

# FINAL REPORT RICHMOND TASK FORCE ON REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY



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## Letter from Mayor Levar M. Stoney

My fellow Richmonders,

In the context of this past summer's long overdue racial reckoning, which shook not only our city but our entire nation, I convened the Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety as a first step in devising an intentional, equity-driven plan to make Richmond a truly safer place for all its residents.

The members of the Task Force were recommended by a variety of trusted public servants and community members as authorities in various areas: the legal profession, mental and behavioral healthcare, emergency services, trauma-informed education and service, reformation of the justice system, and more.

My only direction to them was to explore three issue areas to evaluate our public safety landscape, establish ideal outcomes that reflect substantive and informed change, and chart an actionable pathway toward reform: police use of force, taking a human service approach to calls for service, and community healing and engagement.

The purpose of the Task Force was always to gather insight from and consider the recommendations of a diverse, experienced group of professionals and community members, the collective wisdom of which is far stronger than any one leader can summon independently. So in September, the Task Force presented their findings to me, and I listened.

This report, available to the public since September 24, struck me as innovative, meticulously researched and tailored to Richmond's unique identity as the former capital of the Confederacy. I could not wait to read the finalized report.

Here, you have the opportunity to read that final report. It lays out a broad array of recommendations, some of which are simple fixes and some of which will require restructuring of long-standing systems that are familiar and, unfortunately, comfortable for many Richmonders. Regardless, my administration is committed to starting the work to turn these actionable recommendations into the policies, practices and procedures that will make Richmond a safer and more equitable city for each and every resident.

**It is incumbent on us as a city to look in the mirror and honestly evaluate whether we like what we see.** It is not enough and never will be enough to simply point out flaws or missteps. We must come to the same table, built on a foundation of shared ideals and vision for what this city can be, and actuate the plan. Please, read this report, and join me at the table.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. M. Stoney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

## Task Force Summary of Work and Process

On July 10, 2020, Mayor Stoney announced the creation of the Richmond Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety. Members of the task force consisted of a diverse group of community members, advocates, and experts to review the police department's use of force policies, explore approaches to public safety using a human services lens (specifically focused on calls for service), and prioritize community healing and engagement. In addition to members of the public, Mayor Stoney also asked members of his administration to join the task force to provide timely information and feedback on recommendations. Maggie Anderson, a policy analyst and advisor to the mayor, helped to facilitate the task force meetings, along with Brian Williams, an Associate Professor of Public Policy from the University of Virginia, who has an extensive background in the interplay between race, policing, and public governance.

The first public task force meeting took place on August 7, 2020, with scheduled meetings of the collective task force convening every other Friday. These collective Friday meetings were publicly available on the City of Richmond Facebook page. Each respective subgroup – Community Engagement and Healing, Human Service Lens, and Use of Force – met weekly to discuss ideas/best practices, debate solutions, and learn from one another. The results of the subgroup conversations were then shared every other week in the publicly available meetings.

Over the course of 90 days, the Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety worked on their recommendations to advise the mayor and the City of Richmond on actionable ways to reimagine public safety. Initial recommendations were submitted on September 21<sup>st</sup> (after 45 days of meeting) and final recommendations on November 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that once recommendations were received from each subgroup, the Mayor's Office then formatted and organized the recommendations into a comprehensive report to be shared with the public.

## Task Force Members

Bill Pantele  
Birdie Jamison  
Brad Nixon  
Brandon Browne  
Brandon Lovee  
Brian Swann  
Brian Williams  
Carol Adams  
Colette McEachin  
Courtney Winston  
Daryl Fraser  
Destiny Hill  
Devontae Scott

Djibril Niang  
Dontae McCutcheon  
Councilwoman Ellen  
Robertson  
George Brown  
Glenwood Burley  
Helena Hudson  
Iman Shabazz  
Keisha Cummings  
Kimberly Russo  
Lashawnda Singleton  
Lisa Moon  
Lyons Sanchezconcha

Councilman Mike Jones  
Natasha Crosby  
Patrice Shelton  
Ram Bhagat  
Robert Morris  
Shanel Lewis  
Shatara Hurt  
Sheba Williams  
Shytina Huey  
Torey Edmonds  
Tracy Paner  
Triston Harris  
William Pelfrey

## Acknowledgements

Mayor Stoney and his administration would like to thank all members of the task force for dedicating their time, passion, lived experiences, and love to reimagine how public safety – community safety – is achieved in the city of Richmond. The task before this group was not easy and involved many difficult discussions, hours of listening and reflection, and learning from one another.

We would also like to thank the following members for going above and beyond to support the work of the task force:

1. Daryl Fraser and Carol Adams, for serving as the overall task force co-chairs;
2. Sheba Williams, Natasha Crosby, and Courtney Winston, for serving as the co-chairs of the Use of Force subgroup;
3. Torey Edmonds, for serving as the chair of the Human Services Lens subgroup;
4. Birdie Jamison and Ram Bhagat, for serving as the co-chairs of the Community Engagement and Healing subgroup; and,
5. Brian Williams, for his facilitation expertise, the assistance of his Public Engagement in Governance Looking Lab and Research Assistants (RAs), who served as active listeners and detailed note takers in task force meetings:
  - a. Domenick Bailey
  - b. Mia Bailey
  - c. Zachary Estess
  - d. Lana Homola
  - e. Brianna Lehman
  - f. Tyler Litchfield
  - g. Carmen J. Williams

Even though the 90 day working period of the task force has concluded, we know that we will need continued guidance from all task force members and the greater Richmond community. We look forward to keeping the community informed of actions taken and working together to ensure that Richmond does not miss its moment to transform and expand public safety for the benefit of all community members.



## Recommendations: Human Services Lens for Calls for Service Subgroup

Chair: Torey Edmonds

Members: Lashawnda Singleton, Lisa Moon, Robert Morris, James Davis, Keisha Cummings, John Lindstrom, Shanel Lewis, Shunda Giles, Brian Swann, Reginald Gordon, Bill Pantele, Valaryee Mitchell, Stephen Willoughby, Cynthia Reyes, Lynda Sharp Anderson, Daryl Fraser, Tracy Paner, Maggie Anderson, and Councilwoman Robertson

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### Executive Summary and Work Process: Human Services Lens Subgroup

The Human Services Lens Subgroup met weekly from August 12, 2020 to November 4, 2020. In order to level set the knowledge and data points for the members of this subgroup, several presentations were provided by members of the Stoney Administration: (1) the Richmond Department of Emergency Communication provided a detailed overview of the types of calls for service they receive and dispatch to the Richmond Police Department (RPD); (2) the Department of Social Services provided an overview of the former second responders program (both the pros and cons); (3) the Office of Community Wealth Building gave an overview of the services they provide; (4) the City of Richmond's Community Ambassador program provided a summary of their work; (5) the DCAO of Human Services provided information gathered from previous listening sessions that the City of Richmond held with residents; and, (6) RPD shared demographic information about their officer-initiated stops.

Additionally, RVA League for Safer Streets and 2love LLC, both community-based organizations, gave an overview of the work they do for the Richmond community. RBHA shared city and Virginia state codes that govern how mental health calls are handled. This subgroup also reviewed some resource mapping and asset mapping provided by Torey Edmonds, using data from VCU. All of the information and data shared with this subgroup were used to help develop the problem statement. Lastly, this subgroup has participated in eight community listening sessions to receive input from Richmond residents about their experiences, and receive suggested thoughts and recommendations regarding calls for service in their communities.

