



# FAIR AND JUST PROSECUTION

Promoting justice through leadership and innovation

## ISSUES AT A GLANCE

### Building Community Trust A Compendium of Community Prosecution Models From Across the Nation

*Fair and Just Prosecution (FJP) brings together recently elected district attorneys<sup>1</sup> as part of a network of like-minded leaders committed to change and innovation. FJP hopes to enable a new generation of prosecutive leaders to learn from best practices, respected experts, and innovative approaches aimed at promoting a justice system grounded in fairness, equity, compassion, and fiscal responsibility. In furtherance of those efforts, FJP's "Issues at a Glance" briefs provide district attorneys with information and insights about a variety of critical and timely topics. These papers give an overview of the issue, key background information, ideas on where and how this issue arises, and specific recommendations to consider. They are intended to be succinct and to provide district attorneys with enough information to evaluate whether they want to pursue further action within their office. For each topic, Fair and Just Prosecution has additional supporting materials, including model policies and guidelines, key academic papers, and other research. If your office wants to learn more about this topic, we encourage you to contact us.*

#### SUMMARY

This is one of a series of FJP's "Issues at a Glance" briefs addressing strategies for building community trust. This brief provides a compendium of examples of community prosecution programs and models from around the country.

Trust between the community and the prosecutor's office is essential to maintaining the office's legitimacy and credibility. One strategy many DAs have embraced as a mechanism to fortify relations and bonds of trust with their community is the development of "community prosecution" programs (sometimes known by alternative names such as "neighborhood prosecution," "community-based prosecution," "community-oriented prosecution," or other names that convey a mission of building community trust).

#### AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY PROSECUTION MODELS AND STRATEGIES

There are many different mechanisms and options for prioritizing and integrating responsibility for community engagement and problem-solving in a prosecutor's office.<sup>2</sup> The following are examples of some of these models, with representative offices listed in parentheses. These models were chosen to provide an array of examples of how to operationalize community prosecution principles. Some offices even use a variety of models and strategies. Detailed information on these programs and models is provided in the next section.

<sup>1</sup> The term "district attorney" or "DA" is used generally to refer to any chief local prosecutor, including State's Attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, etc.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on community prosecution principles and community engagement strategies, see [https://fairandjustprosecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FJP\\_Brief\\_CommunityProsecution.pdf](https://fairandjustprosecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FJP_Brief_CommunityProsecution.pdf).

## Geographic Assignment of Neighborhood Assistant District Attorneys<sup>3</sup>

- Assign at least one attorney to each geographic area within the jurisdiction (see for example San Francisco District Attorney's Office, Dallas City Attorney's Office and Los Angeles City Attorney's Office), or intentionally select areas of particular focus and designate a neighborhood assistant district attorney for each of those areas (for example, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office currently assigns attorneys to nine out of 22 city police districts and suburban Oak Park).
- Divide some (or all) units in the office into geographical areas (for example the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office divides its entire trial division into geographic areas, excluding such units as homicides and family violence/sexual assaults, into geographic zones).

## On-Site Location and Offices

- Have assigned attorneys work outside of the central office, in locations in the neighborhood to which they are assigned, such as designated neighborhood offices, or other local facilities (see for example the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, Multnomah County (Portland, OR), District Attorney's Office, and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office [in the case of Red Hook] and many others). The attorney's physical location in the community may be full-time or part-time.
- Set up neighborhood-based offices for outreach and support work in designated communities in addition to, or without, any attorney staffing (see for example the Manhattan District Attorney's Office).

## Case Handling

- Require that cases arising in the office's zones, or geographically-designated areas, be prosecuted "vertically" (by a single prosecutor through all stages of the case) rather than "horizontally" (with cases transferred to various prosecutors depending on the stage of the proceeding). Geographically-delineated vertical prosecution (see for example Wayne County [Detroit, MI.] District Attorney's Office), whether for all cases, cases above a certain level of seriousness, or cases of particular types (for example, a single person or team who takes all gun violence cases within a neighborhood) can help attorneys understand the dynamics of a particular case, recognize the needs and concerns of repeat offenders or repeat victims, and build credibility with victims and witnesses.

