

Re-imagining Public Safety and Actions to Hold the Police Accountable

We're approaching the anniversary of the George Floyd uprising, but miscarriages of justice remain: police officers continue to overpolice Black and other communities of color and murder the community members that they are paid and entrusted to protect while too often escaping accountability.

We outlined [some actions to demand police reforms](#) last year, but here are some updated ones:

1. Call for the establishment and funding of community based & non-law enforcement crisis response programs to respond to mental health crises where there is not an immediate threat of violence, for example
2. Call for the establishment and funding of non-law enforcement homeless outreach programs
3. Call for a budget that invests more than 15% in our communities and for more funding in community-based programs and services
4. Call for the establishment and funding of independent citizen commissions with oversight of the police
5. Support and stay connected with mutual aids and organizations for abolition, racial justice, criminal justice, and police reforms

As Dr. Martin Luther King observed in a speech, [The Other America](#), on April 14, 1967 (emphasis ours):

*But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years. **It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met.** And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, equality, and humanity. **And so in a real sense our nation's summers of riots are caused by our nation's winters of delay.** And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention [...]*

*But after saying this, let me say another thing which gives the other side, and that is that although it may be true that morality cannot be legislated, **behavior can be regulated.** **Even though it may be true that the law cannot change the heart, it can restrain the heartless.** Even though it may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, it can restrain him from lynching me. And I think that's pretty important also. **And so while the law may not change the hearts of men, it can and it does change the habits of men.** And when you begin to change the habits of men, pretty soon the attitudes will be changed; pretty soon the hearts will be changed.*

1 Community Based Crisis Response Programs

On Community Based Crisis Response Programs:

- [Mental Health And Police Violence: How Crisis Intervention Is Failing](#)
- [In A Small Pennsylvania City, A Mental Crisis Call To 911 Turns Tragic](#)
- ['CAHOOTS': How Social Workers And Police Share Responsibilities In Eugene, Oregon](#)
- [How Much Do We Need The Police? Author Alex S. Vitale Talks 'The End Of Policing' After Floyd Death](#)
- [Cities Ask if It's Time to Defund Police and 'Reimagine' Public Safety](#)

- [San Diego Council Members Propose Social Workers Oversee Homeless Outreach Instead Of Police](#), [San Diego approves new neighborhood-based homeless outreach](#), [Coordinated Street Outreach Program Will Help Homeless San Diegans](#), [City Announces New Approach To Homeless Outreach](#), and [Outreach team takes new, personal approach to helping San Diego's homeless](#)
- [La Mesa moves forward with homeless outreach plan](#)

1.1 Crisis Interventions

1.1.1 Escondido

Action: Contact [Escondido City Council](#) and call for the establishment and funding of community based & non-law enforcement crisis response teams to respond to mental health crises where there is not an immediate threat of violence, for example

Escondido Police partners with Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) to respond in situations ["where a community member \(e.g., family, neighbor, health provider, business person\) reports an individual in need of psychiatric crisis intervention or assessment"](#) and when a PERT member is available.

However, a law enforcement officer is still involved and as [this article](#) noted: *"calls to 911 result in the dispatch of PERT where the presence of law enforcement is [frequently] not necessary and, in fact, can have adverse impacts on client and community wellness"*.

We also need non-law enforcement mobile crisis response teams to respond to mental health crises where there is not an immediate threat of violence.

1.1.2 San Diego County

Actions:

- [Comment](#) at a budget hearing on [June 16, 2021](#) and call for full funding of Mobile Crisis Response Team program
- Contact [Supervisor Lawson-Remer](#) and ask for a further expansion of Mobile Crisis Response Team program in North County Inland

On June 23, 2020, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved the expansion of and accelerated the launching of a Mobile Crisis Response Team program to respond to *"non-violent incidents countywide involving people with behavioral health crises"*. The program was launched in January 2021 and will further expanded in North Coastal San Diego.

- [San Diego County's mobile crisis response teams will fill a gap in mental health services](#)
- [County approves mental healthcare team](#)
- [New San Diego County Team Provides Alternative to Law Enforcement Response in Psychiatric Crises](#)

1.1.3 California

Actions:

- Contact [Assemblymember Waldron](#), [State Senator Jones](#) and [Governor Newsom](#) and call on them to pass the [CRISES Act](#) to establish a pilot program to have community-based organizations serve as first responders instead of the police

- Contact [Assemblymember Waldron](#) and [State Senator Jones](#) and call on them to pass the [Miles Hall Lifeline Act](#) to establish non-law enforcement mobile crisis support teams to respond to mental health crises

In 2020, the California Legislature approved the [CRISES Act](#) to [establish a pilot program to have community-based organizations serve as first responders instead of the police](#), but Governor Newsom vetoed it, citing that [Office of Emergency Services was “not the appropriate location for the pilot program.”](#)

However, the [CRISES Act](#) has been reintroduced for the 2021 legislative session: [California Bill That Promotes Alternatives to Policing Is Back Despite Governor’s Veto](#) and [Pass the CRISES Act](#). In addition, the [Miles Hall Lifeline Act](#) was also introduced to [establish non-law enforcement mobile crisis support teams to respond to mental health crises](#).