### Problem Statement: Human Services Lens Subgroup

Historically, there has been a primary emphasis on the law enforcement aspects of public safety. While the services provided by RPD are an important part of public safety, a failure to utilize community assets and incorporate the work of other public service agencies has resulted in RPD having to directly respond to many noncriminal calls, such as those involving mental health issues and the homeless. Responding to noncriminal calls, which typically falls beyond officer's training, can lead to unnecessary confrontations between law enforcement officers and the community and lead to community mistrust. These confrontations have the potential to become fatal, particularly when it comes to mental health crises. National averages show that approximately one-quarter of all people killed by police officers were suffering from a mental health crisis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> November 2016 study published in the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*.

### Criteria: Human Services Lens Subgroup

This subgroup wanted to base all recommendations on data (both quantitative and qualitative), which is why we requested so many presentations from both the administration and subgroup members. Additionally, this subgroup knew that many community resources already existed, which is why discussing such organizations and work was so important. Lastly, this subgroup recognized it is vital that all recommendations are informed by and fit the Richmond community.

### Recommendations: Human Services Lens Subgroup

**Recommendation #1: Develop a new routing system so that mental health, conflict resolution, substance abuse, and other non-criminal calls for service are addressed by the appropriate community members and professionals. In other words, 9-1-1 should remain the number called by residents, but non-criminal calls should be triaged to a non-police, human services-centric response system.**

The components of this recommendation should be as follow:

- a) Develop a routing system to educate and empower community members, emergency communications professionals, and law enforcement officers to forward non-criminal calls for service to their proper locations.
- b) Work with the Department of Emergency Communications and the DCAO of Human Services to find an immediate way to triage calls to get them diverted to appropriate places. Recommended redirected calls include:
  - Barking dogs
  - Civil disputes
  - Welfare check
  - Misbehaving children
  - Parking complaints
  - Medical alarms
  - Truancy curfew
  - Trees down on private or public property
  - Custody court orders
  - Mental health
  - Neighbors disputes
  - Loud music
  - Accident on private property
- c) Strengthen the city's Community Ambassadors program to train those individuals in conjunction with mental health and other social/human services professionals to intervene in non-criminal calls for service.
- d) Develop public/private relationships with nonprofit organizations that serve communities with high volumes of calls for service and use these organizations as community liaisons in responding to calls within serviced communities. For example, if RVA League for Safer Streets works within certain communities, officers can draw upon a relationship with this organization to better respond to non-criminal calls for service.

- e) Provide community education on conflict resolution and support grassroots organizations so that they do not have to rely on law enforcement for public safety.
- f) Provide more access to training programs and opportunities to train community members to de-escalate conflicts (e.g. family disputes).
- g) Empower the community to create a shift on how to view these types of issues.

The results of creating a community-based model and a non-police response system can be powerful. For example, the Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets (CAHOOTs) model claims that when the needs of people experiencing a mental health and other crisis are at the focal point of community safety, there will be a:

- Decreased risk for officers,
- Decreased risk for the community,
- Decreased risk for people with mental health challenges,
- Less waste of taxpayer dollars, and
- A chance to break the cycle.

The CAHOOTs program began as a community policing initiative in 1989. CAHOOTs staff are not an alternative to law enforcement but rather a tool to ensure non-violent resolutions during crises.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the CAHOOTs model has set a national standard for non-police response to non-criminal calls for service, it is vital that the City of Richmond define a program that fits the specific needs of Richmonders and utilizes current community-based assets.

Please note that there are new studies on “[community responder models](#)” that should be evaluated and resources, such as the Center for American Progress, that are willing to provide technical assistance in this work. We ask that you use the guidelines established under recommendation one, consider national best practices (such as CAHOOTs), and consider lessons learned from the former Richmond Second Responders Program in the development of a Richmond community response system.

**Recommendation #2: Utilize community assets and community members to work in public safety, and tap into the community itself to provide human service and public safety support.**

The components of this recommendation should be as follow:

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<sup>3</sup> *Crisis intervention teams and people with mental illness: Exploring the factors that influence the use of force*, MS Morabito, AN Kerr, A Watson, J Draine, V Ottati, B Angell, *Crime & delinquency* 58 (1), 57-77

- a) Incorporate members of the community and community organizations into human services fields. Human services must intentionally begin to recruit and train people from the communities that are not often represented in formal human services positions.
- b) Address barriers and structural factors that prevent community members from entering into human services jobs and other professions.
- c) Acknowledge the essential role poverty and lack of resources play in community issues, beginning to apply pressure to the courts and legislatures who can help.
- d) Create accountability measures to ensure that a new, collaborative, and inclusive human services and public safety system is working *for* the community, especially our historically marginalized communities.
- e) Educate elementary and middle school aged children about the numerous careers that exist that young people may not be exposed to. Examples of careers that are often overlooked are research workers, city planners, and the many positions that exist within the human services discipline.

**Recommendation 3#: Encourage organizations to develop and maintain prevention plans utilizing positive youth development techniques and activities to create better opportunities for youth.**

*Positive youth development is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.(Child Trends).*

The components of this recommendation should be as follow:

- a) Draw upon public/private partnerships to place youth that have had interactions with police officers into programs that can help develop their skills and abilities over time. Research finds that information alone does not change behavior. Information is important and necessary, but it does not seem to be sufficient – there needs to be consistent and solid programming.
- b) Discourage ‘Scared Straight’ or ‘D.A.R.E’ style of programming and interactions, as studies have shown that this method of teaching often has an opposite reaction. We need to fund the strengths and assets in our communities. Often, positive youth development approaches arose from grassroots initiatives, where organization independently came up with PYD strategies. Over time, evaluations have indicated their efficacy.

- c) Engage youth within their communities with positive programming that is intentional and provides positive reinforcement and promotes positive outcomes.

**Recommendation #4: Connect youth and their families (multigenerational approach) to community resources and opportunities.**

The components of this recommendation should be as follow:

- a. Partner with nonprofits located in and around communities with elevated levels of police presence and provide a comprehensive list of all of the resources and opportunities that are available to youth and families. Richmond presently has an online comprehensive resource guide called Help1RVA.
- b. Improve access to human services resources and programming by having a center or helpline that follows non-traditional hours for parents that may work multiple jobs or have other responsibilities.
- c. Ensure that law enforcement officers are aware of the many different organizations in the city that could connect individuals with assistance.

**Reflections from the Human Services Subgroup**

This subgroup desires to continue to chip away at structural racism even after the 90 day charge of this task force concludes. The group seeks to resume its work and carry on the enthusiasm shared by its members.

Special thank you to William Teeples and Laini Boyd for assisting this subgroup research!

## Recommendations: Use of Force Subgroup

Co-chairs: Sheba Williams, Natasha Crosby, and Courtney Winston

Members: Brian Williams, William Pelfrey, Councilman Mike Jones, Patrice Shelton, Brad Nixon, Colette McEachin, Glenwood Burley, Kim Russo, Kiesha Cummings, and Maggie Anderson

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### Executive Summary: Use of Force Subgroup

Our subgroup took a holistic approach to improve the implementation of Richmond Police Department's Use of Force policy by bringing diverse and unique viewpoints to the table to reimagine public safety from a proactive standpoint. We evaluated the needs of the community and the needs of the officers in Richmond's police department in order to encourage rebuilding healthy and equitable community relationships to prevent unnecessary use of force and to move forward with a better implementation of the department's use of force policy.

We offer six final recommendations that acknowledge and are designed to address the historic and contemporary harms that impact police-community relations. Our recommendations are to: (1) prioritize investment in the community over punitive police practices; (2) humanize RPD's use of force policies; (3) reimagine training practices; (4) increase communication, education and transparency; (5) improve accountability measures; and (6) create opportunities to improve officers' mental health. These proactive, yet collaboratively formulated recommendations are intentionally designed to bring the theory of just, equitable, and respectful democratic policing into practice and enhance community safety and wellbeing.