## Community Meetings and Convenings

- Assign attorneys to represent the office at community meetings (for example in the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, San Francisco District Attorney's Office, Dallas City Attorney's Office), or assign non-legal personnel to serve that function (for example in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office).

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<sup>3</sup> We often use the term "Neighborhood/Community Assistant District Attorney" instead of "Neighborhood Prosecutor" here to highlight the fact that the responsibilities of these positions go far beyond, and are fundamentally different from, traditional prosecution.

***"Through this proactive approach to engagement, [prosecutors] can serve as liaisons between our office and the diverse communities in which we live and serve."***

**—13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT (TAMPA, FL) STATE ATTORNEY ANDREW WARREN**

## SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY PROSECUTION MODELS AND PROGRAMS

Given the varied nature of models around the nation, it is no surprise that the term “community prosecution” is applied differently in each jurisdiction that uses it. This section of the brief outlines some key aspects of community prosecution models in eight jurisdictions around the U.S.<sup>4</sup> For each program and model listed below, there is a brief summary of key information, including the number of staff assigned, the program design, and some examples of community engagement initiatives.

While it lies beyond the scope of this brief to describe all strategies employed by each site to address local problems, at least one community engagement program is highlighted in each case for illustration purposes. In addition, this compendium offers a sampling of programs and models from around the nation. This is not intended to reflect the full universe or even all types of community prosecution programs. Rather, this brief provides examples of different models and programs in order to offer elected DAs a starting point as they begin to think about enhancing opportunities for engaging in and with their community.

### Cook County, IL State’s Attorney’s Office

(Population: 5.2 million)

**Name of program:** Cook County Community Justice Centers (CJCs)

**Portion of jurisdiction served:** Nine of the 22 police precincts in the City of Chicago and one suburban district in Oak Park are served by four Community Justice Centers.

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned to each Community Justice Center:** Two attorneys (one for felonies, the other for misdemeanors), plus one community liaison and an administrative assistant. The Central Community Justice Center also has an additional specialist who works on outreach to Spanish-speaking residents.

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** Yes. Attorneys in CJCs work from rent-free office space in the community, for example in government space co-located with another agency.

**Vertical prosecution?** Yes.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Generally, the community liaison attends community meetings, though attorneys sometimes attend meetings. Outside of areas covered by CJCs, the office has a team of four non-legal community liaisons who attend community meetings, offer presentations on topics of interest, and bring local issues back to the attorneys.

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** Working with the local business community, community-based assistant state’s attorneys helped redesign Weiss Plaza, a commercial plaza and drug market hotspot. They made some small changes to the plaza itself and provided businesses with a “911 script” for use when calling the police, after which businesses reported a marked improvement in the plaza and an increase in business.

**Examples of problems addressed:** The North Side Community Justice Center serves the community’s many senior citizens by holding seminars and workshops to educate them about potential scams and help them avoid victimization.

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<sup>4</sup> The information in this section of the brief has been obtained from articles, reports and interviews.

## Kings County (Brooklyn), NY District Attorney's Office

(Population: 2.6 million)

**Name of program:** Community Prosecution Program

**Portion of county served:** Entire county, divided into five zones.<sup>5</sup>

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** The office divides the county into five judicial zones, each covering four to six police districts. Zones with more cases are staffed more heavily.

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** Generally, assistant district attorneys are all based in the central office, but five attorneys work at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a community court in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn.

**Vertical prosecution?** Yes, in some instances. The Homicide and Special Victims Bureaus are vertical and the most serious zone cases are handled vertically.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Representatives from each geographic trial zone attend almost all police community council meetings, major community events such as the National Night Out Against Crime, and public school career days. Non-legal "community liaisons" from the DA's office attend other community meetings.

