



CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY STEPS FOR CITIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Mayors have been on the frontlines of the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have taken action in a variety of areas, including public health, schools and childcare, local economies, and general civic life. Cities must also institute lifesaving policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the justice system. The list below, which will be updated periodically, highlights several actions that cities should take:

1. **Limit police stops and custodial arrests.** Officers should be instructed to issue citations or warrants for as many categories of offenses as possible. Individuals should only be taken into custody if they pose a clear risk to public safety. When custodial arrest is necessary, ensure that individuals are evaluated by a medical professional before being booked into jail.
 - Guidance from [Philadelphia](#) Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw
 - Executive Order from [Washington \(DC\)](#) Metropolitan Police Department Chief Peter Newsham
2. **Suspend penalties for parking violations**, including towing and ticketing. Delay drivers' licenses suspensions and financial penalties for overdue tickets.
 - Press Release from [Chicago](#) Mayor Lori Lightfoot
3. **Distribute sanitizing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) to officers** to wear if they must approach an individual displaying symptoms. Otherwise, encourage officers to remain 6-feet away from members of the public whenever possible. Require 911 dispatchers to ask callers if they are experiencing flu-like symptoms. If yes, ensure that responding officers are wearing full protective gear.
 - [Los Angeles](#) Times article on LAPD policies
 - [Bellevue \(WA\)](#) Fire Department public announcement
4. **Release incarcerated individuals from local jails** belonging to groups the CDC has classified as vulnerable — including elderly individuals and those with underlying medical conditions — unless there is clear evidence of a threat to public safety. Upon release, ensure access to stable housing and other key reentry resources.
 - Marshall Project article on how the [Alameda County \(CA\)](#) Sheriff's Office released over 300 people from jail and [partnered with local hotels](#) to provide rooms for those who need housing.
 - News article on [Cuyahoga County \(OH\)](#) extending early release for people incarcerated for low-level offenses.
5. **Restrict in-person visitation in local jails and expand access to virtual visitation** (calling and video) at no additional cost to incarcerated individuals or their family.
 - [Pennsylvania State Department of Corrections](#) policy

contact: [Betsy Pearl](#) • Assoc. Director, Criminal Justice Reform • Center for American Progress
[Jerry Parshall](#) • Assoc. Director, State and Local Government Affairs • Center for American Progress

updated: March 24, 2020

a resource from [Mayors for Smart on Crime](#)