### Problem Statement: Use of Force Subgroup

Despite having use of force policies that align with national best practices and reported Richmond Police Department data suggesting a decline in total use of force complaints over the past several years, portions of the community hold a negative perception of the Richmond Police Department because of a perceived lack of accountability measures, transparency, and a perceived lack of compassion from officers during interactions. This subcommittee recognizes that research and studies show that use of force complaints are historically underreported due to a lack of trust between the community and the police department. Furthermore, the policy document, for which training is based, does not humanize the use of force continuum.

### Work Summary: Use of Force Subgroup

This subgroup has met weekly from August 7, 2020 to November 4, 2020 in order to discuss use of force policies versus implementation, in addition to bi-weekly full body meetings where the data, best practices, and recommendations were discussed with all task force members. In addition, this subgroup has participated in eight community listening sessions to receive input from Richmond residents about their experiences, and receive suggested thoughts and recommendations regarding use of force. We received presentations from RPD (use of force policies, community programs, hiring processes, officer mental health, and use of force reporting) and our own members, including Dr. William Pelfrey, who compared RPD's use of force policies to

Minneapolis’ policies and discussed CALEA and police department accreditation, and Bill Pantele, who discussed Richmond’s past use of Neighborhood Teams and precinct meetings.

### Criteria: Use of Force Subgroup

The following criteria guided our subgroup’s work:

2. Improving communities throughout Richmond
3. Improving RPD accountability measures
4. Providing community education
5. Increasing RPD transparency
6. Progressive policymaking
7. Equity

### Recommendations: Use of Force Subgroup

This subgroup is reimagining public safety by taking a holistic approach to improve implementation of the Richmond Police Department’s use of force policies. Through thoughtful engagement with various community members and RPD police officers, our subgroup evaluated the following recommendations in order to improve the relationships between RPD and the community they serve. The goal of each recommendation is to provide long-term systemic changes.

#### **Recommendation #1: Prioritize Investment in Community over Punitive Police Practices**

Over the course of 90 days, this subgroup, through multiple listening sessions and meetings with community members and RPD personnel, has determined that investment in supportive services and divestment from punitive institutions and practices could significantly reduce unnecessary use of force interactions. We are asking elected officials and decision makers to acknowledge that the lack of adequate and equitable investment in communities of color and the over-investment in their criminalization is a significant determinant of which members of the community are met with the use of force.

By examination of the [City of Richmond, VA’s 2021 Fiscal Budget](#), it is glaring that one of the largest budgetary items year after year goes towards policing, criminal courts/prosecution and public safety, with a smaller fraction going towards the court services unit/alternatives to incarceration, social services, and economic and community development, among other necessary areas. Intentional investment in the resources and services that truly keep communities safe—health and mental health, quality education, youth development, workforce development, and public transportation are necessary to reduce harmful interactions between police and those who are disparately impacted by over policing.

NOTE: Historically, there has been a constant divesting from communities of color and communities who live in poverty, while staunchly and steadily increasing in policing and criminalization of those same communities. There has been a direct correlation between lack of resources and increased crime. See [“Freedom to Thrive”](#).

As such, it is recommended that going into the FY22 budget year that the city administration review, analyze, and find opportunities to reallocate some of the Richmond Police Department budget and other department budgets and functions that could contribute to greater investment into the community. The goal of this analysis is to streamline processes and monies that will “reimagine public safety” by moving from practices that no longer align with Richmond’s values and needs and invest in assets that will empower the community and bring greater economic and social justice.

NOTE: this process will be necessary in the successful creation of an Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety, which would be designed with the guidance of and creation for the community. This is a recommendation of the Community Engagement and Healing subgroup, see page 20.

### **Recommendation #2: Humanize Use of Force Policies**

After reviewing the Richmond Police Department’s Use of Force Policies, this subgroup found that the policies themselves are well written and meet national standards (as the RPD is an accredited department). However, despite sound policies, the implementation of said policies is often at the discretion of officers, which can lead to discrepancies (especially in communities of color and for those living below the federal poverty line). Furthermore, the policy document, on which training is based, does not humanize the use of force continuum. We also found, through various engagements with community members, that different communities receive different treatment in policing and that humanization varies depending on the community’s level of engagement with officers/precincts.

We recommend the following: (1) emphasize de-escalation upfront and require de-escalation accountability measures, similar to [Minneapolis’](#) new Use of Force policies; (2) include a RPD philosophy and values statement up front, similar to [Eugene](#) and, (3) require officers to intervene to stop any RPD member (even a supervisor) from conducting any act that is unethical, or that violates law or policy (e.g., excessive force, harassment, inappropriate behavior).

NOTE #1: Minneapolis’ policies now will require officers to provide a written explanation of their de-escalation efforts in all police reports.

NOTE #2: Baltimore, MD has a thorough [Duty to Intervene policy](#) which RPD should use as a best practice.

### **Recommendation #3: Reimagine Training Practices**

Unfortunately for officers and the communities they serve, training is often limited due to associated costs. For example, currently RPD officers only receive de-escalation training twice per year. Furthermore, de-escalation training is often coupled with broader use of force training and does not usually involve follow-up (e.g. survey of officers post-training). Another consistent observation was that training is little to non-existent as officers climb the ranks. Lastly, most RPD trainings are taught “in-house,” meaning outside expertise is not often sought.

We recommend the following: (1) more frequent de-escalation training (preferably quarterly, but at least three times per year); (2) continuous fair and impartial training; (3) improved hiring and



bias screening processes; (4) intentionally improved police culture, from the top-down; (5) implement a program similar to [Chicago's Community Training Academy](#); and, (6) trauma informed care and cultural sensitivity training (could be part of the community training academy). We recommend having all recruits attend the Community Training Academy *prior* to being hired (or at least as an initial part of the police academy) and participate in some form of community service in the communities for which they will serve. Furthermore, this subcommittee and the full task force have discussed the need for officers to improve their communications skills, especially in communities of color and poverty, which will hopefully be a primary focus of de-escalation training.

NOTE #1: The Community Training Academy is a multiple day program that will bring in community members as teachers to help officers work more collaboratively, effectively, and respectfully with residents and stakeholders and teach them about the unique dynamics and historical factors of the community. This academy would also provide recruits with community contacts and resources for which they can utilize once they graduate from the police academy.

NOTE #2: This subgroup noted that the current bias screening tool ([MMPI](#)) utilized at hiring is not the most effective. We recommend RPD finding a more efficient pre-offer screening mechanism that will better detect implicit biases.

NOTE #3: It should be noted that this subgroup emphasizes that the need of training implementation to come from the top-down. The leaders of RPD need to emphasize the importance of de-escalation and the importance of building relationships with the community. This is imperative to the success of these training recommendations.

#### **Recommendation #4: Increase Communication, Education, and Transparency**

As this subgroup conducted its research and information gathering, we found that there is a lot of misinformation and information that is not easily accessible to the public regarding RPD. Therefore, we recommend the following: (1) create an easy to understand graphic and add additional [information](#) on RPD's website to demonstrate the use of force continuum; (2) host regular community town halls to share and discuss public safety information with the community; (3) create a more intuitive and easy to access webpage for RPD that includes links to the entire RPD manual, use of force policies, reports and data, and community-led initiatives; and, (4) create a series of training videos demonstrating officers going through the use of force training.