1.2 Homeless Outreach

1.2.1 Escondido

Action: Contact [Escondido City Council](#) and call for the establishment and funding of non-law enforcement homeless outreach programs

On March 3, 2021, Escondido City hosted a workshop on homelessness and transiency during a City Council meeting, presenting [a dedicated website on topic](#). Escondido City used the Police Community-Oriented Policing and Problem Solving Unit (COPPS) to respond to “*homeless related matters and service calls*”. They work with social service and non-profit agencies to connect individuals to housing, medical and other related services.

However, Escondido Police's priority remains ultimately on enforcing laws and code ordinances. As with crisis interventions, the presence of law enforcement can have “*adverse impacts on client and community wellness*”. Law enforcement may not be equipped to understand why individuals may not feel safe and reject help nor equipped to handle these cases.

We also need a dedicated non-law enforcement [homeless outreach](#) program.

1.2.2 San Diego County

Action: [Comment](#) at a budget hearing on [June 16, 2021](#) and call for full funding of the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities and non-law enforcement homeless outreach pilot programs

On April 06, 2021, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved [a new Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities and a homeless outreach pilot program \(not led by law enforcement\)](#).

2 Invest More in Community-Based Programs & Services

2.1 Escondido

Action: [Comment](#) on a budget hearing set for June 2021 and call for a budget that invests more than 15% in our communities and for more funding in community-based programs and services

On June 10, 2020, the Escondido City Council approved [a budget which allocated 43% of the budget \(45.6 millions\) to the Escondido Police](#). By comparison, 15% (16.9M) combined were allocated to [Community Services \(8%, 8.8M\)](#), [General Govt. Support Services \(5%, 5.6M\)](#), and [Community Relations & the California Center for the Arts \(2%, 2.5M\)](#).

When Escondido City sought "cost-saving measures" or to "balance the budget", they [outsourced library operations in 2017 to an out-of-state private company, Library Systems and Services](#), and [closed our East Library Branch closed in 2011](#), for example, when these programs are a small percentage of our budget.

We need a budget that invests more than 15% in our communities: funding to establish community based crisis response and homeless outreach programs not focused on enforcing laws, [to replace or acquire the Palomar Family YMCA which is closing](#), to manage library operations by the city & community instead of by an outsourced private company, etc.

- [Escondido protesters call for redirecting police funds](#)
- [Hundreds of Escondido residents comment on police budget](#) & [Escondido police, city officials say they are working on reform](#)

2.2 San Diego County

Action: [Comment](#) at a budget hearing on [June 16, 2021](#) and call for full funding of the Mobile Crisis Response Team program, non-law enforcement homeless outreach pilot programs and the Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities

The San Diego County's [budget](#) for [2021-2022](#) allocated 39% (2,533M) to Health and Human Services and 31% (2,047M) to Public Safety. This is compared to 36% (2,263M) to Health and Human Services and 33% (2,058M) to Public Safety in [2019-2020](#), and to 34% (2,105M) and 31% (1,920M) in [2018-2019](#) respectively.

3 Independent Oversight Commissions

On independent oversight of the police:

- [San Diego City Approves Ballot Measure to Establish Commission On Police Practices, Transition to San Diego's new police oversight commission underway after Measure B's big win, San Diego Commission On Police Practices Proposes Changes To SDPD Protest Policy](#), and [Police commission recommends changes to new SDPD protest policy](#)
- [Sacramento, CA, to hire police oversight inspector general](#) & [Sacramento inspector general reviews police misconduct](#)

3.1 Escondido

Action: Contact the [Escondido City Council](#) and call for the establishment of independent citizen commissions with oversight of the police.

On May 25, 2016, the San Diego County Grand Jury issued [a report recommending that Escondido establishes independent citizen commissions with oversight of the police](#).

Finding 05: Cities without a citizens' oversight board do not have public review of complaints of police behavior and risk losing the trust of their citizens [...]

Finding 06: A review board shaped with citizen input will promote confidence in actions taken by the board [....]

