

It's Time to Replace Arrests with a Public Health Response to COVID-19

Washington, DC (June 18, 2020) -- On May 27, 2020, our organizations -- a multidisciplinary team of national law enforcement, public health and criminal legal organizations and experts, jointly issued "[Proposed Public Health and Public Safety Pathways for Criminal Justice System Responses to COVID-19](#)." In the weeks that have followed, these principles and recommendations for a public health-oriented approach to COVID-19 have become even more relevant. Increased arrests including those of protesters across the nation are stifling efforts to maintain social distancing, reduce jail populations and use cite and release policies laid out in our document.

From prosecutors to criminal defense lawyers, and from public health organizations to academia, the breadth and depth of resources and support available to jurisdictions from criminal justice system stakeholders involved in this effort is significant. These resources include, for example:

- Experts in development of successful public health/criminal justice interventions;
- Infectious disease experts and consultants within health departments across the country;
- Criminal law legislative and administrative law experts; and
- Experts in diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration.

We encourage jurisdictions who are trying to develop and implement actionable proposals for a public health framework for their criminal justice system response to pandemics such as COVID-19 to contact us for assistance and to be connected with our network of experts. System change is daunting; it takes courage, common sense, vision, and the support of colleagues facing identical challenges. But change is essential, for the health and safety of all of us.

A direct link to "Proposed Public Health and Public Safety Pathways for Criminal Justice System Responses to COVID-19" is available here:

<https://www.nacdl.org/document/JointStatementCriminalJusticeResponsetoCOVID19>.

The authors of these principles are the [Association of Prosecuting Attorneys](#), [The Center for HIV Law and Policy](#), [Community Oriented Correctional Health Services](#), [National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers](#), [The Williams Institute at UCLA](#), and [UCLA School of Law's Criminal Justice Program](#), with support from the [National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors](#), the [National Legal Aid & Defender Association](#), [Columbia Justice Lab](#), and the [Fenway Institute](#).