

North Carolina Task Force

for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice

WAYS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN IMPROVE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

While many issues relating to the criminal justice system are addressed at the state or federal level, local governments have a critical role to play. Indeed, local governments possess a unique ability to tailor laws, policies, and practices to the particular needs of their specific communities. Levers available to local governments include changes to municipal laws and policies, as well as implementing trainings and programs that are directly responsive to the concerns of their residents. In the long run, tailoring approaches to local contexts can help ensure public safety needs are met. In addition, local governments are often best positioned to understand how issues like racial disparities in the criminal justice system arise and, most importantly, how they can be eliminated.

The below recommendations (from the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice’s [December 2020 report](#)) represent just some of the solutions you can implement to improve public safety and reduce racial disparities in the criminal justice system. We have organized these solutions by category and the TREC recommendation number corresponds to the full report. In some cases, we have tweaked the language to reflect progress since we published our report. Finally, while some recommendations can only be accomplished statewide legislatively, local governments can implement consistent with the letter or the spirit of the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

| Category | TREC Recommendation |
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| Reimagine Public Safety and Reinvest in Communities. | 1. Respond more appropriately to situations concerning mental illness, autism, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse, homelessness, and other non-emergency situations. |
| | 2. Add crisis intervention training for current law enforcement officers. |
| | 3. Fund grassroots organization that employs promising and peaceful strategies to help communities promote public safety. |
| | 4. Develop and provide funding to help communities build violence prevention program. |

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| | 5. Participate in the formation and support of local Community Safety and Wellness Task Forces. |
| Strengthen Community Policing Practices. | 6. Adopt community policing philosophies and plans in collaboration with the community law enforcement serve. |
| | 8. Encourage or require officers to spend non-enforcement time, or line in, the neighborhoods they serve. |
| Reform Investigation | 11. Use data and objective criteria, instead of officers' subjective perceptions and beliefs, to drive the level of police presence in neighborhoods. |
| Promote Diversion and other alternatives to arrest | 16. Establish and expand access to diversion programs. |
| Revise the role of School Resource Officers | 19. Hire behavioral health professionals in schools. |
| | 20. Fund school personnel training on mental health, first aid, cultural competence/diversity/inclusion, and developmental disability. |
| | 21. Develop inclusive processes for selecting and overseeing SROs. |
| | 24. Encourage School Justice Partnerships to reduce students' juvenile court involvement. |
| Improve law enforcement recruitment, retention, accountability and culture | 36. Expand investigative and oversight authority of local citizen oversight boards. |
| | 51. Expand recruitment and retention efforts with a focus on how to achieve diversity, increase cultural awareness, and ensure that officers have emotional intelligence necessary to serve their communities. |
| Support restorative justice initiative and victim equity. | 61. Establish and fund restorative justice programs in local communities across the state and at various points of the criminal justice system. |
| Improve pre-trial release and accountability practices. | 82. Promote court appearance strategies and develop alternative responses to failure to appear. |
| | 83. Create independent pretrial services and improve data |

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| Facilitate fair trials. | 91. Increase representation of North Carolinians serving on juries through expanded and more frequent sourcing, data transparency, and compensation. |
| Reduce fines and fees. | 104. Develop process to eliminate criminal justice debt. |
| Armed incarceration facilities practices and programming and address prison discipline. | 110. Expand use of restorative justice and rehabilitation programming. |
| Reduce collateral consequences of criminal convictions. | 123. Support the Statewide Reentry Council Collaborative's recommendations. |

ABOUT THE TASK FORCE FOR RACIAL EQUITY IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice, which is co-chaired by Supreme Court Associate Justice Anita Earls and Attorney General Josh Stein, was established in June 2020. For more information about the Task Force, please visit <http://ncdoj.gov/trec> or email criminaljustice@ncdoj.gov.