



# POLICE REFORM TOOLKIT

**ACLU**  
Florida

# REIMAGINING POLICING THROUGH DIVESTMENT + COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT

From their inception, police have been tasked with protecting power and privilege by exerting social control over Black people. That racist history is the broken foundation that our modern policing institutions are built upon. The epidemic of police violence in this country is not an issue of “bad apples;” modern policing is rotten at its core. Police are empowered to act as an occupying force in low-income communities and communities of color across the country. Black communities live under a persistent and well-founded fear of being killed by the police.

The ACLU has been fighting police brutality for 100 years. Today, public confidence in law enforcement has eroded, as we witness a seemingly endless news cycle of state-sanctioned, extrajudicial violence, particularly against Black people. Communities nationwide are advocating for transformational change.

Reimagining systems of policing to reduce the role of police, increase oversight and accountability, and reinvest in our communities, requires diverse, coordinated, and enduring advocacy.

The ACLU of Florida is following the lead of Black-led organizations in calling for transformative shifts in power, funding, resources, and responsibility away from the punitive and harmful institution of policing, and into community-based and community-led supportive services that uplift the communities historically targeted and disproportionately harmed by police.

The ACLU of Florida has designed this toolkit to assist communities in identifying and pursuing opportunities for local police reform initiatives that seek to address systemic racism in policing, divest from police, and reinvest in communities.

Ideas and opportunities for police reform initiatives are as varied as the communities we live in. Avenues for reform can include advocacy aimed at municipal budgets; legislation that narrows the role and responsibilities of police; ballot measures altering a city’s municipal charter to provide for increased oversight and accountability; executive orders that shift police resources; electoral campaigns that support officials committed to divestment; and much more.

The ACLU of Florida is committed to centering the Black-led community-based organizations that have long been doing the work, and engaging with and uplifting them in meaningful ways that prioritize community needs and leadership.

## STEP ONE:



## IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFORM

Before embarking on any advocacy plan, it's critical to understand what challenges your community is facing, and where, in order to identify reforms that will have a meaningful impact, and to tailor your campaign to the appropriate stakeholders.

To get a better sense of how to begin, work to understand the following through research and conversations with community members:

- What policing policies exist in my community that do more harm than good?
- What type of police oversight and accountability measures exist in my community, and how effective are they?
- What zip codes in my community are experiencing the most harm from policing?
- What events, issues, or concerns have been featured recently in local media?
- What conversations are happening in my community about police reform?
- What organizations in my community are already working on police reform?
- How supportive are my local elected officials of police reform initiatives?
- What solutions are being proposed to address the policing issues in my community, and how will they benefit the people most impacted by the problems?
- How have similar issues been addressed in other communities in Florida?
- What avenue for reform is most appropriate to address these issues?

## STEP TWO:



## BUILD YOUR COALITION

It's important to work with community partners and key stakeholders to identify issues, collaborate on solutions, and organize a concentrated advocacy effort for administrative, budgetary, or policy fixes to address local problems.

Reach out to the organizations in your community that are working on police reform. Introduce yourself, express your solidarity with their work, and ask how you can best support their efforts. Attend community-based events, follow local leaders on social media, and cultivate meaningful relationships. Forming a working group among local advocacy groups, faith leaders, business leaders, and other “movers and shakers,” could be a good strategy for streamlining advocacy efforts and ensuring everyone has a seat at the table.

Together, gather information, set measurable advocacy goals, and define your reform strategy.

## STEP THREE:



## CREATE TALKING POINTS + FACT SHEETS

It's important to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Work to develop concise, data-driven talking points to better convey your message to local leaders, the wider community, and the media. Let these talking points guide internal conversations around potential reform initiatives. Determine how to distribute your calls to action effectively utilizing community events, town meetings, and media.

## STEP FOUR:



## ASSESS + ENLIST SUPPORT OF LOCAL LEADERS

Understanding the position of your community's local leaders—including how they view the problem, what their solutions to the problem are, and how committed they are to seeing the proposed solutions through—is critical to determining the best strategy for reform.

Meeting with your electeds provides an opportunity to discuss community problems, present proposed solutions, and enlist their ideas on what reforms are feasible. If you have a draft ordinance, share it with them and discuss any specific concerns they might have. Leave every meeting knowing their position, and whether you can count on their support. Always follow up, and make yourself available to address their concerns.

Identify a “sponsor”—an elected official willing to champion the initiative among their colleagues. Work to understand the process through which the reform could be enacted, and identify any potential procedural challenges.



## STEP FIVE:



## MOBILIZE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

At this point, you'll have a command of the issue and proposed solutions, a coalition of community-based support, and a well-defined strategy for enacting reform. You'll have met 1:1 with the decision-makers and understand what procedural and political obstacles remain.

Implementing a new policy usually involves opportunities for the public to weigh-in during officials' deliberations, typically in city council or county commission hearings ahead of a scheduled vote. Identify a list of supporters—your key stakeholders—to speak at every public hearing. Key stakeholders should include a diverse group of individuals impacted directly by the problem, faith leaders, and business leaders that have a stake in creating a welcoming community.

In addition to participating in public hearings, identify other opportunities for key stakeholders to mobilize community support, such as penning an Op-Ed in the local paper, getting on a local radio show, hosting an educational workshop, or scheduling a press conference

## STEP SIX:



## MOBILIZE THE PUBLIC

Demonstrating broad community support is both necessary and effective for any advocacy campaign. Take steps to ensure the wider community understands the problem and what's at stake. A concise, informed message and repetition are key.

Consider organizing a letter writing campaign, community forums, rallies, and other creative social engagement actions.

Rally broad turnout for every public hearing. For those who cannot attend the hearing in person, invite them to write, email, or call the elected officials to indicate their support for reform. Familiarize yourself with your municipality's process for public participation during hearings.

Leverage every opportunity for reform, including incidents of police violence; policing data releases; the establishment of a commission or task force; the appointment of a new police chief or election of a new sheriff; approval of the annual budget; negotiation of a police union contract; and state or local elections.

## STEP SEVEN:



## EVALUATE + CELEBRATE YOUR IMPACT

To reimagine policing in a sustainable way, the community must understand what changes are being made, monitor how changes are being implemented, and hold institutions accountable to doing less harm.

Organizing and building community power should be considered successes in their own right, even if the results of your reform campaign fell short of your initial expectations. Transformational change takes enduring advocacy, and it's important to celebrate victories and recognize the improvements along the way.

For more information about the ACLU of Florida's ongoing efforts to reimagine policing across the state, visit: <https://www.aclufll.org/en/issues/police-practices> or contact Quinn Diaz at [qdiaz@aclufll.org](mailto:qdiaz@aclufll.org)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Interactive Policing Dashboard by the ACLU of Florida](#)
- [2022 Police Violence Report by Mapping Police Violence](#)
- [Policing Scorecard by Campaign Zero](#)
- [The Policing Project by NYU Law](#)
- [Police Data Initiative](#)
- [The Stanford Open Policing Project](#)
- [Atlas of Surveillance](#)
- [“New Era of Public Safety: An Advocacy Toolkit for Fair, Safe, and Effective Community Policing” by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#)
- [Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing](#)