Final Report on the Community Safety Review Process
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on December 31st, 2020

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Introduction

On August 19th, 2020 the Brattleboro Selectboard issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Assessment on Community Safety. The Preamble of the RFP[1] stated,

> *"As approved by the Selectboard on August 18 and in furtherance of more than 15 hours of public discussions at Selectboard meetings on June 16, July 7, July 21, and August 6 of this year, Brattleboro will begin a focused examination of how Town resources are currently utilized and can be best utilized to ensure equitable and optimal community health, wellness, and safety. The review will examine (but is not limited to): the Brattleboro Police Department, Town support for non-profit organizations, social service agencies and other community resources, as well as identifying currently unmet community needs. This open process will invite in the wealth of knowledge and life experiences that our community holds about police, social services, racism, oppression, and alternatives to punishment and violence. We are working toward a community that is free of white supremacy in all of its manifestations.*
>
> *This RFP is a call for one or more paid facilitators who will design and facilitate a community focused process to conduct this study, and provide to the Selectboard recommendations on policies, organizational structures, redistribution of resources, and/or further studies needed based on gathered input. This assessment and recommendation will be due by December 31, 2020."*

This report is the culmination of the work of the community safety review process in response to this RFP.

Project Summary and Context

This community safety review process sought to understand the current state of the community safety systems in Brattleboro and their impact on community members' actual experiences of safety, danger or harm.

[1] Town of Brattleboro, Request for Proposals: Assessment on Community Safety, August 19th, 2020.

The process was led by two core facilitators and informed and guided by a nine-member committee, who each brought their own identities, perspectives and lived experiences. From October through December, we designed and implemented four different styles of information gathering to seek input from community members about their experiences with safety, danger, harm and safety response systems. All community members were welcomed to share their experiences and visions, and we focused our engagement efforts on connecting with individuals who carry marginalized identities and who are most impacted by policing and police-like systems. We heard from over 200 community members and professionals working in over 25 organizations. We also performed a quality review of the Brattleboro Police Department policies, practices, and some areas of data collection.

This report includes a summary of the activities performed by the facilitators, committee members, and community participants, what we learned in our listening and systems review work, and our findings and recommendations. This report was authored and submitted by the core facilitators, with guidance and direction from the committee and significant input from the community.

The Town of Brattleboro has embarked on a courageous and imperative process of evaluating community experiences with safety, danger, harm and policing/safety systems. This step must be followed next by action. Many community members who participated in this process commented on the process itself and the town's commitment to this inquiry as a hopeful and encouraging sign of hope and change. This effort was celebrated for its coalitional upbringing, the broad community support it received in meetings throughout the summer of 2020, the ways that it addressed accessibility of town processes to a range of people who are structurally disincentived from participating and honored that accessibility in planning and budget, the way it began to compensate the necessary and vital labor of marginalized people, and the depth and openness and honesty that it fostered about problems that are longstanding and often ignored. It would be a great disservice and cause further harm to those who so bravely and vulnerably shared their stories, many of which invoke deep pain, fear and trauma, for this review process not to materialize actual change. Our community eagerly awaits the opportunity to explore what is possible in our town, and to get to work making it happen in ways that honor and build on the legacy of this process.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

We have organized our key findings and recommendations into four categories, in specific order:

1. Acknowledge and Reckon with Harm Caused

2. Increase Accountability
3. Meet People's Basic Needs and Build Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses
4. Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing

Key Findings

Acknowledge and Reckon with Harm Caused

1. Racial bias and profiling are active and current problems in the community, including in Brattleboro Police Department's response to community safety.
2. Police participation and other involuntary interventions in mental, emotional, and spiritual health crisis response is ineffective and often harmful for many community members.
3. Department of Children and Families' (DCF) responses to risk to youth often cause intergenerational trauma and do not address the roots of unsafety for children.
4. Some community members expect more of the police than is safe for others.

Increase Accountability

1. The current mechanisms for external review, accountability, or community control of the police department are scarce, inadequate, and ineffective.
2. There is little or no accountability around the impact of diversity and inclusion and implicit bias training on the communities that experience the most policing.

Meet People's Basic Needs and Build Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses

1. There is a severe lack of truly voluntary support related to mental health, substance use and addiction, and parenting and child protection.
2. Consistently across all areas of listening, poverty, homelessness, lack of belonging, and lack of ability to meet basic needs were named as some of the largest threats to our community's well-being and safety. Voluntary support, mutual aid, projects led by marginalized people, and basic needs like safe housing, good food, and places for belonging and connection are widely recognized as some of the biggest current safety needs in our community.
3. Consistently across all areas of listening, poverty, homelessness, lack of belonging, and lack of ability to meet basic needs were named as some of the largest threats to our community's well-being and safety. Voluntary support, mutual aid, projects led by marginalized people, and

basic needs like safe housing, good food, and places for belonging and connection are widely recognized as some of the biggest current safety needs in our community.

Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing

1. Those respondents most impacted by policing want reduced police presence with their communities, not "community policing," which puts the onus of trust-building on the wrong party.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are outlined in Table 13. Recommendations Timeline. We have provided guidance on the timeframe of recommendations following this key:

- Immediate= **FY 2021** (within 6 months)
- Short-term= **FY 2022** (within 18 months)
- Mid-term= **FY 2023** (within 2 ½ years)
- Long-term= **FY 2025** (within 5 years)

Context

How We Got Here

National and Community Landscape around Police Accountability

Community concerns and uprisings against police brutality and the severe lack of police accountability, on an individual, departmental, community and national level, are as old as the institution of policing itself. This year, after calls to action that followed several prominent police killings of Black Americans and further police violence in the wake of protests around this violence, communities of all sizes across the country stood up to push for greater police accountability and reduced police and carceral violence to Black communities and other marginalized people.

The strategy of many police departments around the country has been to ask for more money to tackle these ongoing problems. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives, many public health and domestic violence groups, and countless other organizations challenged that strategy and demanded to reduce the power of the system of policing by limiting police budgets and reducing the

scope of policing and the criminal legal system, which is one of the largest in the world. Our community of Brattleboro is not exempt from these ills; our review demonstrates that racial disparities are a real part of the safety response system in our town. Reckoning with the unconscious and insidious nature of white supremacy and systemic racism is a critical part of transforming our community safety systems and responses.

The community of Brattleboro and the Selectboard, whose members are charged with serving their community, have made a commitment to this community safety review process to better understand what safety, danger and harm look and feel like in Brattleboro and to learn about community members' experiences with the police and other safety responders. This Review Process was effective in engaging the guidance, input, and experiences of nine Committee members and over 200 community members as well as over 25 organizations who are part of our community's safety and support system. However, the work does not stop here. We hope that the Town will continue this important work by envisioning alternatives to policing and taking the necessary steps to begin to build them.

The institution of policing is not keeping its oath, as articulated in the Brattleboro Police Department (BPD's) Ethical Policy (General Order 225):

> *"Law Enforcement Oath of Office:*
>
> *On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character, or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the constitution my community and the agency I serve.*
>
> *Policy:*
>
> *The Brattleboro Police Department will maintain the highest standard of integrity by never violating the community's trust."*

As we demonstrate in this report, the public trust has been violated, and there is much work to do to establish integrity and accountability and to make our community safe for all of its residents.