After engaging with various community members, we learned that the definition of public safety lies in the eyes of the stakeholder. What we consistently found was that all residents want to be safe and to have better relationships with the officers who patrol their neighborhoods, prior to a call for service. Safety is not synonymous with surveillance or criminalization of certain behaviors, but is more so about being treated with dignity and respect in all interactions.

NOTE #1: Examples of strong websites: [Eugene](#) and [Milwaukee](#). Milwaukee Police Department completed a rebranding process, which includes highlighting positive stories about officers working in the community. RPD might also consider working with the [VCU BrandCenter](#) to create their new webpage.

NOTE #2: Training videos should include an explanation that all officers experience every level of force (except being shot) to know what it feels like when they exercise that force. Community members need to understand the Use of Force Continuum and understand how and why officers progress through it. Education is key.

#### **Recommendation #5: Improve Accountability Measures**

One area for which this subgroup has been especially focused is improving accountability measures for RPD. This subgroup fully supports the creation of a Civilian Review Board with subpoena power, which we acknowledge is moving through a process via the Richmond City Council. Furthermore, we have identified several additional measures that will assist with improving accountability.

We recommend the following: (1) creating RPD business cards for all officers to include identification information and a webpage address for residents to submit a complaint or compliment, and mandating that these cards are provided to residents on certain calls for service at the beginning of each interaction; (2) creating a public report of demographics based on stops, arrests, and complaints based on sector, race, age, etc., (3) creating an anonymous reporting system, via a third party, for residents to file complaints against officers and/or create an “Office of Compliance,” to have oversight over non-compliance; and, (4) provide a summary of body camera review policies and how body camera footage is used.

NOTE #4: RPD uses body camera data as both evidence and as an officer accountability measure. Body camera data can be retained up to two years by RPD. Supervisors regularly conduct officer accountability checks by reviewing randomly selected body camera data. Those reviews can produce recommendations to the officer regarding officer/resident interactions. Greater clarity on the RPD body camera policy (via easily accessible information on the RPD website) would serve as an effective communications avenue.

#### **Recommendation #6: Create Opportunities to Improve Officer Mental Health**

It has become apparent through conversations and interactions with RPD officers that officers suffer from being overworked and are exposed to many situations that may result in trauma. Even though RPD has a therapist on staff and officers can volunteer for counseling sessions, or in some cases be mandated to attend, there is still a stigma attached to seeking help. Therefore, we explored ways to improve officer mental health and morale as this can also prevent unnecessary uses of force.

We recommend the following: (1) incorporate mandatory, paid wellness days that an officer cannot be penalized for using (explanation not required for use); (2) mandatory mental health check ins with mental health professionals for all officers on a quarterly basis (at minimum); (3) in addition to RPD’s early intervention system, provide officer intervention training for all officers to support personal/partner intervention tools; and, (4) implementing award programs for officers who perform well on duty to improve morale.

NOTE: We believe improvements to officer mental health could assist in an overall cultural shift within the department and can be reflective in the community. We implore RPD to explore additional ways to improve officer wellness.

### **Recommendation #7: Standardize the Approach Language Utilized by Officers**

The research on police/resident interaction demonstrates that respectful, polite language leads to fewer negative encounters, thereby decreasing the use of force (see for example work by Stephen Mastrofski). Police agencies need to recognize that a portion (although not all) of use of force incidents could be avoided through effective officer/resident communication. When an officer approaches persons with a polite and respectful manner, predicated on Fair and Impartial Policing practices, the potential for conflict can be reduced. Officers may then reasonably request the same from persons if such a manner is not forthcoming. Expecting a respectful manner from residents when the officer is not engaging in respectful dialogue is not reasonable.

The Use of Force Subgroup recommends utilization of the [training mechanism](#) shared by Brian Williams (password for video: lighthouse).

All officers should approach residents with a clear statement of purpose. For example:

- My name is Officer Jones and I—
  - Stopped you for a traffic violation
  - Want to talk with you about complaints of noise.
  - Want to talk to you about a crime that was committed in this area.
  - Am looking for help on an issue.

This contravenes a standard police practice which is to assume an authoritative stance by refraining from providing clarity of purpose. Examples include:

- Do you know why I stopped your vehicle?
- I'm going to ask you some questions and you are going to answer them.
- What are you doing here?
- Show me some identification.

Some situations call for different officer behavior—a person behaving in a dangerous fashion, threatening the welfare of others (or their own person) dictates a more authoritative approach and language. De-escalation tactics can still operate on a foundation of Fair and Impartial policing.

### **Reflections from the Use of Force Subgroup**

This subgroup would like to continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis to revisit the recommendations and process of change, as we understand some of the systemic change that we seek will take significantly longer to implement than others.

## Recommendations: Community Healing and Engagement Subgroup

Co-chairs: Ram Bhagat and Birdie Jamison

Members: Carol Adams, Maggie Anderson, George Brown, James Davis, Destiny Hill, Brandon Lovee, Donté McCutchen, Valaryee Mitchell, Djibril Niang, Rodney Robinson, Lyons Sanchezconcha, Iman Shabazz, Brian Swann

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### Executive Summary: Community Engagement and Healing Subgroup

The **Community Engagement and Healing Subcommittee** (CEHS) decided collectively to focus its recommendations on three specific areas. These areas of focus include: 1) acknowledgement of harm; 2) community engagement strategies, programs, initiatives, and events; and 3) support of public safety, practice, and policy changes that increase accountability and public trust. The CEHS also decided to utilize an *emergent strategy* for equity, justice, and healing as a framework to operationalize their recommendations. This framework, coined Massive Resilience, contains designated practices and processes (*Appendix I*) that promote respect, dignity, and mutual concern in order to create pathways to community engagement and healing.

### Problem Statement: Community Engagement and Healing Subgroup

Public safety does not begin or end with the police. The CEHS acknowledges that *structural racism* is an underlying cause and significant social determinant of racial health disparities, economic injustices, and disproportional violence in and against Black and Brown communities. Hence, there is an urgent need to ‘Reimagine Public Safety’ by acknowledging the persistence of harm, adopting *culturally relevant* practices designed for ‘*Healing Community Relationships*,’ and building resilience for challenging systemic racism.

### Work Summary: Community Engagement and Healing Subgroup

The CEHS employed a modified *design thinking* model to determine its work process (*Appendix II*). This approach involved using elements of community building circles, which address getting acquainted, establishing trust, exploring the issues, and solving problems creatively. During weekly meetings from August 3 to November 4, 2020, members of this subcommittee generated four primary recommendations for community engagement and community healing (*Appendix III*). The subcommittee examined multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data, codified major themes for potential programs, identified community resources for best practices, and developed a model for community engagement and healing (*Appendix IV*). This subcommittee considers ‘Understanding of Harm’ to be one of the most important aspects of community engagement and healing. The CEHS discussed the impact of race-based *trauma*, based on ‘historical fact finding’ and ‘present day fact finding.’ Additionally, CEHS members participated in eight community listening sessions. This subgroup also engaged in courageous conversations about *community engagement*, *community healing*, and *institutional racism*, which informed the final recommendations. Subsequently, there are some insightful reflections from CEHS members included in the summary of opportunities and challenges (*Appendix V*).

### Recommendations: Community Engagement and Healing Subgroup

The CEHS developed four recommendations in response to the calls for racial and social justice from the greater Richmond community. These recommendations include: (1) the establishment of

a city Office for Restorative Justice and Community Safety, (2) a city-wide community conferencing intervention, (3) a city-wide training initiative based upon the massive resilience strategy, and (4) an on-going series of community healing events. Along with the recommendations, specific benefits and best practices are provided.

