has since expanded in multiple directions, with an emerging consensus that police are over-utilized, and many services can be delivered more safely and effectively by others. While these programs respond to behavioral and mental health crisis calls, they also cover an expanded range of issues including welfare checks, suicide, trespassing, non-injury accidents, substance use, homelessness, panhandling, and a host of other issues as well as mental and behavioral health crises.

There are also programs that provide services traditionally performed by police following a criminal incident, violent crime, or other community incident. In Rochester, NY, the Homicide Response Team responds to families of homicide victims with rapid wraparound services. And in Denver, the city's Civilian Report Technicians are tasked with investigating property

crime, which in turn frees up police to focus on responding to violent crime and other pressing incidents issues.

In early 2023, the Los Angeles Police Protective League, the union for LAPD patrol officers, issued a report calling for replacing police for 28 types of 911 requests for service.

1. Non-criminal (NC)/non-violent (NV) homeless + quality of life calls; 2. NC mental health calls; 3. NV juvenile disturbance or juveniles beyond parental control calls; 4. Calls to schools unless administration initiates an emergency call; 5. Public health order violations; 6. NV calls for service at city parks; 7. Under the influence calls where no other crime is in progress; 8. NC welfare check; 9. Non-fatal vehicle accidents; 10. Parking violations; 11. Driveway tows; 12. Abandoned vehicles; 13. Person dumping trash; 14. Vicious/dangerous dog complaints where no attack is in progress;	15. Noise complaints; 16. Landlord/tenant disputes; 17. Loitering/trespassing with no indication of dangers; 18. Code 30 (burglar) alarm (except silent "hold up" alarm); 19. Syringe disposal; 20. DOT stand-by; 21. Homeless encampment clean-ups, unless officers requested; 22. Panhandling; 23. Illegal vending; 24. Illegal gambling; 25. Fireworks; 26. Defecating/urinating in public; 27. Drinking in public; 28. Possible dead body where no indication of foul play

Figure 3 is the list of the 28 types of 911 requests for service that the Los Angeles Police Protective League recommended be redirected to alternative responders.

This list represents a turning point in the field of alternative response for several reasons. First, it came from the union, demonstrating an overall positive reception from law enforcement toward these innovative public safety approaches: they, like many community members, recognize that the status quo works for nobody, including them. Second, this list is long, and shows how many different types of calls for service we can potentially address by calling on other types of responders

If Chicago increased its alternative response to keep pace with other jurisdictions, it could relieve substantial burdens on CPD.

Specific call expansions for the City to consider

Chicago should consider expanding alternative response to cover some or all of the following:

Welfare checks

When someone calls 911 with concerns about the well-being of a family member, friend, or neighbor, police typically are dispatched to conduct a welfare or wellness check. Welfare checks represent a significant number of the daily calls for service to 911 and a huge claim on the time and attention of police departments. In 2023, the Chicago Police Department were dispatched to more than 99,000 calls that involved checking on a person's wellbeing. Many jurisdictions utilize alternative response models to address welfare checks, among them Albuquerque's Behavioral Health Responders and Community Responders, and Eugene, Oregon's CAHOOTS program. Chicago could incorporate welfare checks into an expanded version of CARE, or the Chicago Fire Department could address these calls by dispatching basic emergency technicians (EMT-B).

Traffic collisions and hazardous events

The Chicago Police Department responded to more than 70,000 calls in 2023 for vehicle collisions, fires, hazardous materials events, electrical wire incidents, explosions, and power outages. This is a significant burden on law enforcement agencies, and one without any compelling reason for an armed responder. In doing this work, the police are taken away from focusing on crime, and, in the case of vehicle collisions, are basically supporting insurance companies by writing reports.