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes, given that the whole office is geographically zoned.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** The Police Athletic League (PAL) and Brooklyn DA's Office collaborate to administer the PAL Chess Program, which provides weekly chess instruction to over 100 third through eighth graders at two PAL afterschool programs located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and East New York neighborhoods of Brooklyn. Working closely with Chess Grandmaster Maurice Ashley, the program aims to foster strategic thinking and planning among youth.

The office also administers Friday Night Lights at the Miccio Cornerstone Community Center, which provides two hours of fundamental basketball instruction by two professional basketball players from a community group, Pro Hoops Inc., to approximately 40 middle schoolers. The program is located at a community center in a public housing complex in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn.

**Examples of problems addressed:** The Brooklyn DA's Office spearheaded the creation of New York City's first Family Justice Center, which is a walk-in center with services for domestic violence, elder abuse and sex trafficking victims. Today there are family justice centers in each of New York City's five boroughs and each one contains a number of different social service and government agencies, including assistant district attorneys.<sup>6</sup>

The District Attorney's Re-entry Bureau supports several programs, including the Kings County Re-Entry Task Force (KCRTF), a joint venture with the Department of Corrections and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to provide support for people transitioning back into the Brooklyn community. The KCRTF and the ComALERT program (Community and Law Enforcement Resources Together) coordinate referrals for a variety of services for the formerly-incarcerated population.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Trial Zones," *Kings County District Attorney's Office*, <http://brooklynda.org/trial-zones-2/>.

<sup>6</sup> "New York City Family Justice Centers," *NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence*, [www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv/downloads/pdf/fjc-one-pager.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv/downloads/pdf/fjc-one-pager.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> "Re-Entry Programs," *Brooklyn District Attorney's Office*, <http://brooklynda.org/re-entry-programs/>.

## Los Angeles, CA City Attorney's Office

(Population: 3.8 million)

**Community Prosecution Focus:** The Los Angeles City Attorney's Office practices community prosecution through several programs, some of which are described below: Neighborhood Prosecutor Program, Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program, Recidivism Reduction and Drug Diversion Unit, and Community Justice Initiative.

The Neighborhood Prosecutor Program assigns an attorney to each of the 21 Los Angeles Police Divisions. The goal is to take a geographic approach to improve the quality of life in the many diverse communities within the City of Los Angeles. A proactive approach to resolving problems is utilized by these attorneys establishing working partnerships with law enforcement and the community.

The Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program (CNAP) is a real property abatement taskforce in which prosecutors file civil enforcement lawsuits to stop rampant illegal nuisance activity at properties. It is a collaboration between the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, LAPD, Building and Safety and City Planning which also encourages participation from residents and local area businesses in identifying problem properties. The overwhelming majority of nuisance locations handled by CNAP prosecutors have chronic gang, gun, and drug activity.

The mission of the Recidivism Reduction & Drug Diversion Unit (R2D2) is to research, develop, and launch new strategies rooted in data analytics, social science, and evidence-based practices to advance misdemeanor practice in Los Angeles and increase appropriate accountability, public safety, and procedural fairness in the current criminal justice climate.

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** In the Neighborhood Prosecutor Program one supervising prosecutor oversees and coordinates the work of 21 prosecutors — one prosecutor is assigned to each of the 21 police divisions in Los Angeles. The Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program is staffed by 13 prosecutors assigned to address nuisance properties located in each of the 21 police divisions. Two prosecutors staff the Recidivism Reduction and Drug Diversion Unit. In the Community Justice Initiative, one prosecutor supervises each of the various community justice programs.

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** Yes. All prosecutors work out of the local police division, in Los Angeles City Attorney's Criminal Branch operations offices throughout the City, or at community locations where essential partnerships have been established including community agency offices, schools and educational venues, faith-based locations, and non-City governmental departments (county, state, or federal).

