



Equity Advisory Group Findings, Community Discussion

Presented at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, October 20, 2021

Criminal Justice and Safety

What the Advisory Group Found

Barriers:

- Accountability
 - Above the Law mentality for on and off-duty police
 - Lack of transparency regarding past conduct
- Diversity
 - Not enough diverse personnel in legal areas (courts, jails, and police)
 - Non-local police force: lack of community connection, and loss of local revenue
 - Lack of DEI training, understanding, and application
 - Disparate treatment and judicial outcomes in diverse communities
- Over-Criminalization
 - Over-use of police for civil disputes and inconveniences, which leads to the school-to prison pipeline
 - Lack of alternative intervention programs
 - Failure of adequate support for returning citizens, thereby contributing to their re-entry into the system

Suggestions:

- Start a cultural shift in police department and community through education and improved relationships including officer accountability and diverse hiring practices
- Implement and/or expand preventative and alternative programs such as DEI training, psycho testing, technology/environmental efforts (e.g., speed bumps, mailing tickets, closing/revamping streets, separate mental vs. unlawful act calls), specialized counseling and restorative programs
- Increase support for re-entry and restoration of voting rights

What the Community Told Us

Accountability

Obstacles:

- Lack of communication, understanding, respect of others by police officers
- Unchallenged responses/excuses for police officer behaviors
- Lack of transparency
 - Inability to access police officer name and badge information

Solutions:

- Institute a law enforcement accountability board with civilian representation



- Address unprofessional or abusive behavior for police
- For all individuals involved in the criminal justice system
- Monitor what is done right and share best practices
- Educational and community outreach programs
 - Discuss rules about police interactions; when to talk and not to talk? What is a normal stop and not?
 - Inform residents about laws and legislation and how it affects the community
- Implement legislation and follow-up programs to provide immediate therapeutic services for victims of trauma at all age levels and related to all circumstances.

Diversity

Obstacles:

- Recognizing and dealing with personal bias from police and citizen perspectives

Solutions:

- Diversify police force to be more relatable and break down stereotypes, including race, economic status, age, living in the community they serve, being involved in more than just their jobs in the community they serve

Over-Criminalization

Obstacles:

- Escalated situations following “normal” traffic stops
- Heavy police presence in schools
 - Often stereotypes and racism cloud the judgement of individuals in decision making
- Inadequate Prison Reform
- Unfair assumptions of people, treating all people of similar crimes the same
- Unfounded write-ups/negative reports of inmates preventing access to programs
- Financial barriers to support incarcerated family or friends

Solutions:

- Alternative safety practices for schools prior to police intervention
- Provide training to teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff:
 - To ensure students are treated as youth instead of as an adult
 - Focus on conflict resolution, mediation, de-escalation techniques, and alternative disciplines besides kicking students out of school
 - Implement programs addressing trauma associated with abuse, bullying, and learning disabilities
- Create safe places for all students to congregate such as a Boys & Girls Club or local community center
 - Not exclusive and not determined by race, income, education, school, or address



- Provide community voter education training focusing on its importance, how to vote, and running for office
- Change policy and allow federal prison inmates an opportunity to continue their education
- Improve and provide consistent mental health services for incarcerated individuals (taking into account both incarceration reasons and traumatizing events)
- Re-entry revised to include supports such as housing and employment
- Reform expungement of record laws