Cities across the country are re-thinking how they respond to vehicle collisions in which there is no injury. These range from not filing police reports to no longer sending officers out to sending non-police responders.[39] Fayetteville and Wilmington, North Carolina, have instituted a program to dispatch Civilian Crash Investigators to accidents, and in 2023, the North Carolina legislature passed a bill allowing cities across the state to have civilians respond to traffic incidents.[40] New Orleans also recently signed a contract to expand its current non-police traffic response program. Several years ago, the city began a pilot program with On Scene Services, which deploys unarmed, retired police officers to respond to vehicle collisions and fill out accident reports.[41] The contractor's goal is to respond to 10,000-15,000 calls per year, which could mean cutting the police department's vehicle collision workload by up to approximately half.[42]

The city's Office of Emergency Management and Communications Traffic Management Authority already employs Traffic Control Aides to provide support at concerts, demonstrations, and during rush hour, in addition to some emergencies.[43] This position could be expanded to include responsibilities such as implementing street closures and redirecting traffic due to fires, hazmat incidents, or electrical wire incidents. These responders could also be dispatched to no-injury car collisions where the vehicle is immobilized and a crime hasn't taken place. Vehicle collisions in which a vehicle is still mobile and a crime hasn't taken place could be referred to the city's existing online platform.

Parking, recovering stolen vehicles, and towing

The Chicago Police Department receives more than 125,000 calls for service each year related to parking violations, recovering stolen automotives, and towing abandoned vehicles. This equates to 10% of the call volume for the entire department, a poor use of police resources particularly at a time when the city is experiencing high levels of vehicle theft. [44] Other cities have taken steps in this direction. For example, in Minneapolis, calls to 911 about parking are redirected to 311, and in New York City the Department of Sanitation removes derelict vehicles and parking complaints are taken via 311.[45]

The CPD has already shared the responsibility for writing parking tickets and towing with the Chicago Department of Finance.[46] The city could take the next step and make the Department of Finance Citation Division available to be dispatched by 911 for parking-related calls, to recover stolen vehicles to the city yards, and to process and remove abandoned vehicles.

Burglar alarms

More than 47,000 911 calls in 2023, almost 4% of all calls for service, were for burglar alarms in Chicago. While burglar alarms may provide an important layer of community safety, nationally 95% of these calls are automatic false alarms.[47] Applying this rate of false positives to Chicago, that means CPD responded to approximately 45,000 calls last year that they didn't have to.

Chicago has taken important efforts to combat this problem, but can do more. The city created a false alarm registry that triggers escalating fines for each additional false alarm.[48] This is an improvement, but it is a reactive system — meaning, police already have to respond unnecessarily before any action is taken. The City of Milwaukee, in contrast, has

implemented a verified response system which requires alarm companies to verify if a burglary is happening. They do this via phone, in person, or by using a video feed and, if it is occurring, the company places the call to 911. This program has reduced the number of burglar alarms to which the police respond from about 30,000 per year (97% of which were false) before the program was implemented in 2004 to currently about 800 per year (70% of which are false).[49]

Animal control

The Chicago Police Department received 8,800 animal-related calls for service in 2023, the equivalent of four officers spending their entire year working on animal-related calls. The City of Chicago Department of Animal Care and Control has its own Animal Control Officers who are able to respond to these calls, but they work from 7 am to 10 pm. It is unclear from publicly-available data if the police respond to these calls because they were outside of the current animal control officer hours, whether a police officer was dispatched due to an oversight, or if other risk factors were present that required a law enforcement officer on scene.

Chicago already has an unarmed response that is available to respond to calls for service regarding animals. If these calls are being sent to police officers due to the program's hours of operation or due to the availability of animal control staff, the city should consider expanding the hours of availability or capacity of its Animal Control officers and examine the universe of calls they can potentially respond to.

New and enhanced approaches

In addition to the many call types being answered in other jurisdictions by unarmed responders, some jurisdictions are experimenting — successfully by all accounts — with other ways to save police from answering numerous calls for service.

Mediation response

Social conflict, such as complaints related to noise or perceived misuse of public space, is at the root of many 911 calls for service. In response, police often are asked to resolve disputes without legal guidance, to mediate conflicts without proper training, and to navigate cultural clashes that would confound many human beings. Sometimes the police succeed despite these obstacles. More frequently problems and conflicts simply fester, while residents are drawn into unnecessary engagement with the criminal legal system, or tensions (racial or otherwise) are exacerbated.