A Commitment to Antiracism

> *"Racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists, but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen. This*

limited view of such a multilayered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and, in fact, perpetuates racist phenomena rather than eradicates them."[2] Omowale Akintunde

As Robin DiAngelo writes in her book *White Fragility,* "The identities of those sitting at the tables of power in this country have remained remarkably similar: white, male, middle- and upper-class, able-bodied. Acknowledging this fact may be dismissed as political correctness, but is still a fact. The decisions made at those tables affect the lives of those not at the tables. Exclusion by those at the table doesn't depend on willful intent; we don't have to intend to exclude for the results of our actions to be exclusion. While implicit bias is always at play because all humans have bias, inequity can occur simply through homogeneity; if I am not aware of the barriers you face, then I won't see them, much less be motivated to remove them. Nor will I be motivated to remove the barriers if they provide an advantage to which I feel entitled."[3]

Some white people are beginning to reckon with the unconscious nature and harmful impact of white supremacy on people of color as well as LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, people living with homelessness, poverty, substance use, and other marginalized identities. White supremacy causes harm to white people too by diminishing access to one's own strength, courage, wholeness, and abilities. A critical step in this reckoning is for white folks to become conscious of and take accountability for what people of color have known for a long time: that whiteness is a race, and as a racialized identity it affords white folks unearned benefits such as automatic cultural belonging, freedom from the burden of race, freedom of movement, white solidarity, racial innocence, being centered and heard, access to power and resources, among many others.[4] As Peggy McIntosh reflects, "I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group." In order to "see" the racial benefits that whiteness affords, we must unpack the invisible knapsack of privilege and recognize white supremacy as the air we breathe and the water we swim in.[5]

White privilege has bred white fragility, a phenomenon of relative intolerance, defensiveness, and lack of stamina in discussions about race and identity that plagues white people. From Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility:* "White fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable,

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[2] Akintunde, O. "White Racism, White Supremacy, White Privilege, and the Social Construction of Race: Moving from Modernist to Post-Modernist Multiculturalism," *Multicultural Education 7,* no. 2 (1999): 1. Quote and footnote from DiAngelo, R. *White Fragility,* Beacon Press, 2018.
[3] DiAngelo, R. *White Fragility,* Beacon Press, 2018.
[4] DiAngelo, R. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.
[5] McIntosh, P. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *Peace and Freedom,* 1989.

triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotion such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation… This insulated environment of racial privilege builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress."

Racial hierarchies built on myths and stereotypes are a foundational part of our oldest political, social, and cultural systems (systemic racism). As Ibram Kendi writes, "the beneficiaries of slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration have produced racist ideas of Black people being best suited for or deserving of the confines of slavery, segregation, or the jail cell. Consumers of these racist ideas have been led to believe that there is something wrong with Black people, and not the policies that have enslaved, oppressed, and confined so many Black people."[6] This reckoning is a necessary part of transforming community safety systems because, as Resmaa Menakem explains, "the myth of the fragility of white bodies and the corresponding fear of Black ones lives on. The deadliest manifestation of white fragility is its reflexive confusion of fear with danger and comfort with safety."[7]

We have rooted this process in an antiracism framework by centering the voices and experiences of those most impacted, including BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ community members, people who have been psychiatrically labeled, people living with disabilities, folks living with homelessness, substance use and addiction, poverty, and other people who carry marginalized identities. We also crafted a living document of committee agreements to combat the conditions of white supremacy culture[8] and strengthen our capacity and stamina for dialogue and processing difficult and intersecting topics such as race, gender, class, disability, labels, privilege, access, safety, danger, harm,… the list goes on (see Appendix A).

As two white facilitators, we stepped into this work not because of what we know. We are inspired and motivated by what we don't know, what systemic racism has kept masked and hidden, and what we are humbly discovering in ourselves, in our relationships, and in our community. We are encouraged and guided by countless Black, brown, white and multicultural leaders and thinkers and healers and visionaries, some of whom are quoted or footnoted in this report. And we are compelled by the shared vision of a community that is truly safe and supportive for all.

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[6] Kendi, I. *Stamped from the Beginning.* New York: Nation Books, 2016.
[7] Menakem, R. *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies.* Central Recovery Press, 2017.
[8] Okun, T. "White Supremacy Culture." Dismantling Racism.

A Note on Language

We recognize that best practices are evolving on the specifics of language and grammar that is most honoring of impacted communities. For this report we have made the following choices, and we commit to continuing to learn and grow and adapt in our journey towards racial and social equity.

- We capitalize Black when referring to people descended from the African diaspora, acknowledging that Black does not just indicate color but a history and racial identity of Black Americans. This capitalization uplifts the racial identity of Black people in line with the capitalization of Asian, Latinx, and Native American. Indigenous, though rarely used in the report, is also capitalized to indicate their shared identity and culture as original inhabitants of this land.

- We do not capitalize brown or white in this report, although we recognize that best practice on this is currently being debated. We made this choice to acknowledge that white does not indicate a racial identity and shared cultural history as does Black. It has been argued that the lack of culture is a characteristic of white supremacy, allowing white supremacy to become the shared culture. A risk of not capitalizing white in particular is a perpetuation of whiteness as "human-neutral" and invisibilizing whiteness as a race, which serves to perpetuate white supremacy. We chose not to capitalize brown because it also does not reference people with a shared history and culture, but instead it is used to discuss racial bias based on skin color. Although, it is argued that the racial injustice experienced by brown people is a unifying cultural experience that should be noted by capitalization. Specific cultural identities, such as Latinx, Hispanic, and Indian, are capitalized. We do not capitalize the phrase 'people of color' for the same reasons.

- BIPOC is used throughout the report to refer to Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

- LGTBQIA+ is an acronym used throughout this report to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexuall, queer, intersex, asexual, and other gender and sexual identities that fall outside the confines of cis-gender heterosexual normativity (the +). It is important to note that there is much diversity of experience and identity within this identifier. We also use the phrase 'queer and trans' somewhat interchangeably with LGBTQIA+, which is a common practice. We recognize that the term 'queer' has a history of hatred and bigotry, and its recent

widespread use within the LGBTQIA+ community is an act of reclamation, although we recognize that not all LGBTQIA+ people agree with this use of the term.

- We use many words to refer to people who have lived experience with extreme and altered states and mental health and psychiatric treatment; but we never use the term 'mentally ill' as we (unless referring to its usage elsewhere) as we consider it stigmatizing and ableist. The terms we use, such as people with disabilities, neurodivergent people, psychiatrically labeled people/people who are psychiatrically labeled, mad, and possibly more are terms that are used by people with these identities and lived experiences.

- There are some other terms and labels that we use in this report that are not culturally utilized, but serve the purposes of clarity and accuracy in distinguishing complex themes and identities in community experiences work. Further notes on this in the Community Listening section.

Community Call to Action

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) scheduled for March 2020 was cancelled and postponed, later to be held in September 2020. In Brattleboro, residents elect Representative Town Meeting members to vote on articles previously warned by the Town and Selectboard, including the annual budget. Cancelling the spring 2020 RTM meeting meant that the FY 2021 budget was not discussed or approved by RTM members. In June 2020, the Selectboard voted to adopt the FY 2021 budget in an emergency order to ensure that the Town government could continue to operate on July 1st, the start of the fiscal year. This was a significant break in precedent. Furthermore, the proposed (and adopted) FY 2021 budget included a 12% budget increase for the police department, in the national climate calling for increased police accountability and reform of community safety through defunding the police. Community members expressed their concern and dissatisfaction with this order of operations and demanded a review of the community safety systems in Brattleboro in preparation for the FY 2022 budget. Through an arduous series of Selectboard meetings and public discussions, several community members worked with the Town to draft an RFP for a community safety review process that embarked in late September, culminating in this report.

Our Appreciation

"Everything worthwhile is done with other people." ~ Mariame Kaba

An incredible amount of cooperation and collaboration went into the design and implementation of this process. First and foremost, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude for the community members who shared their experiences and visions with us. The listening work is the heart and gut of this process, the core of the work, and without your vulnerability, courage, strength, faith and hope for a better world, this process could never have happened. We have heard loud and clear how exhausting, despairing, and at times hopeless it feels to share your experiences over and over and to work for change despite fruitless attempts, and still you shared anyways. Know that your stories are held with the deepest reverence; our great wish is that your courage and willingness to share so that we as a community can learn will foster the change and growth that so many in our community clearly stated that we urgently need. We now belong to this information.

We hold such deep respect and appreciation for the nine members of the Community Safety Review Team/Committee. During a time of such struggle for us all, these community members stepped up to dedicate dozens of hours of their time to attend evening Zoom meetings and participate in critical tasks in the design and implementation of the process. The committee members demonstrated such respect, reverence, courage, vulnerability, humility and vitality in working together to cultivate a brave and safe (and very public!) space in which this work could occur. Your direction, accountability, feedback and visions were an invaluable compass guiding this process. Thank you to our American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters, primarily Christine Bricault and Janet Dickinson, and to Austin Rice and others at Brattleboro Community Television (BCTV) for their commitment to making our work more accessible.