The 2015/2016 Grand Jury recommends that Mayors and City Councils of El Cajon, La Mesa, Escondido, Oceanside, Carlsbad, Chula Vista, and Coronado:

- *16-30: Establish independent citizen commissions for oversight of police behavior.*
- *16-31: Determine the specific commission model with community input to ensure acceptance, independence, and accountability.*

On August 16, 2016, Escondido City issued [a response rejecting the Grand Jury's recommendations](#), stating that the Escondido Police's internal [citizen complaints](#) review is sufficient, and that the public has sufficient forums for providing feedback on the police, such as through the City Council or City Manager.

On the subject of formal complaints, all are rigorously and thoroughly investigated by a full-time sergeant specifically dedicated to this task. The Department has a robust history of imposing appropriate discipline when an investigation reveals it is warranted. Citizen complainants are advised of the general outcome of the investigation and may appeal that outcome to the City Manager [...]

The Escondido Police Department has a documented history of resolving complaints regarding police behavior through existing channels and procedures.

Escondido City did not provide any data or evidence backing their claims. It is also unknown if the sergeant tasked with investigating complaints has any independence nor are any of their findings made public.

We need independent citizen commissions vested with authority to review and investigate complaints or, for example, the effectiveness of the [de-escalation policy](#) that [the Escondido Police recently updated](#), publicly publish the findings and provide recommendations.

The topic of "*establish[ing] citizen review boards to investigate complaints against law enforcement officers*" was brought on the Escondido City Council's agenda for October 21, 2020, and [was heard and discussed by the City Council](#) then. However, there have been no updates since that hearing. See [Council, residents call for Escondido police oversight board](#).

As the San Diego Union-Tribune Editorial Board [noted](#):

Escondido has long had a record of governing and policing in ways that were hostile or worse to communities of color. In 2006, the city was in the national spotlight after it became the first in California to adopt policies [penalizing landlords](#) who rented to undocumented immigrants — a law that a federal judge quickly blocked on the grounds that immigration enforcement was the responsibility of the U.S. government. In 2010, the city again found the spotlight over its Police Department's unusually close relationship with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and its [practice](#) of using sobriety checkpoints not just to find and punish drivers who were impaired but drivers who were undocumented.

See also [Escondido's city-federal effort to oust \[undocumented\] immigrants draws praise, criticism](#) from 2011, [Escondido Police Under Fire](#) from 2012 and [Escondido continues DUI checkpoints despite past controversy](#) from 2020.

We as a community have not received any accounting or reports showing the effectiveness of sobriety checkpoints in Escondido or that these sobriety checkpoints do not still disproportionately target communities of color.

3.2 San Diego County

Actions:

- Read about [Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board](#) (CLERB) which [investigates citizen complaints related to the Sheriff's Deputies and Probation Officers of San Diego County](#)
- Attend CLERB meetings which are scheduled on the Second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Currently, meetings are held remotely via [BlueJean Platform](#). Public comments can be made at [Register Comments or Request to Speak](#).

On June 23, 2020, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved [expanding powers and resources of Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board](#):

- *CLERB's staff and functions [is] reassigned to the jurisdiction of the county's Finance and General Government Group rather than its Public Safety Group [and more community input is allowed in selecting board members]*
- *CLERB [now] has authority to automatically review and launch investigations any time a peace officer fires a weapon, any time the use of force results in great bodily injury and any time a peace officer uses force during a protest or other event protected by the First Amendment*

The San Diego Union-Tribune recently published a series analyzing the policing of communities of color by the San Diego County Sheriff's Deputies (and San Diego City Police):

- [The Color of Authority: San Diego police, sheriff's deputies disproportionately target minorities, data show](#) (see also [Data: San Diego Police And Sheriff's Deputies Target Minorities](#))
- [A Palpable Fear: Minorities describe encounters with San Diego police, sheriff's deputies](#)
- [The Strong Arm of the Law; San Diego officers, deputies turn to force more often when minorities are involved](#)
- [Back story: Examining racial disparities in policing across San Diego County](#)

4 Support Local Community Organizations

Action: Support and stay connected with mutual aids and organizations for abolition, racial justice, criminal justice, and police reforms including:

1. [North County Equity & Justice Coalition](#) (see [North County Equity and Justice Coalition aims to be hub for social justice activism](#) and [Social justice supergroup boosts activism in North County](#))
2. [We the People Escondido](#) ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#))
3. [North County San Diego NAACP](#) ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#))
4. [Racial Justice Coalition of San Diego](#) ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#))
5. [DeDe McClure Community Bail Fund](#) ([List of Bail Funds for Protestors across the Country](#))
6. [March for Black Womxn San Diego & Mutual Aid](#) ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Linktree](#), [Twitter](#))
7. [We All We Got SD Mutual Aid](#) ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)) and see [San Diego Community Members Help Each Other During Coronavirus Pandemic](#))