Addressing these inter-personal and inter-communal conflicts with professionals trained in mediation and conflict resolution can help cultivate peaceful and respectful communities. The Dayton, Ohio Mediation Response Unit (MRU) provides just these sort of real-time mediation services to residents. Launched in May 2022, it is the first program in the country to dispatch mediators in response to low-level, non-emergent 911 calls, such as neighbor conflicts, noise complaints, loitering and trespassing, animal complaints, and other non-violent issues. A team of MRU professionals trained in conflict resolution, de-escalation, and mediation respond to 911 calls that, based on the facts provided, appear to be good candidates for mediation.

Dayton's program represents a promising approach that has been well received by a broad range of stakeholders, including community members and the police.[50] Community conversation participants in the other cities studied — Denver and Tucson — expressed interest in a non-police alternative for handling community conflicts. Although this did not arise specifically in the Chicago community conversations, it is included here because trained mediators can address a broad range of community issues and, in doing so, can get to the underlying issue that's driving a problem and avoid recurrence in the future.

Greater utilization of online reporting

To enhance its efficiency, we recommend that Chicago join other jurisdictions in requiring that residents report low-level crimes online. Although Dallas residents have had the option to make such reports online for the past two years, as of early July 2023 using the online system for 18 call categories is required. These include:[51]

- Accident
- Burglary of a Coin Machine
- Burglary of a Motor Vehicle
- Credit/Debit Card Abuse
- Criminal Mischief
- Graffiti
- Harassing Phone Call
- Identity Theft
- Interference with Child Custody
- Lost Property
- Reckless Damage
- Theft
- Theft of Service
- Theft - Shoplift

These incidents still are investigated by Dallas PD, but police resources are not used to travel to the scene immediately or take the report. Those who lack internet access or proficiency can make reports via a local library or a kiosk in the police station.

The Chicago Police Department responded to more than 46,000 calls in 2023 in which the outcome was a report. Some of these dispatches are to address incidents in which the crime occurred a significant time prior the call for service. Some that involve violent crime might require an on-scene response, but the majority of these calls are not emergencies and could be filed online or in person at the station. These include common property crimes like "Auto Theft" or "Criminal Damage to Property," as well as incidents in which police are dispatched to a scene to collect routine information ("Info for Police").

The City of Chicago has an existing online reporting platform and a staffed 311 system.[52] The city should expand the criteria to fill out reports online and then direct callers to go to the stations, give reports to 311, or file them on the website instead of dispatching a police response. For residents who aren't connected to the internet and aren't comfortable going into the station, libraries can be used to submit online reports and the librarians can be trained to walk individuals through the online reporting process.

Holistic response

Our recommendations for the expansion of Chicago's non-police response options have, with a few exceptions, largely focused on how the city can better utilize existing programs and personnel—but this is not the only way. The recommendations have been structured this way

because this approach — expanding criteria or hours of existing programs, amending job descriptions for certain roles, or scaling up current responses — can be a more expeditious way for the city to expand its alternative response ecosystem.

Over the medium- and long-term, though, the city should assess and evaluate its needs and consider ways to approach non-police emergency response in a holistic manner. This can be done through creating a continuum of positions that include opportunities for entry-level hiring from impacted communities and career ladders for advancement.

Holistic response might sound like a novelty, but there already is one responder who handles all the tasks discussed in this report: a police officer. Yet most of the calls described do not require the use of force, a weapon, or even enforcement of the law. Instead, it requires skills police are not often trained in. As alternative response grows across the country and non-police responders take up more and more call types, cities like Chicago should consider the very real opportunity to create and train a new type of responder who specializes in the range of calls that do not require a badge and a gun, and who can focus on responding to the community without unnecessary involvement of law enforcement.