**Vertical prosecution?** Yes. In most cases, vertical prosecution is implemented within the *Neighborhood Prosecutor Program*, *CNAP*, *R2D2*, and the *Community Justice Initiative*. However, in some situations involving criminal diversion, cases may be handled by Branch Operations prosecutors not directly assigned to staff the diversionary program.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Yes.

*"If [residents are] developing a relationship that is so close that they're looking at this person as somebody that gets problems solved, and not as a traditional prosecutor... that's when you know the concept is working."*

—MILWAUKEE COUNTY (WI) DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOHN CHISHOLM

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** All assistant district attorneys associated with Neighborhood Prosecutor Program, Community Justice Initiative, and Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program work directly with the community, the Los Angeles City Council, law enforcement, and other government stakeholders to focus resources on problem offenders, citywide conditions impacting crime, offenses, and locations. Active participation in community meetings is integral and office engagement ranges from community members engaging in restorative justice activities to meeting regularly with field deputies from Council Offices located within police divisions to joining City Attorney Mike Feuer at Town Hall meetings scheduled throughout the year in each of the 21 geographic LAPD areas.

**Examples of problems addressed:** The goals of the Neighborhood Prosecutor Program, Community Justice Initiative, and the Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program are twofold: (1) to create restorative outcomes for individuals in conflict with the law, thereby changing the nature of traditional justice and engendering new modes of civic engagement and restorative justice administration to enhance safety and (2) to improve the quality of life in the many diverse communities of Los Angeles by establishing working partnerships with law enforcement and the community to prioritize and address quality of life issues involving nuisance activity, social disorder, and physical decay.

## Marion County (Indianapolis), IN District Attorney's Office

(Population: 928,000)

**Name of program:** Community Prosecution Division

**Portion of county served:** Community-focused assistant district attorneys serve the entire City of Indianapolis, assigned to correspond to Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department's six geographic districts. Community assistant district attorneys are also located part-time in the neighboring towns of Lawrence, Beech Grove, Speedway and Cumberland.<sup>8</sup>

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** One deputy prosecutor is assigned to each district. In addition to the prosecutor, there is a "District Coordinator/paralegal" in five of the six districts served by the Indianapolis Police Department.<sup>9</sup>

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** Yes. Attorneys are housed within each of the six police district facilities spread throughout the City of Indianapolis.

**Vertical prosecution?** Yes (on a limited number of cases).

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Yes.

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes, but caseloads are smaller to allow for community engagement activities.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** As part of these initiatives, community-focused deputy district attorneys engage in educational/crime prevention activities, including presentations at schools, churches, public libraries, senior living facilities and community meetings on cyberbullying, fraud, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, burglary prevention, senior exploitation, and gun violence. In addition to these outreach activities, the Community

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<sup>8</sup> "Community Prosecution Division," Marion County District Attorney's Office, <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/County/Pros/CommunityProsecution/Pages/CPD.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

Prosecution Division hosts quarterly landlord/tenant trainings and an annual Community Justice Academy (CJA) that provides speakers and information on various criminal justice topics of interest to the community. The CJA sessions are held on four consecutive weeks in October. Past sessions have included a number of topics including, but not limited to, domestic violence, elder and child abuse, re-entry barriers, the school-to-prison-pipeline, plea agreements, the crime lab, mental health issues in criminal justice, hate crimes, and gun violence.<sup>10</sup>

**Examples of problems addressed:** Community deputy district attorneys address the issue of chronic truancy through the Parent Accountability to Reduce Truancy (PART) Program, examining the issues underlying the truancy and offering services through community partners to the parents.

Community deputy district attorneys are also collaborating with a local trauma hospital, juvenile probation, the police department, the county health department, and other partners to address the problem of gun possession and violence by high-risk juveniles who are on probation for gun related cases through the Project Life Program. Components of this three-part program include Educating Kids About Gun Violence (EKG), which brings together a criminal court judge, a deputy prosecutor, a police officer, and an emergency room doctor or nurse to talk to juveniles on probation about the legal and medical consequences of gun violence and to offer instruction on resolving conflict without weapons. The second day of Project Life focuses on appropriate responses to trauma and goal setting. Day three is centered around conflict resolution and the concept of hypervigilance. It also includes a component where the parents of the juveniles hear from a mother of a shooting victim regarding the impact of violence, breaking down anti-“snitch” culture and why it is important to be engaged in the community.