**Recommendation #1: Create an Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety**

The Richmond Office of Restorative Justice and Community Safety (ORJCS) would be a collaboration between city government agencies and city residents, including city youth. This office would be formed in collaboration with the Human Services Department with direct support from the Mayor’s Office, City Council, Commonwealth Attorney’s Office, Police Department, School Board, and the court system. The ORJCS would be operated by a team of content experts and government employees. More importantly, it would be guided by a Community Advisory Board to ensure that it is acknowledging and meeting specific needs of the community. This office would also contract out to community organizations to help achieve genuine community safety. By doing so, the city would create a permanent pathway for community members to inform and critique Richmond’s restorative justice and public safety priorities.

Benefits:

- Create a model for racial healing guided by communities most harmed by the “justice system;”
- Ensure community-based interventions for public safety are elevated and sustained;
- Provide non-law enforcement resources and responses to non-criminal calls for service;
- Share accountability for community safety and reducing duplicative government functions; and
- Strengthen community safety and reducing overreliance on police.

Best Practices and Resources:

- Center of American Progress - Office of Neighborhood Safety  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/10/15/491545/beyond-policing-investing-offices-neighborhood-safety/>

ROCA

- <https://rocainc.org/work/our-intervention-model/>

## **Recommendation #2: Develop, Implement, and Evaluate Community Conferencing in Schools and Communities**

The foundational principles of restorative justice are 1) **acknowledgement** of harm, 2) **acceptance** of responsibility for the harm caused, and 3) **agreement** or making amends on the best way(s) to heal from the harm. This approach is based on establishing healthy relationships. It emphasizes collaboration and cooperation between willing participants and stakeholders. This approach to justice can lead to transformation of relationships, people, and communities.

This subcommittee recommends an integrative approach to Restorative Justice Practices which includes: Community Conferencing Circles, Community Healing Circles, Community Building Circles, and Conflict Resolution Circles. The CEHS envisions public safety from a restorative justice lens that magnifies the collective responsibility of city residents to resolve their conflicts.

**Community Conferencing Circles** provide all participants who are involved in and affected by a conflict or crime, a safe and structured space to resolve the matter safely and effectively. This approach allows conflict and crime to serve as a stepping stone to reestablishing healthy community relationships. Whether community conferencing is being utilized by the juvenile justice system, schools, courts, or neighborhoods, the result is the same: people in conflict come together to find ways to repair harm and move forward in a better way. The CEHS recommends a culturally relevant approach to community conferencing that would be designed to increase community capacity for accountability and reconciliation. This process would empower community residents with their own means of resolving disputes that would otherwise be settled by traditional adjudicatory courses of action.

### Benefits:

- Reducing over-representation of Black youth and Youth of Color in the juvenile justice system;
- Improving school culture by reducing the number of students being suspended, expelled, and arrested; and
- Strengthening communities through intentional relationship building.

### Best Practices:

- **Restorative Response Baltimore**  
<https://www.restorativeresponse.org>
- **Performing Statistics**  
<https://www.performingstatistics.org>

### **Recommendation #3: Massive Resilience Training**

Massive Resilience is a culturally relevant strategy based upon the principle of Ubuntu, an indigenous African concept that means – *I Am, Because We Are*. Hence, it promotes human dignity, love, and respect in order to create pathways to community healing and community resilience. This principle of inter-connectedness can invoke healthy community relationships.

Although race relations may have improved over the past sixty years, since the *Brown v Board of Education* decision, separate and unequal conditions still persist for a disproportional number of Black, Brown, and Indigenous children. They are more susceptible [than white children] to the persistent harms associated with racially and economically segregated communities. The adverse childhood experiences they encounter include but are not limited to unhealthy learning environments, unaccredited schools, substandard nutrition, school and community violence, derisory curricula, and zero-tolerance discipline practices that disproportionately entangle them within the criminal legal system. In the following excerpt, the renowned educator Dr. Bettina Love describes some remedies that children of color need in order to do more than survive:

*Dark children, especially those who are experiencing or have experienced toxic stress, do not need their grit measured or their character examined by researchers or school officials. They need culturally relevant therapy that teaches age-appropriate stress-reduction practices and they need mentors who understand what being a critical mentor means (see the work of Torie Weinstein-Serdan). Students need youth-centered programs like the "Ambassador's Program and Mayor's Youth Academy (Richmond, Virginia), Richmond Youth Peace Project (RYPP); Afrikan Males (Richmond, Virginia); "Young, Gifted, and Black (Oakland, California); and Kuumba Lynx (Chicago). They need health services in the schools that service their community. Students need healthy food programs and urban gardens. Every community needs a Children's Defense Fund Freedom School. These schools have been models for teaching social change for more than fifty years, built in response to the educational survival complex after Black schools were closed around the country in reaction to Brown v Board of Education. Dark children need an end to the school-to-prison pipeline through the decriminalization of schools by removing security guards, metal detectors, and police with deliberate speed, inserting restorative justice and mindfulness practices in the schools and communities alike. Every child needs a counselor or therapist. In order to make mental health as important as education, the two must and should work in tandem. (Love, B. 2019).*

Massive Resilience is an emergent strategy for equity, justice, and healing based on the principles of unity, self-determination, purpose, and creativity. It is formulated to counteract the hierarchy of human value based on skin color. Massive Resilience is a mindset centered around the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which promotes a sense of deep connection, compassion, and care within the hearts and minds of students, teachers, parents, staff, and community members. Massive resilience is also

based on the philosophy of *Sawubona*, which shows members of a school/community how to see each other with respect, dignity, and mutual concern in order to create pathways to love and self-justice. This emergent strategy consists of a set of practices that encourages collective work and responsibility because everyone can contribute something unique to their own community, as the slogan *I Am the Work*, proclaims.

### ***The Massive Resilience Strategy***

There are four spheres (*see Appendix I*) of this equity engagement process: art, culture, education, and health, which collectively promote safe, responsive, loving, and healthy communities and organizations. This is a holistic approach focused on equity and freedom. The four arcs or engagement practices of this emergent strategy (*see Appendix I*) are trauma healing, restorative practices, mindfulness, and artfulness. The central focus of Massive Resilience is Equity (2020) – a decade-long enterprise of transformative experiences in healing that produce a clear vision for transforming historical harms in Richmond specifically, and Virginia as well. *Equity is more than access to resources; it's a deep commitment to liberation predicated on self-love, self-healing, self-justice, and compassion for others.*

#### Benefits:

- Designing, implementing, and evaluating an evidence-based culturally relevant therapeutic intervention model for racial trauma healing within communities of color, especially for youth.

#### Best Practices:

- Emotional Emancipation Circles  
<https://communityhealingnet.org/emotional-emancipation-circle/>
- Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR)  
<https://emu.edu/cjp/star/>
- Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC)  
<https://healingandrebuidingourcommunities.org>
- Urban Trauma Certification  
<https://maysaakbar.com/courses/>
- Holistic Life Foundation  
<https://hlfinc.org>

### **Recommendation #4: Community Engagement & Healing Events**

A clear path to community healing can be forged by providing community engagement opportunities for diverse individuals and groups to come together with an intentional focus on racial equity and inclusion. The same sense of urgency that compelled Mayor Stoney to assemble the Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety must continue to prioritize racial and social justice



in order to create equity and justice for all communities in Richmond. Consequently, the fourth and final recommendation of the CEHS is an on-going series of monthly, quarterly, and annual events that help to dismantle the long-term impact of systemic racism. These events would range from small monthly workshops and intimate discussions facilitated by The Conciliation Project, to larger quarterly city-wide programs and events similar to Beyond Containment. They would consist of flexible formats and would include subject matter experts dealing with culturally relevant topics, as well as, inspirational speakers and activities for youth. These events would also use the creative and cultural arts to help build and maintain the spirit of healing centered engagement throughout the City (e.g. *Junkyard Jam – The Rhythm of Restorative Justice, Call and Response Gatherings, Generation Dream Edu~Concerts, and Juneteenth Celebrations, etc.*).