We were able to collaborate with local BIPOC-led organizations as support facilitators to deepen our commitment to safety and confidentiality. Thank you to The Root Social Justice Center, Youth4Change, Families United, and the SUSU Healing Collective for your leadership and labor towards this collective effort and in all of your work, which holds so much of the vision we heard about in our listening work.

We would like to thank Town Manager Peter Elwell and Town Secretary Jan Anderson for their kind and very helpful guidance, responsiveness, and support throughout this process and to the Brattleboro Police Department and its leadership, and Captain Mark Carignan in particular, were very cooperative and helpful throughout this review process, responding to multiple requests for documents, explanations, and clarity with friendly responsiveness and a fair bit of labor.

We would also like to express our gratitude for our domestic partners and network of family, friends, and fellow organizers who have provided hours and hours of unpaid labor and support for this process. We

are grateful for all of those organizing to make our town safer and more just. It is from this organizing work, deeply rooted in community and transformation, that this process emerged.

Throughout our listening, we heard from many people who felt encouraged, hopeful, and supported by the Town and Selectboard's decision to embark on this community safety review process. We want to express our gratitude for and pride in our Brattleboro community and the leaders that are showing their commitment to listening, learning, growing and fostering the kind of transformational change that is being called for nationwide. Thank you for stepping into courage in leadership. We sincerely believe that you know that this is not the beginning, and it is not the end, of this difficult work; but this was a big step in opening up to this work in this community. Thank you for taking this step; and let's keep walking the path!

Community Tensions and Readiness

We anticipate that there are areas of tension and areas of alignment between what is articulated in this report and the various moving pieces of the current town leadership and community safety systems in Brattleboro. This report captures the experiences and visions of people who live in Brattleboro and centers the voices of those most impacted by policing and other safety responders. The report also includes a review of our current model of policing. Our key findings summarize the themes identified by synthesizing the information gathered from community experiences and the documents and data reviewed from the Brattleboro Police Department. The recommendations provide short, mid- and long-term steps towards the vision of a safer community for all. While there may be discord and at times contention among community members and leaders when exploring the recommendations, we believe there is also significant agreement and resonance with many of the key findings and recommendations.

It is important to acknowledge that the key findings are just that, what we found when asking the question: "What does safety, danger, and harm look and feel like in our community?" These experiences are unarguable, as they are reflections of many people's lived experience. We encourage the community and its leaders to consider all of the content in this report, and take action in the places of readiness while challenging ourselves to grow and transform in all areas towards the vision of a safe community for all.

It is clear that in Brattleboro, Vermont we have town leaders who are willing and able to be brave, bold and visionary. We know that addressing racism, white supremacy, and harm in our community is a big challenge, and we believe that our town and its leaders are up for this challenge. But if we are to meet

this challenge, we must do so together. This report includes some bold and visionary recommendations that are likely to be met with some degree of resistance and defensiveness.

If we are to challenge ourselves to do this hard work together, it is important that we take care of ourselves and learn to settle our nervous systems. Our work has been framed by a commitment to safety and grounding in the process as well as the outcome. We offer a moment of grounding here before moving on— As you read through this report, when you notice yourself feeling particularly challenged or activated, we recommend that you take breaks, take deep breaths, and reconnect with yourself and the wider vision of a community that is safe for all of its people, including you. Then, when you feel settled and connected, read on.[9]

Overview of the Town of Brattleboro (Wantastegok)

We acknowledge that what is now known as Vermont is a part of the traditional lands of the Abenaki; specifically, the immediate Brattleboro area is known to them as Wantastegok. The Abenaki and their ancestors have made this place their home for 12,000 years, developing an intimate knowledge and relationship with it. We further acknowledge the centuries where people in power explicitly (and implicitly) have used incarceration, policing, law-making, court orders, and other tools of enforcement to prioritize white lives and safety over the lives of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). As we bear witness in recent times, this oppression persists. These same tools have been used to control and oppress other marginalized groups of people: psychiatrically-labeled people, people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness, people who use or have used drugs, people whose identity challenges currently accepted gender roles and/or sexual relationships, and the list goes on.[10]

According to the Census Bureau's 2019 population estimates, Brattleboro Vermont is home to approximately 11,332 residents, a population decrease of 5.9% from 2010. The Census estimates that 53.6% of the population of Brattleboro identifies as female, and that approximately 54% of the population is between the ages of 18-65. The Census estimates that 93% of Brattleboro residents identify as white; 4.2% identify as 2 or more races; 2.3% identify as Hispanic or Latino; 1.7% identify as Asian, and 1.1% identify as Black or African-American. The Census estimates that 4% of Brattleboro residents are "foreign-born" and that 3.8% of residents speak a language other than English at home. The Census estimates that 16.7% of residents under age 65 are living with a disability, and 7.1% of

[9] For more somatic grounding strategies to support you in addressing racism and change work, see *My Grandmother's Hands,* a book by Resmaa Menakem, which is referenced in this report.
[10] From Town of Brattleboro, Request for Proposals: Assessment on Community Safety, August 19th, 2020.

residents under age 65 do not have health insurance. The Census estimates that the median household income between 2015-2019 was $38,175, and that 20.9% of people in Brattleboro are living in poverty.[11]

The following information was ascertained from Migrant Justice, an organization working for economic justice for and human rights of immigrants in Vermont. Due to issues related to immigration, threats of deportation, and other complicating factors, it is challenging to collect accurate demographic data that are inclusive of people who have immigrated or who migrate to Vermont. Migrant Justice estimates:

- 1,250 undocumented dairy workers: An average of estimates done by Migrant Justice, UVM researchers, UVM Extension Program that generally range between 700 and 1,500
- 1,750 undocumented adults outside dairy: Extrapolated from a 2016 report by New American Economy[12] that counted 1,979 total undocumented immigrants in VT (subtracting the 234 that the report counted in agriculture and rounding off)
- 500 Citizen and Legal Permanent Residents who file taxes with undocumented spouses: taken from a 2017 report by the American Immigration Council,[13] which counted 1,000 U.S. citizens living with undocumented family members (and halving it by assuming that perhaps 50% are jointly filing spouses)
- 0-500 immigrants with lawful status but without SSNs (student visa holders, spouses/dependants petitioned by citizens, asylum applicants who haven't yet received work authorization); this is very much an estimate, as there are no data totalling these groups with diverse experiences
- Note: these estimates also fit with a Pew report from 2016 that estimated "fewer the 5,000" undocumented people in VT[14] (though that methodology is shaky and relies on extrapolation from Census).

[11] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/brattleborotownwindhamcountyvermont
[12] New American Economy, "The Contributions of New Americans in Vermont," August 2016.
[13] American Immigration Council, "Immigrants in Vermont," 2020.
[14] Pew Research Center. "US Unauthorized Immigrant Population Estimates by State, 2016," February 2019.

Parallel Projects: What's Already Happening

We will highlight here some other related organizing initiatives currently happening in our community and statewide. The work of these groups and projects align with the community safety review process, in ways articulated in our key findings and recommendations.

Migrant Justice and No Más Polimigra

Migrant Justice Justicia Migrante in collaboration with Community Asylum Seekers Project is working on improvements to the Fair and Impartial Policing policies of police departments across the state. Brattleboro's current Fair and Impartial Policing represents the state's minimum standard and these groups are organizing to strengthen department policies beyond state requirements.

From the Migrant Justice Justicia Migrante website:

> *"We want Vermont to be a state that welcomes immigrants, where we don't live in fear, where we can work freely without being afraid to go to the store, where families won't be scared to bring their children to school. We ask that as legislators of this state, that you support us in our struggle, because we can't do it alone. This is how we won the initial Fair and Impartial Policing law. But there are many departments that haven't implemented the full policy. So we will fight to make sure police respect our rights and don't discriminate against us." - David Diaz*

Migrant Justice is organizing to ensure that police are not in the business of deportations. The "Polimigra"—collaboration between local police and immigration agents—is a key tool in the policy of mass deportation that is terrorizing our community. Migrant Justice has fought alongside allies to pass successive laws mandating that all law enforcement agencies in Vermont adopt "Fair and Impartial Policing" policies.