Focus on community policing and building trust

Finally, here are recommendations related to community policing, an alternative to Chicago's costly and often unsuccessful traditional policing model, and one that has been required for five years by the consent decree.

A real neighborhood policing strategy

Five years after the initial pilot of CNPI and five years after Chicago signed the consent decree that demands a comprehensive model of community policing, the city still does not have a real community or neighborhood policing program. CAPS has shrunk significantly from its original mission, although neither the city nor CPD have acknowledged or addressed it. Despite Northwestern University's initial positive evaluation, CNPI has never been fully adopted, even in the so-called "gold standard" districts.

It is long past time this situation was remedied. Given public acknowledgment of the profound need to improve trust between the community and the police, neither the Monitor nor the Mayor should tolerate it. Community policing is not a mere set of words, and it is not even a small number of officers dedicated to holding meetings and events with the community. It is a critical part of building trust, and it should be a department-wide holistic

philosophy. Until this happens there will not be trust between CPD and the citizenry, and pretending otherwise is just that — pretend.

The current superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, Larry Snelling, has not endorsed CNPI, but has asked the Civic Consulting Alliance to advise on what Chicago's community policing strategy should be. Prior to taking office as superintendent, however, he did say two germane things. First, he said that "[i]nstead of having a specific community-policing section … every cop would be considered a community-policing officer." He also stated that "Our community members have to have a stake. We have to bring them to the table. We have to talk to our community leaders."[53]

Although the Policing Project — the authors of this report — have long been involved in working with the city to get CNPI off the ground, the key point is that whether it is CNPI or something else, the city needs a comprehensive community policing strategy, and quickly. Chicago at present has none.

Given the Policing Project's extensive experience with CNPI and its knowledge of community policing historically and nationally, however, it has some recommendations about the direction of community policing in Chicago.

First, the superintendent is right in his general views about community policing. It is entirely correct that community policing should not just be the work of one "section," and it is entirely admirable to want that every officer would be a "community-policing officer." In saying this, however, it is necessary to ask: What is a community-policing officer? How does that differ from the status quo? What expectations should we have for them, and how will we know if they are succeeding?

The goals of community policing are clear — to allow community members and CPD to "co-produce" public safety. Community policing, done well, allows officers to develop relationships with community members so that they can work together to fight crime and make communities safe. They must remain on their beats and in their districts, and not be shifted all over the city, so they can develop those relationships. They must remain in their positions long enough to do so. Community members ask for this. In a recent meeting between Policing Project CNPI staff and commanders in the "gold standard" districts, the commanders also expressed the wish for community support. Therefore, Chicago's community policing strategy should have a structure that prioritizes officers staying in their sectors, and proper management and oversight to ensure it is adhered to.

Of course, community policing is not just the "where" of policing, but it is also "what:" What are officers doing? How are they spending their time? Officers must have time away from

answering 911 calls — time "off the radio" — to actually build relationships with community members. Trust and working relationships take time to develop.

In addition, there is the question of "how": for community policing to be a reality and not simply an aspiration, it must be administered at the highest levels of the Chicago Police Department. Even if the aspiration is that every officer is a community policing officer, this requires clear and strong management and administrative structure.

There must be training on how the police and the community can work together to engage in "problem oriented policing," a well-evaluated model of community-police problem solving that is used in many cities successfully. There must be record-keeping and accountability to ensure this all happens. There must be an administrative structure to achieve this: systems in place to ensure officers are getting the time off the radio, the ability to track and measure the community problem-solving efforts that officers are engaged in. This type of performance management and accountability will help CPD know that its community policing strategy is working as it should, and will show the community how their officers are working to support their neighborhoods.

CNPI was developed to be Chicago's own method of achieving all of this. It was developed with substantial input from numerous stakeholders across the city, and it continued to incorporate input from CPD and the community over time. It was designed to give officers time off the radio, to allow community problem-solving led by DCOs, to ensure that officers remain assigned to consistent areas, and to track each of these components to ensure they are working. While the program has never been fully implemented, many of the essential theories, structures, building blocks of any community-policing strategy have been created over the years as a part of CNPI. Regardless of the exact approach that CCA recommends or CPD chooses, the city should learn all it can from CNPI and avoid starting from scratch where possible.