#### Benefits:

- Acknowledging and transforming historical harms;
- Celebrating the rich history and cultures of Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, LGBTQ+ communities, and African immigrant communities across the city;
- Creating healthy community and city-wide relationships;
- Developing transformative programs and policies that positively impact BIPOC communities; and
- Promoting racial equity, diversity and inclusive education through the arts.

#### Best Practices:

- **I am my brother's and sister's keeper**  
<http://richmondfreepress.com/news/2018/nov/21/i-am-my-brothers-and-sisters-keeper-day-program-no/>
- **National Day of Racial Healing**  
<https://us.iofc.org/events/2019/1/national-day-of-racial-healing>

## Reflections from the Community Engagement and Healing Subgroup

Traumatic stress occurs when our ability to respond to threat is overwhelmed. Dr. David Anderson Hooker, who coined the term *traumagenic*, contends that ‘trauma causing’ events have the potential to produce a traumatic response; yet, people may respond differently to the same event. The on-going and overwhelming threat from structural and systemic racism can cause a trauma tsunami, which was witnessed around the world after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Amaud Arbery. This subgroup believes that we have provided a pathway for the people of Richmond, Virginia, and even the Commonwealth of Virginia, to engage in a process of deep community healing, through the four recommendations outlined in this report.

In closing, we offer a reflection from George Brown, one of the members of the Community Engagement and Healing Subcommittee.

“I would like to say to my fellow subcommittee members, co-chairs, and student researchers, excellent job, well done, congratulations! The CEHS generated three areas of special interest for our final recommendations, as part of the Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety. These three areas of special interest are 1) Acknowledgement of Harm, 2) Community Engagement Programs, and 3) Support of Public Safety. The central themes of our proposed solutions are **Ubuntu** (*I Am Because We Are*) and **Massive Resilience**.

At this point in the process, I want to be clear that I am in no way being critical of my colleagues’ hard work, commitment and dedication. I do have some questions about “True Restorative Justice.” Suppose everything the Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety generates is a glaring success, where officers improve their relationships with the communities they serve, a Call Center is set-up to successfully redirect calls to the appropriate responder, and all responders are right on time, that would be great!

However, imagine after all that great work, the people are still poor, living in dysfunction without significantly focused opportunities and lacking the necessary resources to solve the greater problem, POVERTY! I understand that the “WAR on poverty” is one we must win one battle at a time in which some of the symptoms will be addressed, if all goes well. So, I will cautiously celebrate a victory with all of the contributors to the task force. I believe we have developed a well thought out plan based on the original goals stated at the beginning of the process.”

*“Blessed are those who struggle, Oppression is worse than the grave, It is better to die for a noble cause, Than to live and die as a slave.” – The Last Poets*

## Terminology: Community Engagement and Healing Subgroup

### *Brown v Board of Education*

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was a landmark 1954 Supreme Court case in which the justices ruled unanimously that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional.

### *Community Engagement*

Community engagement is the process of building rapport, trust and strengthening community relationships through equitable involvement in meeting needs and resolving complex community problems as a path toward empowerment and the well-being of the whole community.

### *Community Healing*

Community healing involves supporting community members in designing and implementing interventions geared towards alleviating the impact of historical harms and eradicating the lingering effects of historical trauma.

### *Culturally Relevant*

Cultural Relevance is the incorporation of cultural knowledge (social), cultural orientation, (historical), and cultural power (political) in the process of developing working relationships with community members in order to identify, prioritize and meet the needs of a community. Gloria Ladson-Billings created the term culturally relevant teaching (CRT) in 1994, to enlighten educators. CRT is “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural representations to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”

### *Design Thinking*

Design Thinking is a process for understanding issues, challenging assumptions, and redefining problems in an attempt to identify alternative strategies and solutions that might not be instantly apparent from the onset of a problem-solving process. The 6 phases of Design Thinking are empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, and implement.

### *Healthy Community Relationships*

Healthy Community Relationships are preceded by equitable standards of engagement; where community members and leaders work together to develop opportunities for meeting the needs of food, clothing, shelter, safety and security for all. It implies having access to quality education, safe and healthy homes, adequate means of securing income, reliable transportation, quality health care, restorative models for resolving conflict, and sustainable environmental design.

### *Emergent Strategy*

Emergent Strategy is a strategy for building complex patterns and systems relatively small interactions. It emphasizes building authentic relationships, listening with all the senses of the body and the mind.

### Institutional Racism

Institutional racism occurs when there is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by institutions (*e.g.* financial, educational, medical, *etc.*). Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they act in ways that advantage and disadvantage people, based on race.

### Racism

Racism is a far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual persons. Racism is different from racial bigotry, prejudice, or discrimination. Racism equals prejudice plus power (Racism = Prejudice + Power). It involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