Due to the courageous organizing of immigrants in the state, Vermont's policy is among the strongest in the nation. Where it was once commonplace that traffic stops would result in a call to Border Patrol, most departments now understand that immigration issues are outside their authority. Yet under threats from the federal government, the state is wavering in its commitment to end police collaboration with immigration agents. Migrant Justice continues to organize to strengthen the state's "Fair and Impartial

Policing" policy and to encourage local departments to go beyond state requirements and create a firewall between local officers and federal deportation agents.[15]

Currently there are four towns in Vermont (as well as two towns in NH) which have taken action to protect immigrant community members and pass stronger versions of the Fair and Impartial Policing Policy (FIPP). Those towns are Winooski, Hartford, Norwich and Burlington.

See Appendix E for more information on strengthening the FIPP policy. These recommendations are incorporated in our Key Findings and Recommendations section.

Brattleboro Common Sense S.A.F.E. Policing Policy

Brattleboro Common Sense's (BCS) mission is to invigorate the political life and maximize the political influence of Brattleboro, by facilitating residents' involvement and influence in civic affairs and town governance.

One of their initiatives is the S.A.F.E. Policing Policy, which stands for the Sensible Alternatives to Fatal Escalation Policing Plan. This proposal seeks to eliminate firearms from routine police patrols and most classes (codes) of police activity in order to increase public safety by preventing accidental and hasty use of firearms by police, and in order to increase the safety of police officers, who become pre-emptive targets by carrying lethal weapons

From their website: Brattleboro Common Sense believes that a progressive attitude towards police reform is essential to promoting the safety of officers and the public, as well as positive relations and a sense of trust between the two. BCS is now arranging conversations within the Brattleboro community and with other towns in Vermont.

On November 21, BCS interviewed BPD Captain Carignan and the department's "Use of Force" instructors to hear their thoughts and concerns. BCS is now arranging conversations between Brattleboro's officers and officers in countries with reduced-weapon practices.[16]

See Appendix E for specific details of the S.A.F.E. Policing Plan. This report's Key Findings and Recommendations incorporate recommendations from the S.A.F.E. Policing Plan.

[15] From the Migrant Justice Justicia Migrante website; Immigrants Rights tab.
[16] Brattleboro Common Sense website, S.A.F.E. Policing tab.

Removing Police from Schools

The School Resource Officer (SRO), an armed, uniformed police officer, patrols the hallways of our local elementary, middle and high schools. This program is experiencing scrutiny alongside national calls to action for police accountability and reform. Many across the country, and in Vermont, are calling for the removal of the School Resource Officer position from schools.

An excerpt from an Open Letter to Vermont School Boards and Superintendents from Vermont Legal Aid:[17]

> *"In the wake of George Floyd's death at the hands of police, and the rising violence against people of color in our communities across the country, we stand with the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance, the Vermont Human Rights Commission, the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, the Advancement Project, and other organizations in calling for the removal of law enforcement in our schools and the end of exclusionary disciplinary policies including suspension and expulsion. We urge school boards and school administrators to shift resources to establishing restorative justice practices and providing mental health supports and services to students.*
>
> *The time is now for school boards across Vermont to join mayors, superintendents, and school boards in Portland, Charlottesville, Minneapolis, West Contra Costa, Denver, and others in remedying the inequity and discriminatory effect of policing and exclusionary practices. We ask that your school district/supervisory union immediately:*
>
> - *Remove law enforcement and School Resource Officers from your school, whether funded by the school district or the local law enforcement agency.*
> - *End the use of suspension and expulsion as a response to student behavior.*
> - *Adopt and implement restorative justice practices.*
> - *Invest the savings in mental health and social services and supports to students.*
>
> *We can only address the racial disparities and inequities in our educational system by taking action now. Thank you for your anticipated courage in taking this important step."*

[17] Vermont Legal Aid, Inc., "An Open Letter to Vermont School Boards and Superintendents." June 2020.

We stand in solidarity with these recommendations to the school board and superintendent in Windham County. In our Key Findings and Recommendations section we urge the Town to do so as well.

Project Scope and Methodology

What We Did and How We Did It

Project Scope, Design and Implementation

This community safety review process sought to understand the current state of the community safety systems in Brattleboro and their impact on community members' actual experiences of safety, danger or harm.

We proposed and executed a community safety review process that was collaborative, organized, efficient, creative, emergent, dynamic, and attuned to issues of unsafety, danger, and threat that are inherent in discussions about people's experiences with the police and other community safety professionals.

Our proposal was selected at the September 15th, 2020 Selectboard meeting. Twenty-three community members were nominated and interviewed for consideration for the Community Safety Review Team/Committee (CSRT) and nine were selected to serve as committee members at the September 22nd, 2020 Selectboard Special Meeting. The first CSRT meeting was held on September 29, 2020 and the Committee met weekly from then until December 28, 2020, with a couple of special meetings added, for a total of 15 committee meetings. Almost all committee meetings were two hours long. All committee meetings were subject to Open Meeting Law.

Despite challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic and many major holidays occurring during this process period, we were able to maintain integrity with our proposal schedule. The table below shows the schedule and timeline we maintained for this process.

Table 1. Community Safety Review Process Schedule and Timeline

Timeline	Tasks	Who?
September	***Proposal Selected*** ***Committee Selected*** ***Initial CSRT Meeting*** Introductions, established group norms &	Selectboard Selectboard Core Facilitators & Committee

	agreements, established decision-making processes, set initial goals & meeting structure, assigned tasks.	
October	***Weekly CSRT Meetings (4)*** Finalized plan & schedule for information gathering sessions, designed questions for information gathering, developed anonymous survey, identified facilitation needs & responsibilities, identified programs to connect with & scheduled meetings, began determining data collection processes. ***Began BPD Review*** Met with BPD leaders to review scope of project and request materials for review, began to review materials.	Core Facilitators & Committee Core Facilitators & BPD Leaders
November	***Began Information Gathering from Community*** Launched anonymous survey, scheduled & held listening sessions, scheduled & held 1:1 meetings with community safety professionals, identified & prepped support facilitators. ***BPD Review*** Sub-committee met to review BPD documents, gathered further data from BPD, performed tracers, reviewed & analyzed data. ***Provided Email Check-In to the Selectboard*** ***Weekly+ CSRT Meetings (5)*** Finalized & launched anonymous survey, established plans for outreach & dissemination, checked in on listening sessions progress, scheduled & held two public forums, assigned Committee tasks & reviewed progress on tasks, administered & discussed committee feedback survey.	Core Facilitators & Support Facilitators Core Facilitator and Sub-Committee Core Facilitators Core Facilitators & Committee
December	***Wrapped Up Information Gathering from Community***	Core Facilitators

	Closed survey, finished listening sessions and 1:1 meetings, de-identified, analyzed, and summarized all listening information for the committee & report. ***Finalized BPD Review*** Gathered further data from BPD, performed tracers, reviewed & analyzed data, summarized data for the committee & report. ***Weekly+ CSRT Meetings (5)*** Reviewed FY 2022 Town & police budget, heard from folks representing related projects in the area to consider inclusion in the report & discussed, reviewed and discussed major themes in listening information, reviewed and discussed data from BPD review, administered committee feedback survey, reviewed and discussed key findings & recommendations.	Core Facilitator & Sub-committee Core Facilitators & Committee

Who We Are: Facilitators, Committee Members, Community Members

The community safety review process was led by two local facilitators ("Core Facilitators") with experience working in and with various community safety systems and organizations.

Shea Witzberger is a white queer educator, facilitator, and artist who hails from the rural midwest and has lived in the greater Brattleboro community for the last 11 years. Shea has worked in schools, colleges, in social services supporting those experiencing homelessness and domestic and sexual violence, and in crisis response. Shea has facilitated support and learning with students, young people, teachers, administrators, survivors, artists, activists, friend groups, social service providers, and police about gender, consent, healthy relationships, bystander intervention, supporting survivors, and responding to violence in our communities. Shea has also consulted with art and non profit organizations to develop and implement plans to strengthen cultures of consent, accountability, and care and reduce our reliance on punishment and harm as primary strategies to make the world safer. Shea has survived intimate partner and sexual violence and works to build up life giving supports that do not cause violence as a solution to violence. Shea also makes visual art, puppetry, performance work, and music in collaboration with other artists, movement workers, and the land. .