Community-focused attorneys address the issue of underage drinking/public intoxication and poor decision making related to alcohol and marijuana in collaboration with the Butler University Police Department. Butler University students who are stopped by campus police for alcohol and marijuana offenses are offered the opportunity to participate in a pre-charge diversion program that includes participation in a community impact panel as well as a community service component.

## Milwaukee County, WI District Attorney's Office

(Population: 956,000)

**Name of program:** Community Prosecution Unit

**Portion of county served:** Community-focused attorneys serve the entire City of Milwaukee, divided into the seven police districts.<sup>11</sup>

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** An assistant district attorney is based in six of the seven City of Milwaukee police districts. In the remaining district, one attorney is based at the police station while another works in a different part of the district on a specific project in partnership with local companies and a university.

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** Yes, prosecutors are located in six of Milwaukee's seven police districts.

**Vertical prosecution?** Yes.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Yes.

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<sup>10</sup> “Community Justice Academy,” *Marion County District Attorney's Office*, [www.indy.gov/eGov/County/Pros/CommunityProsecution/Pages/Community-Justice-Academy.aspx](http://www.indy.gov/eGov/County/Pros/CommunityProsecution/Pages/Community-Justice-Academy.aspx).

<sup>11</sup> “The Milwaukee Community Prosecution Model: A Vision of Smart, Efficient, and Effective Law Enforcement,” *Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office*, at 2, [http://county.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/User/jkrueger/Electronic/CP\\_Program\\_Description1.pdf](http://county.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/User/jkrueger/Electronic/CP_Program_Description1.pdf).

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** Attorneys hold trainings for community members on such topics as the workings of the criminal justice system, crime prevention through environmental design and improving building security. Relatedly, attorneys often give presentations on criminal law at local schools and universities and several of the community district attorneys teach a course on community prosecution at a law school in Milwaukee.<sup>12</sup>

**Examples of problems addressed:** Community district attorneys focus on both low-level and violent crimes within their geographic area. In addition to criminal charges, community-focused assistant district attorneys work to address nuisance properties in their community and coordinate other government services for their assigned jurisdiction. There are three additional attorneys from the City Attorney's Office that provide support for these cases.

Attorneys also partner with community-based organizations to provide links to alcohol and drug abuse treatment, mental health treatment, criminal victim needs, after-school programming, and other services.<sup>13</sup>

## Multnomah County (Portland), OR District Attorney's Office

(Population: 766,000)

**Name of program:** Neighborhood DA Unit

**Portion of county served:** Community-focused attorneys cover the Lloyd Business District, East Portland, North Portland, Downtown Portland, with two other attorneys focusing on Rockwood and Gresham in eastern Multnomah County. Additional assistant district attorneys address issues on a countywide basis, including youth violence, human trafficking, and one attorney focuses on the Tri-Met public transportation system.

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** There are nine community-focused attorneys in total. One assistant district attorney is assigned to each geographic sector and to the subject areas mentioned above, except for East Multnomah County, which has two assistant district attorneys.

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** Yes. Community-focused attorneys are located in offices in their particular regional assignment, in some cases working out of the local police precinct.

**Vertical prosecution?** The office vertically prosecutes felonies.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Yes.

**Community district attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** The Neighborhood ADA is part of the City of Gresham Multi-Agency Gang Prevention and Enforcement Initiative, a collaboration between the DA's Office, the Gresham Police Department, the Boys & Girls Club, and other agencies and organizations. As part of this effort, the DA's Office leads the Rosewood/Rockwood Enrichment Neighborhood Enforcement Workgroup (RENEW), which is a collaboration between criminal justice agencies, local government, and the public. A key component of the program is to hold regular community meetings to discuss criminal justice issues.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Id.*, at 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> "City of Gresham Multi-Agency Gang Prevention and Enforcement Plan," *City of Gresham*, at 16, <https://greshamoregon.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=1711>.