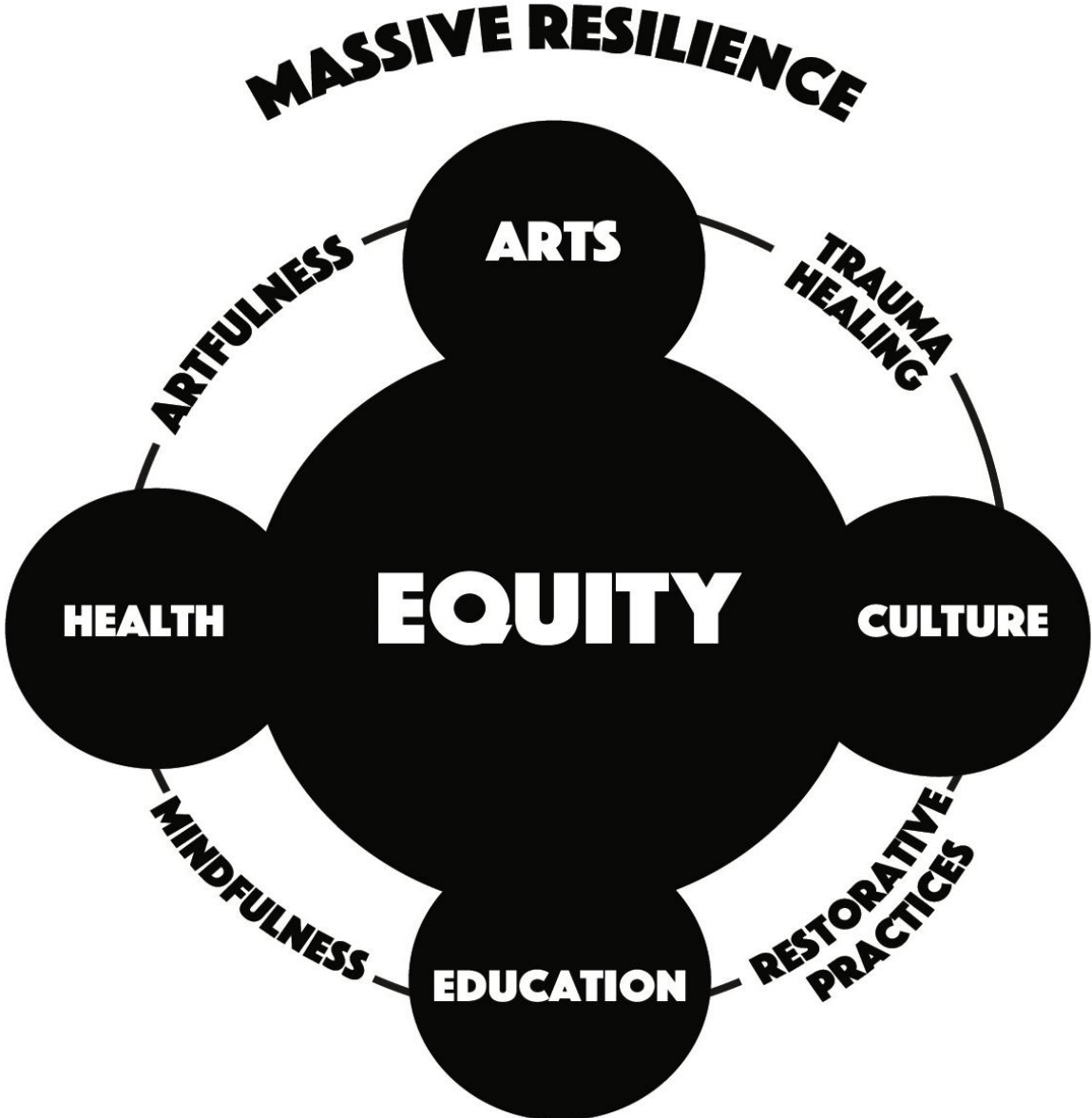
### Structural Racism

Structural Racism in the U.S. is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy that guarantees the preferential treatment, privilege and power for white people at the expense of Native American, Black, Latina/o, Asian, Pacific Islander, Arab Americans and other racially oppressed people.

### Trauma

The word **trauma** comes from the Greek “*traumat*” which means wound. Dr. Peter Levine’s definition in *Waking the Tiger* is helpful in differentiating between ordinary stress (*i.e.* *eustress* and *dis-stress*) and traumatic stress. Traumatic stress occurs when our ability to respond to threat is overwhelmed. Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates defines trauma as a state of great distress and shock, usually around a significant event or ordeal of great calamity or suffering.

Appendix I: Massive Resilience – Practices and Processes



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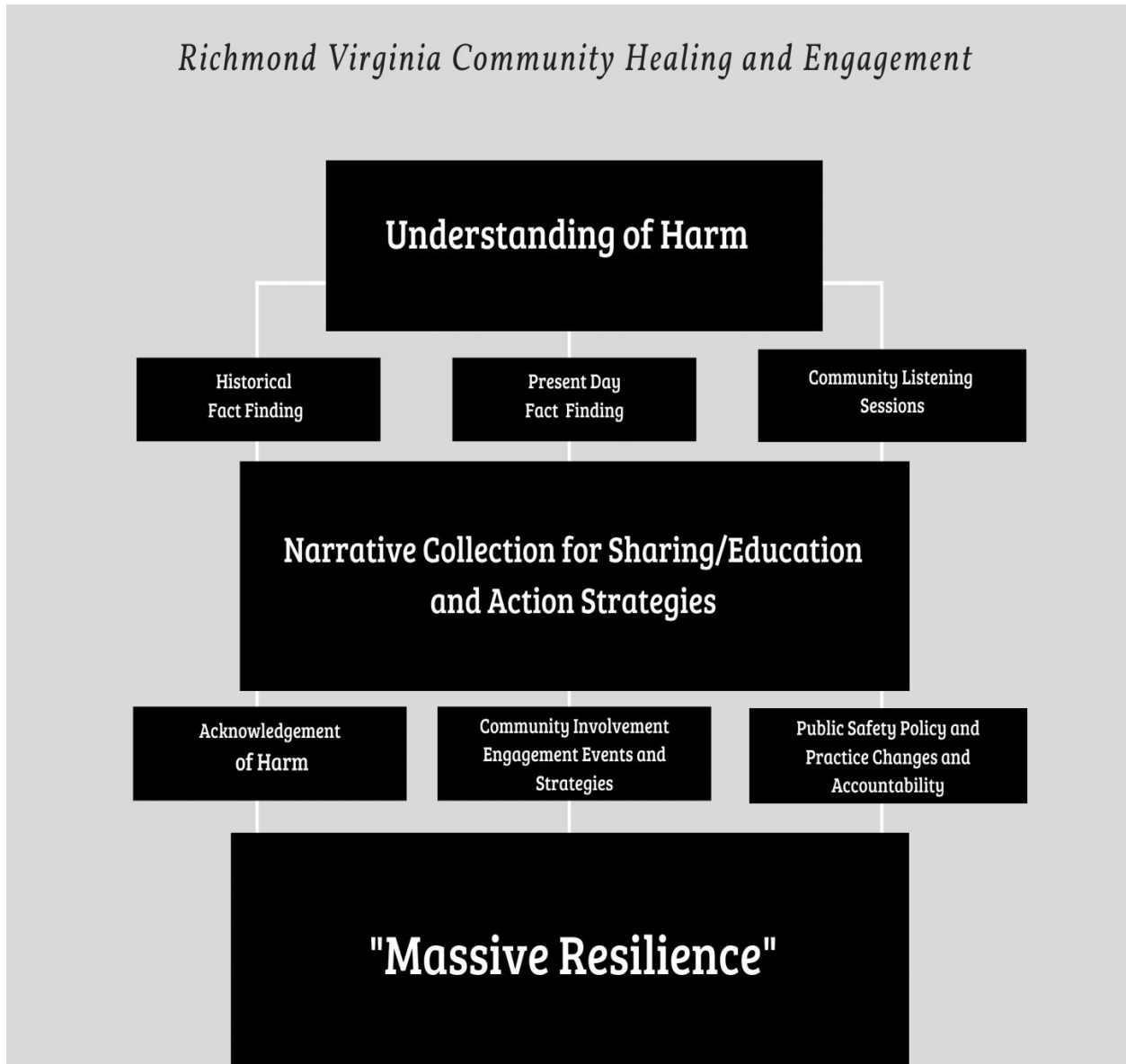
**Appendix II: CEHS Work Process**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Process</b>
<i>Empathize</i>	8/3	Get acquainted Generate ideas	10/6  10/13  10/20	Critical Analysis & Feedback  Refine Plan ( <i>Prototype</i> )  Discuss funding structures
<i>Define</i>	8/18	Creating our process	10/27	Final Recommendation
<i>Formulate Guiding Questions</i>	8/25	Define major themes and potential programs	11/2  11/5	Second Draft  Final Proposal
<i>Ideate</i>	9/8	What is authentic community engagement?	<b>Notes:</b>	
<i>Prototype</i>	9/15	Develop plan – Recommendations		
	9/21	Interim Report – 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft		
<i>Test</i>	9/22	Interim Report – Revise		
	9/29	Reflections on Report		

**Appendix III: Recommendations from Community Engagement and Healing Subcommittee**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Areas of Focus</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence Based Models</b>
Center for Racial Healing and Restorative Justice	Support of public safety practice and policy changes that will increase accountability and public trust	Center of American Progress - Office of Neighborhood Safety  ROCA in Chelsea, MA
Restorative Justice Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community Conferencing Circles</li> <li>▪ Community Healing Circles</li> <li>▪ Community Building Circles</li> <li>▪ Conflict Resolution Training</li> </ul>	Acknowledgement of harm  Support of public safety, practice, and policy changes that increase accountability and public trust	Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC)  Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY)  Restorative Response Baltimore  Performing Statistics
<i>Massive Resilience: An Emergent Strategy for Equity, Justice and Liberation</i>	Acknowledgement of harm  Community engagement strategies, programs, initiatives, and events	Urban Trauma Certification  RJOY  Holistic Life Foundation  The Conciliation Project
Monthly, Quarterly, and Annual Events	Community engagement strategies, programs, initiatives, and events	National Day of Racial Healing  Annual Generation Dream <i>Edu~Concert</i>  Beyond Containment