Emily Megas-Russell identifies as a white cis queer woman, a mother, a dancer, a somatic trauma therapist, and more. She is a licensed clinical social worker (LICSW) and current operator of With Great Heart, PLC,[18] a psychotherapy and consulting practice, specializing in somatic-based trauma therapy and explorations of gender and sexuality. In her consulting work, Emily works with local non-profit organizations to provide CQI (continuous quality improvement) program design and implementation, training and staff development, clinical supervision, and crisis response support. For a full bio of each facilitator, see the list of proposals (link in footnote) on the Town of Brattleboro's website.[19]

As planned in our proposal we contracted with two local organizations, Susu Healing Collective and The Root/Youth4Change, as support facilitators to hold some of the listening work in order to maximize our commitment to safety and confidentiality. We want to express our deep gratitude and respect for these organizations and the trust that they hold with community members who have been marginalized and silenced. We hold a vision for a truly safe and inclusive community where all are free from violence and oppression, and we also recognize that this is not where we currently are and there is a real and pressing need for structures that honor and center the need for safety and upliftment of those most impacted by violence and oppression. As two white facilitators, we recognize that it is not safe for everyone in our community, especially people of color and people with other marginalized identities that we do not hold, to share their experiences with us. Working with other support facilitators who were able to hold sensitive information about people's experiences with trust and anonymity allowed us to learn more about the experiences of safety, danger and harm from community members who otherwise may not have shared.

Throughout the review process, the core facilitators were supported, guided, advised, and held accountable by a team of nine Community Safety Review Committee members. The committee members were chosen by the Selectboard and each committee member was paid $750, a precedent-setting decision in Brattleboro town government to support and value the labor of those who served through compensation and increase access to town processes to those for whom there are barriers. The committee members represented diverse identities, perspectives and experiences, which led to dynamic and impactful discussions and decisions throughout the process.

It is important to note that this final report was authored and submitted by the core facilitators, Shea Witzberger and Emily Megas-Russell. A critical and challenging component of this process was found in

[18] www.wgreatheart.com
[19] Town of Brattleboro, Facilitators Proposals: Community Safety Review Process, 2020. brattleboro.org

balancing the need for safety through confidentiality and de-identification with the openness and transparency of the committee meetings. The core facilitators were charged with maintaining integrity in our commitments to reverence, security, and safety in the information-gathering process and in sharing information with the committee (and therefore the public, considering all committee meetings were subject to Open Meeting Law). This delicate balance required the core facilitators to protect much of the content gathered while sharing and discussing themes in listening and data review with the committee.

The committee's role was multifaceted and included developing shared agreements to establish an antiracism and anti-oppression framework for the work to occur, refining the project methodology for gathering public input, designing questions to gather community input, providing guidance and accountability to the core facilitators, reviewing police department documents and data, helping design multiple online surveys, holding space for the public forums, and informing the key findings and recommendations. However, as designed in our proposal and due to the sheer volume of work completed by the core facilitators and the need to protect information through confidentiality and de-identification, the committee members did not author or review this report before its submission, and the report does not indicate the endorsement of any individual committee member.

Central to this project are the many different voices and experiences of our fellow community members, and especially those most impacted by policing and those most harmed by community response and safety systems as they are currently designed and implemented. The heart and gut of this project is the listening information, which summarizes hundreds of responses to our inquiry from community members. We spent dozens and dozens of hours holding reverent space for listening to those in our community whose voices have gone unheard, despite their tireless efforts to speak up and challenge the oppression they face or witness. We heard time and time again about the frustration and despair that many in our community feel in sharing their experiences and visions, and the precarious dance of hope and hopelessness that encourages or limits folks from participating in efforts to transform these harms. For those who found a moment of hope or courage to share their experiences and visions with us, we are grateful and indebted; this work is for them. We recognize and honor those in our community who we did not reach in this work, or who felt too unsafe or hopeless to share or were called to spend their precious life energy elsewhere. We are grateful for their wisdom in taking care of themselves; this work is for them, too.

Report out on Measures of Success

Table 2. Measures of Success

Metric	Measurement Tool
Accessibility of the process to people most impacted by police intervention Broad range of participation & experiences gathered from the impacted communities	Quantitative review of responses over a diverse group of ways people identify Throughout this process, we collaborated with local leaders, groups and organizations to create specific points of access for people with marginalized identities. We held 9 listening sessions for groups of people with shared marginalized identities, including people of color, queer and trans folks, people who have experienced DCF contact, BIPOC youth,mad people/people who have been psychiatrically labeled, and professionals who work in safety system organizations. We planned more listening sessions that had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also collaborated with local BIPOC leaders as support facilitators to hold some of the listening work with folks who may not have felt safe or willing to share their experiences and visions with the core facilitators. Due to these efforts, we were able to hear from over 200 respondents who carry diverse identities. Presence or absence of interpretation and translation services will be tracked We published an anonymous community experiences survey that was open to any who has experienced safety, danger and harm and safety response in Brattleboro. We had the survey translated into Spanish and published. We also published an anonymous organizational survey for professionals who work in the community safety system which we did not translate. We provided American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation at all 15 public committee meetings and public forums that were later aired on Brattleboro Community Television (BCTV). We provided detailed meeting minutes to the public of all committee meetings and public forums. We did not have any specific inquiries for language interpretation or translation.

	Presence or absence of technological supports for participants will be tracked We collaborated with the library to coordinate technological supports for participants as needed and advertised these supports. This support was very minimally utilized. Use of childcare will be tracked We offered and advertised childcare stipends for folks to use at their discretion for our public forums and for listening sessions. These supports were not utilized. Analysis of answers to optional participant brief feedback survey questions Participant feedback survey was not administered. Feedback about the information gathering portion of this process was mostly positive, with community members expressing gratitude and hope that the project is occurring and appreciation for the attunement to safety and confidentiality. There was also some constructive feedback that surveys were too long and that some questions were difficult to answer.
Felt Sense of Collaborativeness in the Process (respect and reciprocity between community participants, CSR Team members)	A CSR Team Survey will be administered at two separate intervals—first week of November and third week of December The first team/committee survey was administered in early November and all nine committee members responded (there were 10 anonymous responses). The second team/committee survey was administered in late December and two committee members responded. The same questions were asked in both surveys. **Questions Asked:** 1. "How collaborative does the community safety review process feel to you?" [mostly not collaborative; somewhat not collaborative; neutral; somewhat collaborative; mostly collaborative] 2. "Comment or Feedback on Collaboration?" [open text] 3. "How safe does the community safety review process feel to you?" [mostly not safe; somewhat not safe; neutral; somewhat safe; mostly safe] 4. "Comment or Feedback on Safety?" [open text]

5. "Is there any way we could be doing a better job meeting your needs?"
6. "Any other feedback or recommendations on the community safety review process that you would like us to consider?"

Responses:

We received 10 responses to the November survey and 4 responses to the December survey.

Question	Survey 1- Nov	Survey 2- Dec
How collaborative does/did the CSRT process feel to you?	2 said "Neutral" 2 said "Somewhat Collaborative" 6 said "Mostly Collaborative"	1 said "Mostly Not Collaborative" 1 said "Somewhat not Collaborative" 1 said "Neutral" 1 said "Mostly Collaborative"
How safe does/did the CSRT process feel to you?	1 said "Neutral" 9 said "Mostly Safe"	1 said "Neutral" 3 said "Mostly Safe"

The surveys included many comments to help the facilitators better understand ways to improve collaborativeness and safety and to offer feedback on the process.

Most committee members who responded shared that the process felt as safe as it could under the circumstances.

There was a wider range of experience with the felt sense of collaborativeness. Two committee respondents indicated that there was not enough work delegated to the committee, including in writing and approving the report.

This was a limitation of the design of this process and these concerns about collaboration are important lessons learned for future phases of this work.

