



# Building Community Justice

## Five Action Steps for Safety and Justice

The Center for Justice Innovation is driven by a singular idea: local communities are critical to transforming justice. We believe that the only way to truly create safe and flourishing neighborhoods is with a full-spectrum approach that runs from communities to systems and back again.

We call that approach Community Justice.

As we’ve worked to build Community Justice over the past three decades, we have collaborated with and learned from a wide range of community partners—neighborhood residents and leaders, local businesses and entrepreneurs, and grassroots and nonprofit organizations. But we know that “community” is much broader than that.

Community Justice requires enlisting *all* of government and civil society, not just the sectors traditionally associated with public safety.

That means we work in partnership with public housing authorities, social service agencies, job training and education providers, victim services, children’s services, and drug and mental health treatment providers. In legal systems, we work with judges, prosecutors, defenders, civil attorneys, pretrial services, community corrections departments, law

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enforcement agencies, and criminal, housing, and family court administrators. And because we are always looking to better understand and build upon our experiences as implementers on the ground, our vision of community includes data analysts, researchers, and policymakers in federal, state, and local governments.

While every community is unique, we focus our efforts on a full spectrum of actions to build and deliver Community Justice:

## 1 | Center Community Voice and Agency



Community Justice prioritizes the expertise and values of communities and supports residents in leading a broad range of efforts to create safe and flourishing neighborhoods. Through approaches such as placekeeping, dynamic youth programming, family support services, economic development, and early diversion, we invest in "upstream" initiatives that prevent contact with the justice system altogether or create "off-ramps" that help people out of the system as early as possible.

## 2 | Bridge Community and Government

Community Justice fosters meaningful dialogue, equitable partnership, and effective collaboration across communities, organizations, systems, and sectors. We work to prevent system involvement with resources such as help centers and community justice centers that operate alongside the traditional system. Where system involvement cannot be prevented, we promote alternatives to traditional punishment and other interventions that may cause harm, building broad coalitions to solve problems and generate community-centered responses.



### 3 | Reduce Harm and Support Repair



Community Justice reduces the harms caused by systemic injustices while working to generate sustainable solutions to longstanding, complex problems. From community-led healing circles and mobility-out-of-poverty initiatives to alternatives to incarceration for people charged with serious offenses, we seek every opportunity to promote holistic practices, healing, and accountability for all people and communities.

### 4 | Understand Causes and Impact

Community Justice continuously interrogates the impact of systems and practices meant to deliver safety and justice and actively seeks to improve them. We leverage the full range of causal, quantitative, qualitative, and participatory research methods to measure outcomes and drive evidence-generating and evidence-informed practices.



### 5 | Build Safety and Justice for All



Community Justice recognizes that safety and justice are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing, a truth made manifest every day in well-resourced communities across the country. We work to achieve safety *and* justice through an approach tailored to the needs and priorities of each unique community, applying the lessons we learn nationally to create better ways of building and maintaining safety.

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