**Appendix IV: Model for community engagement and healing**





**Appendix V: Reflections from CEHS Members**

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<p><i>The Office for Restorative Justice and Community Safety combines all efforts from the larger task-force into one space to continue the work needed to re-imagine public safety and does so in a way that engages the community in a partnership with the City.</i></p> <p><i>The Office for Restorative Justice and Community Safety or the Center for Racial and Restorative Justice could provide a new legacy for the City of Richmond and the entire state that celebrates equity, diversity and inclusion.</i></p> <p><i>The Office for Restorative Justice and Community Safety would provide an opportunity to collaborate with different groups or individuals to establish healthy community relationships.</i></p> <p><i>We all have issues that are specific to our own group. The Office for Restorative Justice and Community Safety would give us a great opportunity to address these issues and help each other work through any challenges without feeling that we are only concerned with our individual needs.</i></p> <p><i>The Office for Restorative Justice and Community Safety would empower us to reduce arrests, convictions, and harm due to the criminal legal system.</i></p>	<p><i>The largest challenge is building trust with everyone in the City and ensuring that all efforts, events, and resources are accessible to all members of the City. Also, figuring out how to tackle any blind-spots that might exist is a challenge.</i></p> <p><i>The struggle to bring about the self-reflection necessary for systemic change that results in a positive shift in culture involves hard work and consistent intentional effort.</i></p> <p><i>A huge challenge is figuring out how to effectively create space for authentic interactions between different organizations or individuals.</i></p>

## Community Listening Session Notes and Themes

### **Purpose of the Listening Sessions**

The listening sessions were coordinated to gather feedback from the community regarding the initial recommendations set forth by subgroups of the Task Force on Reimagining Public Safety. The listening sessions offered community participants more understanding of how the initial recommendations may benefit them and the broader community and allowed them to share their thoughts and feelings on the proposed recommendations.

The listening sessions took place on October 5, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, and 29. Sessions ranged between 90 minutes to three hours. Nearly 81 people participated in eight listening sessions. Five of the listening sessions were entirely conducted in a virtual setting, two listening sessions were conducted in-person, and one listening session was virtually facilitated through Microsoft Teams while participants convened in a group setting at a predetermined location.

The participants represented civic association leaders from each quadrant of the city, youth, Richmond residents, RTO leadership, and patrol officers. *Please note that the listening session comments and findings are not comprehensive and reflect the views and opinions of those who participated and not necessarily the entire Richmond community.*

### **Themes that emerged from the listening sessions**

- 1. *Many listening session participants support the initial recommendations outlined by the task force.*** Throughout the listening sessions, many participants reacted positively to the initial recommendations set forth by the task force. Several civic association leaders, youth, and Richmond residents felt the recommendations serve as crucial first steps to elevating and improving public safety throughout the City of Richmond.
- 2. *Cultural shifts within RPD will take time.*** During the listening session with patrol officers, task force members were met with some resistance. Specifically, patrol officers were concerned about recommendations related to mental health support for police officers, changes to shift schedules, and rerouting certain calls to service. Even though they agreed that police officers should not have to respond to certain non-criminal calls for service, they expressed safety concerns about resident-driven responses. Patrol officers agreed that additional training and community engagement events would be beneficial.
- 3. *The necessity for an overt human service lens approach to public safety.*** The Human Service lens subgroup of the task force outlined a set of holistic recommendations to combat the high frequency of calls to service in specific areas of the city. Participants elaborated on instances where taking holistic approaches to solving problems are in the best interest of those experiencing mental health crises, non-violent parent-child disputes, lack of youth resources, etc.

Sample comments:

- This is an area that has the greatest opportunity to reimagine public safety
- Reflection on regretting calling the police on a neighbor who they later learned was experiencing a mental health crisis

4. ***The lack of community program support, the need for a “cultural shift,” and accountability with program funding.*** Several youth and family programs in the Eastend, Northside, and Southside are visible but do not produce outcomes reflective of their initial purpose or no longer fully serve in a way that reflects the current needs of the community. There is the appearance that there are many programs or large non-profits with the intention of supporting children and families but are not consistent or do not produce satisfactory outcomes. There is a need for more accountability to ensure that programs/organizations are actually working for the community they claim to serve, especially if they receive city funding.

Participants pointed to newer community organizations that are doing critical work in these areas but lack funding, and in turn, lack visibility.

Sample comments:

- People think they can come into the community and give them what they need instead of assessing what is needed
- There are a lot of programs, but I never see anything happening
- Large non-profits and their push for numbers instead of outcomes shows a lack of integrity
- Empower existing community assets that are already doing the work and bring them to the table to expand their reach (e.g., the neighborhood mother that virtually runs her own youth program with little to no funding)

5. ***Zipcode bias and the disproportionate use of force leads to distrust.*** Police officers not fully understanding the lived experiences of the communities in which they serve signal a cultural and communication gap that leads to distrust and apprehension of police officers amongst residents in over-policed neighborhoods. Participants acknowledged the need for police intervention in appropriate situations, but personally still feeling unsafe if they do need to call them.

The youth participants were clearly aware of how their fellow Richmonders are treated in predominantly White neighborhoods, compared to Black and Brown communities. This observation correlates to how they feel about the physical conditions of their living environment and how a lack of equitable funding for programs and infrastructure inadvertently predisposes these areas to unfavorable stereotypes.

Sample comments:

- Police officers are constantly working in high-stress situations, but community members are always in survival mode – continuously living in high-stress environments – and this often seems not to be considered by certain police officers
- How do you enforce laws while also ensuring the constituent feels safe?
- How do you overcome being afraid of the police?
- Police officers need to re-learn the Richmond neighborhoods
- De-escalation teams need to work in tandem with community ambassadors
- There needs to be more unity between neighborhoods across the city

6. ***A general consensus that the Richmond Police Department's public information is inaccessible and efforts of community outreach are not visible.*** The Richmond Police Department has several community outreach apparatuses for engagement outside of calls to service, but many listening session participants were not clear or aware of the engagement the police department institutes outside of RESET, National Night Out, or toy drives. RPD's lack of visible community engagement serves as a missing component that could potentially foster better communication between an institution that is perceived as harmful to Richmond residents.

Sample comments:

- RPD should work through or partner with community organizations as a communication tool to bridge trust with community members

## Next Steps

Mayor Stoney and his administration are grateful for the work of this task force and their dedication to providing actionable steps to reimagine and expand the definition of public safety. Even though the 90 day working period of the task force has concluded, Mayor Stoney and his administration know that they will need continued guidance from all task force members and the greater Richmond community.

Now that the Stoney administration is in receipt of this report, it is time to thoroughly evaluate each recommendation, discuss programmatic details, establish an implementation plan, and seek additional community input. The necessary changes to these long-standing systemic issues will take time and a holistic cultural shift. But, the administration remains committed to this charge.

We look forward to keeping the community informed of actions taken and working together to ensure that Richmond does not miss its moment to transform and expand public safety for the benefit of all community members.

## Additional Resources

### Articles

Du, D. (2017). *The role of collective efficacy in defendants' acceptance of plea bargaining: A perspective on housing density*. Retrieved from:

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Johnson, B., Seidler, M. & Kayser, C. (2017). *Practitioner perspective on paradox: A case study using the polarity approach in Charleston, South Carolina*. Retrieved from:

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Kohler-Hausmann, I. (2013). *Misdemeanor justice: Control without conviction*. Retrieved from:

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