Felt Sense of Safety in the Process (community participants, CSR Team members, facilitators)	A CSR Team Survey will be administered at two separate intervals—first week of November and third week of December Presence or absence of trauma-informed, body-based, safety-focused information gathering methods will be tracked Each committee meeting and public forum and several of the listening sessions included a body-based grounding practice. Respondents were invited to engage in listening work in non-verbal ways, such as through artistic expression, and some artistic work was submitted (see Appendix G). Additionally, we offered a creative expression/open mic style public forum. And, as a trauma-informed and safety-focused strategy, we contracted with support facilitators with shared marginalized identities and/or lived experiences to connect with folks who may not feel safe sharing with the core facilitators. Analysis of answers to optional participant brief feedback survey questions Facilitators will report on qualitative data of sense of safety in the final report See community listening section.
Production of Deliverables	Creation/presence of: ● Current Community Safety Ecosystems Map ● Report on the Community Safety Review, including data gathered from community experiences and community safety systems review ● Recommendations to the Selectboard All of these deliverables are included in this Final Report.

See Community Listening and BPD Review sections for more information about the specific methodology for these sections.

Community Listening

What We Heard from Community Members

Contact Overview and Centering the Voices of Those Most Impacted

We made contact with over 200 community members (not counting people speaking in an organizational capacity, represented in Organizational Listening) in our attempts to hear about individual community members' experiences with danger, harm, safety, and policing, DCF, and the mental health system. We received approximately 128 submissions to our anonymous individual survey, held two public forums, and held targeted listening sessions with several community groups representing those people who have high contact with policing and police-like interventions in our community. This included:

- A listening session about the mental health system facilitated by and for psychiatrically labeled people supported by HCRS Peer Support and Advocacy Program
- A listening session by and for queer and trans community supported by Out In The Open
- A listening session with families who have experienced DCF intervention supported by Families United
- We hired SUSU Healing Collective as co-facilitators from the BIPOC community to do supported individual listening with people of color who had experienced contact with these systems and/or who might not otherwise speak with us
- We hired youth facilitators from Youth4Change to co host a listening session for youth
- We did targeted outreach through many community organizations that support people who have high contact with these systems

The information we gleaned from listening to people about their individual experiences does not, by design, represent a randomized cross section of our community. Our goal from the onset has been to center those we theorized might have most contact with these systems, and to ask about what positive and negative experiences they had, what strengths and threats to community safety they observed, and what visions they held about the well-being and safety of the community. The listening was open to the community and many people who shared no marginalized identities also shared experiences with us.

We hired ASL interpreters for every (virtual) meeting, left the chat function up with agreements and parameters to increase access for nonverbal and less verbal people and to share resources with one another, and we had our anonymous survey translated into Spanish. We offered child care stipends and tech support to those for whom those would otherwise be a barrier. The anonymous online survey, all of our public meetings, a public forum about community experiences, a public open mic about community experiences, and individual opportunities for phone or email connection were extended to the larger

community, and we experienced significant turn out among people who listed no significant marginalized identity who also answered the call to share. These myriad opportunities to connect were publicized through social media, the town website, and organizational contacts, and Brattleboro Community Television generously volunteered labor to process and post recordings of our meetings online. Accessibility can always be improved, and we learned lessons about access that we will carry with us.

Limitations

Our greatest limits in the work were time and the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited available spaces and the ways we could do outreach. Between the time we spent collaboratively designing the inquiry with the Community Safety Review Committee and the time spent doing analysis and drafting the report, we had just over one month to collect information. In that time, it was difficult to do outreach to some of these groups of people due to COVID-19. Stricter quarantine and distancing requirements in shelters as we entered the pandemic winter cancelled some in-person listening sessions that were in development that would have increased access to those for whom technology was a barrier. Distrust of the usefulness of government projects and a desire for anonymity (especially among people holding sometimes invisible identities like survivors or undocumented people) were named by professionals in the community as limitations to accessing some populations. Concerns about confidentiality and the role of the committee arose midway through the project and led to the facilitators holding all of the raw listening information for safe keeping, which limited the collaboration that was possible for some analytical tasks. There is always more to do and learn, and we will make recommendations for further action and study that build on protection, accessibility, compensation, and equity elsewhere in our Recommendations for Further Work section.

Key Areas of Inquiry

The information that we gleaned from listening to people about their individual experiences will be organized here into five major areas. The questions here appeared in our online survey and served as a jumping off point for conversations and were co-developed with the Community Safety Review Committee in public meetings.

- ***Strengths***
    - What are your support systems? Who do you turn to when you need help?

- What supports your wellness, thriving, and safety?
- What is your community already doing well to support community safety?
- If you sought help and experienced anything positive, what worked about the process or the help you received?
- What has been the most helpful regarding your circumstance/experience? What was supportive? What helped you?
- (We included here answers in response to other questions that highlighted strengths in community support and safety)

- ***Threats***
    - What are the biggest threats to your community's safety?
    - If you were concerned about the consequences [for seeking help/support], what were you concerned about?
    - If you sought help and experienced anything negative, what didn't work? What led to a negative outcome or harm?
    - (We included here answers in response to other questions that highlighted threats to community support and safety)

- ***Experiences with policing, the mental health system, and/or DCF***
    - What do your daily/ongoing interactions with police/policing look like? What do they feel like?
    - What types of experiences would you like to share?
    - Tell us about your experience(s)! What was the experience like? How would you describe your experience(s)?
    - Did you receive a response from a community safety system?
    - If so, was the system's response wanted or unwanted by you or others?
    - If you have experienced danger, harm, or unsafety, did you seek help from existing community safety systems? What led to your decision about whether or not to seek help? How did you choose who to reach out to?
    - If you sought help, what was your experience like?
    - If you have sought help , was your experience: positive, negative, positive and negative, or other?

    - Have you been arrested, incarcerated, stopped, or otherwise experienced policing directly?
    - If you've experienced direct interaction or intervention from police, what was your experience like? How did that impact you/the community around you?
    - (We included here answers in response to other questions that highlighted experiences with policing, the mental health system, and/or DCF)

- ***Visions and solutions for a safer community***

    - What would a totally safe Brattleboro look like to you?
    - What does safety mean to you?
    - What do you think might better support your wellness, thriving, and safety?
    - What resource, support, or response do you wish had been available to you in times of need?
    - If you have experienced danger or harm in Brattleboro or sought support for a dangerous situation, what were you hoping would happen?
    - What is your vision for a safer Brattleboro?
    - (We included here answers in response to other questions that highlighted visions and solutions for a safer community)

Organization and Presentation of Community Listening

The themes that emerged were categorized from narrative responses to our survey and many, many conversations. When analyzing this mammoth amount of input, we sought to understand as much as we could about the cohesive themes in what we were hearing from all respondents and also to begin to understand patterns and themes in the similarities and differences among shared experiences.

The experiences people shared can be seen as individual stars—they shine truly and uniquely. Each experience of support, healing, care, violence, or harm that was shared with us did occur, whether it was a majority experience or an outlier. Our primary job is to show you an anonymized reflection of these stars that were shared with us. Even when one person is injured, hurt, killed, hungry, or unhoused, our whole community contains that wound. But when we zoom out, the context and positionality of these experiences can help us draw some constellations. The space between experiences is also information that might point to clustering, gaps, power differences, equity, or disparity. There are very notable gaps

between the trends in responses about specific experiences with policing when the information is organized by racial identity, as an example.

In order to think constellationally about the starscape of experiences we have been bravely handed by our community, we have organized the information we received by more than key areas of inquiry. The responses are also organized loosely by some of the self-generated and/or reviewer-generated identity categories that became relevant to the analysis. We'll share the strongest and most notable themes among total respondents, and often also the strongest or most notable themes by racial identity or other relevant identity or lived experience. We will highlight the perspectives of some people who are psychiatrically labeled and/or have experienced psychiatric hospitalization when discussing the mental health system, as an example. We will attempt to point out areas of alignment and divergence when they are clear.

Identity, Honoring Our Stories, and Resisting the Urge to Quantify

The Community Safety Review Committee discussed the benefits and costs of attempting to quantify the listening information. Broadly speaking, the benefit to a more quantitative approach is greater precision; the cost is decreased accuracy. We chose the more inclusive qualitative approach, valuing accuracy over precision.

