

* Visit (link) to learn more about these best practices

FRANKLIN COUNTY BEST PRACTICES ANALYSIS

Across the board, Franklin County falls short of best practices for promoting community safety and reducing the number of people entangled in the criminal justice system. The county and city are missing opportunities taken by other counties across the country to promote safety and justice.

Policing: Cities, such as Oakland, Richmond and Stockton in California, have shown that it is possible to reduce violence rates by building stronger, more collaborative relationships within the community. The Procedural Justice approach – including an emphasis on dignity and respect, ensuring community members have a voice, fact-based decision making, and transparently acting in a way that demonstrates officials have the best interests of community members in mind – requires the police to rebuild trust and credibility with the community. If implemented thoroughly, it works. Ceasefire is a particularly effective example of a violence reduction program based on the principles of procedural justice. Given the high rate of homicides in Columbus – 99 alone in 2015 – and their concentration in a smaller number of areas in the region, it is important the city and county adopt effective public safety policies that focus on reducing violence rather than criminalizing Black and Latino youth through aggressive policing.



Police accountability: During District Attorney Ron O'Brien's entire 18 years as Franklin County's prosecutor, not one police officer has been indicted for an officer-involved shooting. District Attorney O'Brien relies on the same prosecutor-managed grand jury process that has been widely criticized in St. Louis County, Missouri, in the case of Michael Brown's killing. Prosecutor-managed grand juries are not seen as providing a fair and independent process for holding police accountable for abuse. For example, O'Brien has acknowledged publicly that "[n]ine times out of 10, we're presenting a case that otherwise wouldn't be presented because we don't think a crime was committed."² Best practice to

² <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/01/18/local-police-shootings-always-go-to-grand-jury.html>

racial disparities in charging, providing pretrial services within 24 hours to people who've been arrested, and seeking to minimize the length of probation and parole. It is possible to hold people accountable for breaking the law while prioritizing the needs of victims in the community, and seeking to limit the number of people involved in the criminal justice system.

Re-entry: Both Columbus and Franklin County need a comprehensive approach to supporting people's reentry back from jail and prison. This should include investment in transitional jobs and housing. It is common sense that finding work and stable housing reduces the likelihood that people will end up back behind bars.

When combined the best practices, outlined above in this section, to both reduce violence and incarceration provide a road map for Franklin County to dramatically reduce the number of people placed in jail each year, and under the supervision of law enforcement – perhaps by as much as one half. These best practices will also reduce glaring racial inequities in the region. The key is for those in positions of leadership to take leadership for the common good of Franklin County.

LOCAL CALL TO ACTION

Less than two weeks after the launch of the Columbus Safe Communities Initiative, another young black man was killed at the hands of police. Another Linden mother's heart is broken. On Monday June 6th, a 23-year-old young black man was gunned down just one block away from Linden McKinley High School. Henry Green was killed by plain clothes officers Jason Bare and Zachary Rosen whom according to witnesses did not identify themselves as police nor did they give time for Green to respond. Green owned a handgun, but according to the surviving victim Christian Rutledge it was not out when the plainclothes officers pulled up on them in an unmarked SUV.



Prosecutor O'Brien, you were elected to office in Franklin County to enforce the laws that are supposed to keep our community safe. Community members do not feel safe when they can be gunned down by plain clothes police at any moment. It has been three months with no action from your office. We again, are asking you to do

the right thing. We want to see a commitment to appoint an independent prosecutor to oversee Henry Green's case to ensure a fair and unbiased trial.

We want justice for Henry, but we also must prevent more situations like this one from happening again. We must get serious as a community about investing in evidence-based strategies that actually prevent violence and keep families safe. Both candidates running for Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney should commit to follow the best practices outlined in this report.

We have invited the sitting Republican Prosecutor Ron O'Brien and the Democratic candidate Zach Klein to attend our forum on Wednesday September 14, at 6 p.m., at Mount Olivet Church to outline how they will use their power in the prosecutor's office to create a more safe and just community in Franklin County.



NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION

by Dr. Robert "Biko" Baker

So now that you've come to the close of this report, my question for you is simply: "What are you going to do about it?"

There was a time, perhaps, when elected officials and decision makers could claim that they were unaware of the drastic impact that their bad policy decisions were having on their communities. After all, we live in the era of big data. Twenty years ago our policy makers did not have the same technological tools that we are blessed with today. It's likely that few could have predicted that the tough on crime policies of the 1990s would still be having such a dramatic impact a generation later.

Today, the impact that the over-policing of our communities is in our faces everyday. But the truth is, we don't need statistical models to that see our current system is broken.

Whether it's the nightly news reports of dead Black and Brown bodies lying on pavement or the haunting absence of our loved ones who face long prison sentences, we can no longer afford to turn away from the trauma that the prison industrial complex is inflicting on our nation. Those of us who come from communities that have been ravaged by this broken system just ask that you stand with

us. Don't look away from the pain festering in places like Ferguson and Baltimore, rather, run towards the trauma. Do something about it.

You are now armed with enough data and proven policies to help define a new reality for future Americans. We need bold leaders who are willing to step to the front and challenge the status quo. If places like Oakland, California, can see dramatic drops in violence, so can your community. We just need leaders who are willing to demand that our local and state governments try new approaches. If there's anything this report has shown, it's that we can transform our communities if we work together.

The time for a better future is now. Do your part, use the data in this report to help make sure that all of us can live free.

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