

Issues in Policing*

Policing faces several significant issues today, and addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving systemic changes, community engagement, and policy reforms. Collaboration among law enforcement agencies, community organizations, policymakers, and the public is required. It is crucial to involve diverse perspectives and work towards building trust, accountability, and equitable policing practices.

Here are some key issues and potential solutions. When available, San Diego-specific examples and references are supplied.

Police brutality and excessive use of force:

- San Diego issues: [Evaluating Policing in San Diego](#)
- Improve training: Enhance de-escalation techniques, cultural competency, and implicit bias training.
- Accountability measures: Implement body-worn cameras, independent civilian oversight boards, and mandatory reporting of incidents involving force.
- Strengthen disciplinary procedures: Ensure timely and fair investigations of misconduct and establish consequences for excessive force.

Lack of trust and strained community relations:

- San Diego issues:
 - [“Some officers escape discipline despite new police transparency laws”](#), inewssource, March, 2023.
 - [“Southeastern San Diego residents say police interactions start as young as 6”](#), Voice of San Diego, June, 2020
- Community-oriented policing: Foster stronger relationships through community engagement initiatives, such as regular meetings, community policing programs, and problem-solving partnerships.
- Transparency and communication: Increase transparency in police operations, share data on policing practices, and encourage open dialogue with community members.

Racial profiling and bias:

- San Diego issues:
 - [CBS-8 report, February, 2023](#)
 - [Evaluating Policing in San Diego](#), 2020 report

*How to use this document:

- Feel free to use some or all of the text above when writing your letter
- For location-specific data, internet searches using each of the issues and bullet points above, followed by the name of your location should be useful.

- Bias training and education: Incorporate comprehensive training on recognizing and addressing implicit biases among officers
- Data-driven accountability: Collect and analyze data on police stops, searches, and arrests to identify patterns of racial profiling and take corrective action.
- Diverse police force: Encourage recruitment efforts to ensure a more diverse and representative police force that reflects the communities they serve.

Mental health crisis response:

- Collaborative partnerships: Develop specialized crisis intervention teams that include mental health professionals alongside police officers.
- Diversion programs: Establish programs that divert individuals with mental health issues from the criminal justice system towards appropriate treatment and support services.
- Training on mental health: Enhance training for officers to better understand mental health issues and employ de-escalation techniques in crisis situations.

Overcriminalization and systemic inequalities:

- San Diego issues:
 - [“How homelessness is criminalized”](#), Voice of San Diego, October, 2021.
 - [“Studies show policing doesn’t end homelessness. San Diego officials double down anyway”](#), inewssource, March, 2023.
- Review and reform policies: Assess existing laws and regulations to reduce overcriminalization and prioritize alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenses.
- Address root causes: Invest in community development, education, and social services to address systemic inequalities and reduce crime at its roots.
- Restorative justice: Implement restorative justice practices that focus on repairing harm, rehabilitating offenders, and involving the community in the process.

Technological advancements and privacy concerns:

- Establish clear guidelines: Develop policies and regulations regarding the use of surveillance technologies like facial recognition, drones, and data collection to balance public safety with individual privacy rights.
- Oversight and transparency: Create mechanisms for independent oversight and public scrutiny of police technology usage to ensure accountability and prevent misuse.

Conditions in jails and prisons

- San Diego issues:
 - [San Diego County In-Custody Death Study](#)
 - [State Audit of San Diego County Sheriff’s Department](#) , 2022
- **Lack of proper healthcare:** Inadequate medical care and delays in responding to medical emergencies can contribute to deaths in custody. Well-trained medical staff, protocols for medical emergencies, and regular health screenings for inmates can help address this.

- **Use of excessive force:** It is important to train and educate correctional personnel on the appropriate use of force and establish strict guidelines and accountability mechanisms to prevent the misuse of force. Implementing body cameras and independent oversight mechanisms can also help ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Inadequate mental health and addiction support:** Prisons and jails should invest in mental health services, including comprehensive assessments, treatment programs, and crisis intervention training for staff.
- **Prison overcrowding and understaffing:** Governments should consider measures to reduce overcrowding, such as sentencing reforms, alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders, and investing in community-based rehabilitation programs.
- **Lack of transparency and accountability:** In-custody deaths often face a lack of transparency and accountability, making it difficult to assess the causes and prevent future incidents. Establishing independent oversight bodies, conducting thorough and impartial investigations into deaths, and making the findings publicly available can help promote accountability and identify areas for improvement.

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