In order to maximize participation and hear from those most impacted, including deeply personal narratives, it was essential in many listening settings to not ask for personally identifiable information (PII). Some valued community members would not speak up if there was a chance they could be identified and experience retaliation later. Several respondents, including some who are multiply marginalized, named a clear fear of being "outed" around their experience. We are keeping the commitment we made in our proposal to maintain radical confidentiality, anonymity, and protection, which includes not requiring the gathering of PII, and not sharing precise stories from which a person's identity in this small community could be discerned. The advantage, again, is that we heard from more people, including some marginalized individuals for whom this might be their first time speaking up to someone outside of their closest circle. This gave us a much more accurate picture of an underrepresented part of our community.

The disadvantage is that without an exact accounting of each and every person's PII it is *impossible* to precisely sort, label, and categorize how many of certain types of people had certain kinds of experiences. Also, because many people have multiple identities, even if we had chosen to forego

accuracy and focus on precision, quantifying identities is problematic. Identity does not function as a stack, one on top of another in a clean equation. For many people, their identity cannot be parsed into separate categories, and the cohesive experience of living with myriad identities is not always just the sum of each part, but a whole experience that is indivisible. A queer person of color speaking about racism may be quoted in the area discussing the experiences of people of color. This honors that people of color have diverse experiences and identities, and the protection of anonymity should not erase the complexity of the people who shared with us or how they experience the world. They may also be quoted as a queer person when talking about homophobia or transphobia. As one queer organizer shared,

> **"Queer experiences are all of the experiences. Queer people are all other kinds of people, too. So homelessness is a queer issue. Hunger is a queer issue. All these issues are also queer issues."**

So while we are able to say that a queer person said X, or several Black persons said Y, we cannot say with precision that, e.g., 27.35% of Black persons said Y.

We have chosen to hold people's experiences with reverence, honoring their wholeness. We ask that you honor that each person who shared their experience contains multitudes, even as we use these simplified and reductive identifiers to attempt to observe some patterns across responses.

This information can not only reside in our heads if we are going to make our world safer for all of us. This Community Listening information is the "beating heart," the "gut," the "nervous system" of this larger project. Any analysis would be incomplete if it were divorced from our felt, emotional, physical experience, or by reducing it to numbers and compartmentalizing it. This framing is an attempt to take back our humanity from White Supremacy Culture, which usually values quantity over quality and measurability over relationships.[20]

This quantitative/qualitative discussion will be explored later in the BPD Review, where the great majority of the quantitative data in this project resides, and we will share more about the limits to the quantitative data that the community currently collects about policing and the flaws and racism inherent in much of modern data collection. These concerns may serve as a springboard and compel further study that more accurately represents a true cross section of the community, but must be done so in a way that addresses concerns about equity and safety. **For our part, this project as proposed was a**

[20] https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html

relationship-based listening project, and the useful mechanisms of safety that allowed for these harms to be expressed rendered them unquantifiable. This new (or very old) way of knowing is familiar to those of us who are practiced in holding space for survivors of violence or others who experience harm, but may be uncomfortable for others who are less familiar with receiving information this way. We ask that you accept discomfort if this happens for you, and read these stories with the reverence those who shared them deserve.

Content Warning

The Community Listening section of the report includes descriptions of many kinds of violence and harm, including discussion of police use of force or violence, racist violence, traumatic child removal, sexual violence, forced drugging and restraint in a psychiatric context, and more. An emotional support document (available in Appendix J: Emotional Support Resources) was co created with the Community Safety Review Committee to resource respondents around the activation of sharing their stories, and may be of use to you as you proceed with integrating this information.

Strengths in Community Safety

In zooming out and looking at the total information shared with us from all community members, the most overwhelming themes in response to questions about what supported respondents' safety and well being were that friends, family, and organic networks of community support were where people turned to first and whenever possible for safety and support. How well resourced those networks were, both materially and in skill, felt determinant to many respondents' felt sense of safety and security in their community. Those whose networks were well resourced often felt much safer and less threatened than those whose networks were small, under resourced, or unskilled at support. Another overwhelmingly strong theme was that this community safety review process was widely acknowledged among respondents as a strong step toward a safer community for all. The effort was appreciated explicitly for its perceived inclusivity, multiple points of access, and providing respondents opportunities to illuminate and acknowledge some of our community's most systemic historic and current challenges. The need for expanding safer spaces for continued dialogue and reckoning between people of many different identities and backgrounds and real, substantial, necessary change were hopes of many people we talked to.

When asked about what the community is already doing well to support community safety, respondents (in the survey, not just in co-hosted listening spaces) expressed gratitude, praise, and support for the

work of The Root Social Justice Center, and named feeling personally and communally supported by their work and programs. This was not limited to self identified people of color.

Many people acknowledged access to many types of resources as foundational to their well being and safety in times of need. Access to enough good quality food, safe housing, and free or accessible medicine were named as vital to people's experiences of safety and security, in addition to articulations around financial security and access to ample resources. Relatedly, the work of Groundworks in helping people in poverty access safe housing and resources was praised by many community members, despite differences of opinion about other aspects of the challenges our community faces around poverty, homelessness, and addiction. To a lesser extent, the works of many other organizations were appreciated by many.

Competent therapists and healers, when accessible, supported many respondents in feeling safe and secure. Access issues will be discussed later on, but competence often seemed measured around trauma and trauma healing, competence with queerness and sexuality, and antiracism or shared experience of marginalized identity. Exercise, physical wellness practices, and activities in our community's beautiful outdoor spaces supported many respondents across all identities.

Emerging mutual aid networks were often cited by total respondents as creating safety and support, especially for those who didn't name feeling supported by contemporary institutional safety systems, with many respondents of all identities indicating that resourcing marginalized communities directly is a direct strategy to increase safety for the whole. Many expressed sentiments about their safety being conditional to the well being of others— that everyone in the community thriving helps each individual thrive, and conversely that witnessing any community members suffering increases risk and causes all of us to be less safe, well, and at peace.

Among self identified Black respondents, the strongest theme that emerged in response to questions about what is working to support their safety, well being, and thriving is that this was a difficult question to answer except in the negative. As one Black community member shared:

> **"I would say not much. I think this is deff a start, the community safety review project and actually giving people a voice to and space to share the harm they experience. I also think black and brown people creating stuff and finally having a little bit of attention and permission to dream is starting to help a bit"**

Almost every response was that not much was working, or that things changing would support the respondent's safety, but that it was difficult for many Black people who shared with us to name strengths in how the broader community was supporting their sense of safety and wellness right now. While threats to safety and unsafe experiences will be shared later in the report, this overwhelming trend among respondents when asked about what was strong and working is notable.

Among strengths in community safety shared with us was overwhelming support of and reliance on The Root Social Justice Center and its programs, including their mutual aid work. Other strong supports for the safety and well being of Black respondents were people of color/BIPOC community and camaraderie, and spaces and projects created by and for these communities. Family, friendship, and this community safety review process were also strong themes among Black respondents as something the community was doing well to support safety. Many Black respondents named having access only to unofficial networks of support, due to consensus in responses regarding long histories and contemporary realities of official community systems causing significant harm and danger.

> **"My family [are my supports], if it's a community issue I turn to people in my community that I think will be able to help me amplify the issue because I know with one black person speaking it will just get brushed under the rug."**
>
> **"My only support system here is friends and family really. Feels isolating here as a so-called 'black Man'."**
>
> **"People in our community are speaking out more, getting together, letting everyone know we aren't divided and we aren't going to back down, we are going to express what's wrong in these areas. telling the select board, and all these people, and if they aren't going to listen to us we will bring it to the streets. We want them to just listen to us so we can make changes."**

Among non-Black specified people of color[21], which includes Latinx people, people who identified a racial identity that was not Black or white, people who specified being multi-racial or mixed race but did not also specifically identify as Black, or who identified as being a person of color but did not further specify, results were very similar to those of Black respondents. Many non-Black specified people of color named challenges in accessing official community safety supports without risking harm. The Root Social Justice Center and BIPOC community spaces were far and away the most commonly named safety supports. This community safety review process was also listed as supporting safety for some non-Black specified people of color respondents.

