

11 actions to take for a

POLICE-FREE

future

adapted from mpd150.com

MPD 150 is a people's project to evaluate the Minneapolis police department, which is not unique among United States police departments.

ESSENTIAL FINDINGS

- * The police cannot be reformed away from their core function. Slavery was not abolished: it was reformed into the prison system.
- * The police criminalize dark skin and poverty, channeling millions of people into the prison system, depriving them of voting and employment rights.
- * The police escalate situations that call for social service intervention.
- * There are viable alternatives to police already in use for every area in which police engage.

THOUGHT EXERCISE

Imagine what stability would look like in a new city. How would you try to solve the problems that your friends and neighbors encountered? How would you respond to crises and violence? Would your first choice be an unaccountable, untrained paramilita?

Are police part of the solution at all? Patterns of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and bullying are built into the foundation of the police system. When someone is having a mental health crisis, or when neighbors are concerned about a fellow neighbor, or when we feel unsafe, are the police our only option? Vibrant, dynamic, and police-free communities are only built from the bottom up.

1. STOP CALLING THE POLICE WHEN IT'S UNNECESSARY.

Calling the police is always a choice,

Reflect on that choice to make sure it isn't an automatic response to personal discomfort or uncertainty. Be aware of the hidden prejudices that may affect your decisionmaking. They were put there by a society only beginning to recover from generations of oppression.

An inconvenience for one person, once police are involved, can become a death sentence for another person.

2. GET TRAINED IN FIRST AID, DE-ESCALATION, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, ETC.

Increased police spending rarely goes to enhanced training or making more capable cops. The more skills we have to share with our neighbors and family, the less we must ask the police to do. Find or organize local trainings for community members to share their knowledge.

3. BUILD COMMUNITY ALL THE TIME, NOT JUST IN CRISIS.

We need to proactively cultivate resilient communities. One of the first steps we can take toward communities that no longer need police is meeting one another. We can know our neighbors' names. We can hold pot-lucks, volunteer to help our neighbors with simple things like shoveling snow or carrying groceries, and build real relationships. That way, when crises happen, we have other resources to call upon besides the police.

Ask, "If I needed to, could I call you?"
Say, "If you needed to, you could call me."

4. IF YOU NEED POLICE, GO TO THEM INSTEAD OF CALLING THEM TO YOU.

If something of yours is stolen and you need to file a report for insurance or other purposes, go to the police station instead of bringing cops into your community. You may inadvertently be putting someone in your neighborhood at risk.

5. IN MENTAL HEALTH CRISES, CENTER THE PERSON IN CRISIS.

A person in a mental health crisis must have their wishes respected as much as is safe. The best intervention strategies will be things that the person buys into and does voluntarily. Those with mental health issues have likely been traumatized by doctors and other practitioners not listening to them or doing things against their will.

Context matters, and there are no absolutes. However, think about trauma when you are considering what actions to take.

6. MAKE A LIST OF LOCAL SERVICES/ HOTLINES TO CALL INSTEAD OF THE COPS.

- * Domestic abuse crisis centers
- * Shelters for homeless people
- * Mental health support groups

Find out which ones involve the police as a matter of protocol, and which ones don't. Hang the list on your refrigerator. Keep those contacts in your phone. Send this list to your neighbors.

7. SUPPORT THOSE SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH.

Where those services exist, support them. Volunteer, donate, and lobby for funding from the local government. Alternatives to the police already exist, but they are deliberately underfunded.

Ask: how can I re-allocate resources from police to services that help people?
How much of my local budget goes to police?

8. FIND SOLUTIONS WHERE YOU ARE.

Across the country, activists changing the narrative and doing the work. Teachers and parents are working on campaigns like Dignity in Schools' "Counselors Not Cops." LGBTQ groups are uninviting police from Pride parades. Formerly-incarcerated people are organizing networks of mentorship and unarmed community mediation teams. The Sex Workers Outreach Project is working to address stigma and criminalization. From decriminalizing drugs, to dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline, to abolishing ICE, and beyond: every step gets us closer.

What could you make happen in your area?

9. DEVELOP POLICY WORK TO PREVENT CRIME.

What keeps your community healthy and safe? Affordable housing, jobs, youth programs, opportunities to create and experience art, welcoming environments,

We can cultivate safer and healthier neighborhoods by getting involved in activist organizations, neighborhood groups, school boards, etc. that have the power to do this preventative work.

10. DREAM BIGGER: ONE DAY, WE WILL REPLACE POLICE.

We can take these steps now, but this work is about planting seeds: some of the tools we need don't yet exist. The first step toward a police-free future is visualizing what that future will look like.

Let's defeat the mindset that police are an inevitable part of life. There are better ways for us to keep our communities healthy and safe than an organization built to support white supremacy. Help build the world in which you want to live.

11. VOTE.

The people who make the biggest impact on your day-to-day life are your local representatives. The most direct way to influence the people choosing how to spend your money is the ballot box.

If you care about justice for criminal police, make sure you're registered to vote.

If you care where your tax money goes, make sure every contact in your phone votes.

If you care about the wellbeing of your Black neighbors, make voting a priority.