## San Francisco, CA District Attorney's Office

(Population: 870,000)

**Name of program:** Neighborhood Prosecutors

**Portion of county served:** Neighborhood Prosecutors are assigned to each of the ten police districts in the City & County of San Francisco.

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** Currently, six Neighborhood Prosecutors are assigned to one or two police districts, depending on the public safety needs of the community.

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** The Neighborhood Prosecutors split their time between the San Francisco Police District Stations in each area they serve, and the District Attorney's Office at the Hall of Justice, so that they are accessible to community members and officers in the field, as well as criminal courts and administration.

**Vertical prosecution?** While a significant portion of their time is dedicated to inter-agency collaboration, crime prevention operations, and community partnerships, the Neighborhood Prosecutors also vertically prosecute cases that are of particular importance to the districts in which they serve.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Yes.

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes.

**Examples of problems addressed:** Neighborhood Prosecutors work within the Crime Strategies Unit, a multi-disciplinary team that uses a data-driven approach to resourcefully address chronic crime and crime drivers. Neighborhood Prosecutors work shoulder to shoulder with investigators, crime analysts, neighborhood stakeholders, and the community to develop long lasting solutions to the City's major crime issues. They also work to build connections between the SFDA and community stakeholders, enhancing the accessibility of the criminal justice system, and strengthening the community's trust. Neighborhood Prosecutors spend the majority of their time out in the field looking for ways to promote public safety through meaningful community engagement and enforcement.

## Washington, D.C. U.S. Attorney's Office

(Population: 659,000)

**Name of program:** Community Prosecution

**Portion of District served:** The entire District is served, divided into seven police districts. (Note that the Washington U.S. Attorney's Office is unique in that it has jurisdiction over misdemeanors).

**Number of attorneys and staff assigned:** One community-focused attorney is assigned to each of the seven police districts, along with one "Community Outreach Specialist." Additional

*"I am diverting low-level offenses to neighborhood courts to ensure that victims are made whole and perpetrators face appropriate consequences, while being given an opportunity to choose a different path by receiving the services necessary to do so."*

—SAN FRANCISCO (CA) DISTRICT ATTORNEY GEORGE GASCÓN

attorneys from the other divisions within the office are assigned to particular neighborhoods as well and pair with community-focused attorneys as “Extended District Teams” when appropriate.<sup>15</sup>

**Attorneys in neighborhood-based facilities?** No. Community-focused attorneys work out of the main office, but community outreach specialists are stationed in police district offices.<sup>16</sup>

**Vertical prosecution?** Yes.

**Attorneys attend community meetings?** Yes.

**Community-focused attorneys carry caseloads?** Yes.

**Examples of community outreach activities:** The D.C. U.S. Attorney’s Office operates the Clergy Ambassador Program, which brings together assistant U.S. attorneys, D.C. clergy and other community leaders for regular dialogue. There is an initial training for clergy participants, followed by six bi-monthly meetings where guests give presentations on a range of topics, including: trauma-based care, policymaking, understanding the Drug Enforcement Administration, and working with the Metropolitan Police Department.<sup>17</sup>

**Examples of problems addressed:** Project Safe Neighborhoods is a comprehensive strategy to reduce gun crime by focusing on the people most likely to commit violent firearm offenses and the community most likely to be victimized by gun crime.<sup>18</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

An effective community prosecution program must be sensitive to the unique needs of each individual community. The following recommendations and guiding principles, however, provide a useful starting point for DAs to consider:

1. **To the extent possible, the office should have a specialized community prosecution unit, or intentional office-wide geographic assignments.** Creating a standalone unit or reorganizing the office towards geographic assignments signals that community engagement is a priority and ensures that individuals committed to this work — and trained to do it — are engaged with the community.
2. **Attorneys and non-legal staff assigned to geographic areas should conduct a needs assessment, including a data review, for their designated area** and use that information to formulate a strategy to engage the community and identify local problems, with an eye towards helping the community to craft solutions. The needs assessment can include interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups with interested populations, community forums or meetings, and a review of demographic data and crime statistics. These efforts will show the community that the office is committed to improving public health and safety, highlight community resources and problems, and provide baseline information to measure progress.