CPD, like many police departments at present, has staffing challenges, but these should be no barrier to adopting CNPI or something like it. Chicago has more than enough officers per city resident to get the job done. And, as this report has indicated, there is significant opportunity to divert thousands of additional calls from police to other responders.

If Chicago is to have true community policing, it is hard to imagine that model looking so different from CNPI. The question is not about imagination or branding; it is about doing the work to meet the requirements of the consent decree, which the city agreed to with the Illinois Attorney General's Office, and meeting the needs of the community.

Avoid policing that sunders public trust

As was discussed above, Chicago residents feel both under-policed and over-policed. As was evident in the community interviews, over-policing, particularly over-enforcement, has led to a substantial breach of trust between the community and the police.

The city and CPD should focus in particular in reducing unnecessary and pretextual traffic stops. There has been legitimate concern about the high number of traffic stops in the city, on which CPD over-relies in an attempt to fight violent crime.[54] Yet, as work of the Policing Project and many others makes clear, pretextual traffic stops typically are not efficacious at fighting crime, but they do create animosity toward the police in the communities most affected by such crime.[55]

Chicago is conducting a staffing study which, among other things, will bear upon its community policing model. But over-use of tactics like traffic stops takes officers away from what could be effective community policing. Not only that, but it is counter-productive to the sort of trust that community policing is designed to achieve. It destroys trust at the same time as community policing is trying to build it.

Transparency with the community about reform efforts to increase trust

Although outside the direct scope of this report, significant barriers in Chicago shape the context of any effort to reimagine public safety. These include: lack of clarity — internally and externally — on an overall public safety strategy, limited data and technology capacity within CPD, and a dearth of trust that community members have in their local government and officials to provide effective services.

To this last point, Chicago community conversation participants specifically recommended that the city increase public awareness of its reform efforts, including CARE and CNPI. Such an effort, they said, could help to heal relationships between community members, elected officials, and police officers. In light of these words, it was good to see that the MHSE Working Group's report advocates for increasing community awareness of the city's mental health resources. Some of its specific recommendations in this realm include creating a public awareness campaign, organizing citizen engagement opportunities like town halls, and editing job descriptions to emphasize communication responsibilities.[56] We sincerely hope the city acts on this.

CONCLUSION

Residents of some of Chicago's most violent districts live in near-constant fear for their physical safety and yet plainly are lacking in confidence in the Chicago Police Department. Municipal stakeholders echo these concerns about the city's policing but acknowledge that real change has proven elusive — impeded by organizational culture and insufficient prioritization. Police officers themselves are overworked, under-supported, and expected to perform tasks for which they are unsuited and untrained. The gravity of the public safety challenges confronting Chicago cannot and should not be underestimated.

Existing initiatives in Chicago, such as CARE and CNPI, although modest in scope, can serve as a foundation for progress. They reconcile dual community sentiments: the desire for greater support from municipal authorities and profound concern about CPD response. Enhancing CARE and expanding beyond the existing model would supplement officers with trained responders who are better suited to serve mental health needs and non-violent concerns generally. Similar successful models across the country offer practical guides to viable action and serve as proofs of concept for alternative response. And embracing real community policing, instead of treating it as a program that sits adjacent to the department's main patrol function, combined with robust public engagement, would represent a critical step toward forging trust with the community. Chicago's current leadership should commit to confronting these difficult issues with honesty, focus, and sustained effort.

As we write this, the city is working on its community policing and alternative plans. What matters most, however, is what happens next: how those plans are turned into reality. How they are administered, how they are overseen, and how they can be swiftly turned into tangible actions that improve the lives of Chicagoans.

The Policing Project has been honored to work with so many in the City of Chicago, including many philanthropic partners, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders, to better understand this vital challenge and to help chart a course to a better, safer, and more just future.

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