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<sup>15</sup> “Community Prosecution,” *The United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia*, [www.justice.gov/usao-dc/programs/community-prosecution](http://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/programs/community-prosecution).

<sup>16</sup> John S. Goldkamp, et al., “Community Prosecution Strategies,” *Bureau of Justice Assistance, US Department of Justice*, August 2003, at xix, [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/195062.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/195062.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> “Community Engagements,” *U.S. Attorney’s Office, D.C.*, [www.justice.gov/usao-dc/programs/community-prosecution/community-engagements](http://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/programs/community-prosecution/community-engagements).

<sup>18</sup> “Project Safe Neighborhoods,” *U.S. Attorney’s Office, D.C.*, [www.justice.gov/usao-dc/project-safe-neighborhoods](http://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/project-safe-neighborhoods).

3. **The office leadership should develop staffing, hiring, and training strategies to ensure community assistant district attorneys have the appropriate values and skills.**<sup>19</sup> Community assistant district attorneys should be highly regarded by their colleagues and the community, and invested in community prosecution work.
4. **Make clear in both internal and external communications that community prosecution and engagement with the community are integral values** of the district attorney's office and part of the office's core mission.
5. **Take steps to ensure that the caseloads of community assistant district attorneys are reasonable** and allow adequate time for their community outreach and engagement work.
6. **Supervisors should manage and oversee community assistant district attorneys in a manner that allows them discretion and rewards success according to relevant measures.** This work needs to be valued and office performance indicators and assessment tools should account for it. Relevant individual performance indicators could include the number of community events attended, referrals for support and services made, community problems solved, number of new diversion programs and cases diverted, or the development of prosecutive approaches that are linked to community priorities.<sup>20</sup>
7. **Ensure parity in offers and treatment for defendants across different communities and develop strategies to address and reduce racial disparities.** Since community prosecutors are often "closer to the ground" in particular neighborhoods, they are able to individualize justice and ensure that treatment for defendants is fair. They also need to be acutely aware of racial disparities and work to create and implement strategies that address these concerns.
8. **Evaluate your community prosecution model, according to objective measures of success.**<sup>21</sup> Continuing evaluations may help persuade funders and other criminal justice system actors (for example, law enforcement and the courts) that community prosecution is a worthwhile endeavor. For example, an evaluation of Cook County's community prosecution strategies from 1995 to 2011 found some crime reductions and significant cost savings overall.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Appropriate values and skills might include: experience with the selected community, public speaking skills, personal skills to further interactions with community members, compassion for vulnerable populations, and a problem-solving attitude.

<sup>20</sup> For other examples, see Rachel Porter, *Choosing Performance Indicators for Your Community Prosecution Initiative*, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (2011), available at: [www.prosecutingattorneys.org/wp-content/uploads/Choosing-Performance-Indicators-final1.pdf](http://www.prosecutingattorneys.org/wp-content/uploads/Choosing-Performance-Indicators-final1.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> For examples of measures by which community prosecution may be evaluated, see John S. Goldkamp, Cheryl Irons-Guynn, and Doris Weiland, *Community Prosecution Strategies*, Bureau of Justice Assistance, (2003), at Table 4, 96–97.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas J. Miles, *Does the "Community Prosecution" Strategy Reduce Crime? A Test of Chicago's Experience*, *Am Law Econ Rev* 16 (1), (2014) at 117–43, available at: <https://academic.oup.com/aler/article/16/1/117/135028>.