[21] A note about self identity and Blackness and accuracy

"The Root is providing a safer space for BIPOC to be in community. We are welcomed with all our painful history and elevated amongst one another. We have space to share our experiences, and our authentic selves are held and honored. We have space to celebrate and experience joy without the fear of the same harm we experience outside of that space."

"[It supports my safety that we are] Talking about all aspects of these situations, and bringing it to the light to show awareness of the things we all can do better with as people and a community."

Among LGBTQIA+ respondents, which included respondents who self identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, queer, non-binary, gender non conforming, intersex, asexual, and androgynous, three overwhelmingly strong themes emerged as supporting safety and well being. The Root Social Justice Center, friendships and organic community care networks, and this safety review process were the most cited supports for safety. Like other marginalized communities, safety felt conditional for many LGBTQIA+ respondents. Often, the cited condition for safety was avoiding contact with official government systems like police and a public mental health system that were sometimes described as coercive or a threat to the safety and well being of many LGBTQIA+ people. This safety review process and increased conversation about taking care of one another were named as supportive of safety by many LGBTQ+ respondents. Many queer respondents also named that Out In The Open [OITO] was a strong support to safety. Out In The Open's provision of spaces to connect with others who share similar experiences and their mutual aid efforts were especially highlighted.

The last strong emergent theme among LGBTQ+ respondents was access to queer and trans competent therapists, healing professionals, and social service providers. The harms caused by lack of queer and trans competent support, particularly in the public mental health system, will be explored later on. Queer and trans competent support could only be accessed privately, out of pocket, or by travelling for some respondents. Relatedly, access to this support seemed to fall largely down class lines, with many unable to access this costly support being relegated to queer incompetent providers who caused more harm than healing. While many LGBTQIA+ respondents named family as supportive, that theme was less strong than with any other group of respondents. "Chosen family" and friendship with other queer people, or family in the form of partnerships and children, were named more often than parental or family-of-origin supports for some LGBTQIA+ respondents.

"To be heard/seen as the person I am and for that to be valued. To feel like I'm part of a community or communities. Having people around me who I can trust with my

physical safety and also with whom I can be emotionally vulnerable without fear of retribution. When I am around folks who I can't trust in those ways, I feel safer when I have control/power in the situation and/or can opt out of it. Consent, in general, in as many ways as possible, helps me feel good and safe. Knowing that people in my community would have my back if I were -- or were about to be -- hurt. I also feel better when other people in my community are thriving -- it can be painful or scary when others are unsafe or unwell."

"Friends who were dedicated to supporting me and my well-being. Friends who knew about different ways of doing things and of caring for each other and the community without going through coercive systems. Harm reduction."

"I appreciate the depth of the questions and the many avenues you all created to make the research gathering accessible. I am glad we are having this conversation."

"I go to informal networks of other queer people I know. I've gone to OITO so many more times than anyone else. Mutual support networks- OITO and the Root- they need more money."

Among neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, or mad respondents, the strongest themes about strengths in community safety were networks of friends or family who could provide support outside of official systems. This effort and the presence of spaces like The Root and Out In The Open and other places of belonging and connection were themes.

"There has been some mutual aid and that has been helpful I think."

"Efforts in housing with the funding made available to them, disability services, decent restorative justice attempts for those already in the court system, Community Safety Review Committee (i hope!)"

"The Root Social Justice Center is supportive."

Among white respondents, friends, family, this Community Safety Review project, and The Root Social Justice Center, Groundworks, and several other community organizations were named as key community safety supports. Financial stability, being resourced, and outdoor and recreational activities and spaces to connect were important to many people who shared with us.

"I have financial stability due to my class, whiteness, and gender identity; the fact I fit within standards of beauty also make my life comfortable in many ways. My financial situation-- high level of education, employment, and the way I am not monitored in my workplace-- means that I have health care without many out-of-pocket expenses. I can buy healthy food from the co-op despite the exorbitant costs, I work with a therapist, I have time to exercise and participate in leisure activities. I have a

community of friends who come from similar backgrounds. I am connected to a network of people who work in "professional circles". My support systems are prolific!"

"I feel supported by having connection with others, and having access to spaces that feel nurturing and safe in which I can thrive. This looks like family, friends, a strong support system. It also looks like access to housing as a low-income person. Beyond that, it looks like community spaces that exist for us to gather and share art/music/food/ideas... which has been hard to achieve in Covid times. I hope those spaces still exist and thrive when it's safe for us to share space in the community once again."

"The FEET group, when it meets, is good. Anything that gets people out on the street and interacting with each other feels good - like neighbors are on the street and not drug dealers."

"The daily work program being run by Youth Services is a great example of a program supporting community safety. The array of activities available to kids-the ice rink, skate park, ski hill, youth sports, youth theatre, all available at low cost. Ideally every activity available to children from the wealthiest families should be available to every kid."

For those who shared no relevant identifiers about race, sexuality, disability status, or significant contact with these systems, this effort, the existence of mutual aid and direct support, outdoor and recreational activities were themes in what was strong about our community's safety.

"Groundworks, recently formed mutual aid groups, peer support for people dealing with substance use, lots of trails for people to use and some downtown green spaces, the library."

"Thanks so much for doing this work! I'm grateful you're doing it, that the Selectboard is open to it, and that concerned citizens had the energy, in the middle of a pandemic, to make it happen. Wow, this is a great town!"

"I believe that people coming together, with different ideas than what we're doing now. Grouping together to collaborate a better way of loving and supporting each other."

"Having programs like this one to help solve our safety problems and find collective solutions."

"Respectfully questioning how policing is done, openness to changing outdated practices."

Threats to Community Safety

Overwhelmingly, three very strong themes arose when respondents across all identities shared threats to safety in our community—systemic racism and white supremacy, police and policing, and opiates and addiction. Classism, poverty, Selectboard/local government specific racism or complicity in racial oppression, and lack of adequate mental health and addiction supports (and the harms that constitute inadequacy) were also strong themes in total response to questions and answers about threats to community safety.

Among Black respondents, the overwhelming majority of respondents named systemic racism and white supremacy as the biggest threat to safety, in addition to police and policing.

> **"The biggest threat to my communities safety is law enforcement."**
>
> **"Not having security from my police department. My biggest threat is that people racially harass me [ ] and I don't have the same support a white person would have when this happens with them. The police here deal with a lot of things in a racist manner. It's an unfair outlook or judgement that they give you, they taunt you, antagonize you."**

We will share much more about community experiences with police and other systems elsewhere. The other themes that arose as strong throughout listening to BLack respondents about threats were racism in The Brattleboro Selectboard and local government and classism and anti-poor policies. Black people shared many detailed instances of racist violence and injustice experienced in Brattleboro, often with no accountability or repair even after significant efforts were made. The unwillingness of local government and social services to acknowledge or end racist harm was also noted by many Black community members. Lack of adequate supports for people in struggle and an inability to call for help, which was often explicitly connected to racism in the police force, mental health institutions, social services, or child protection were also named by many Black respondents. Black youth named many threats due to racism (and sometimes also homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression). They shared about being harassed by downtown businesses, followed in stores, accused of stealing, and negative interactions with community support systems. Black parents shared about needing to teach their children to guard against racist violence, hate speech, and attention from police. A lack of freedom of movement was present in responses from Black community members, whether due to threats of racist interpersonal or state violence.

“I've been [serving my communities] for years, ive done alot for this community and I feel so hurt about all the stuff I have to go thru here… I get really upset about the way this town treats us.”

“[I] cant speak my mind here and say what needs to be said. They focus on censoring you instead of actually listening to the harm they are causing you. Stop blaming black people for everything. Actually do something for us for once.”

[How did you make the decision about who to ask for help?]" This is a complex question because there are different reasons someone could need help for. I don't see promise or support in this area. I don't feel like I can get support from my town hall, police system, or any of the people who are supposed to keep you safe here."

“Racist, biased white police. ‘Well intentioned’ white led non profits making decisions on behalf of people they have no relationship to and know nothing about. My people not having access to what they need to survive.”

“I don't ever actually walk around Downtown because my mom won't let me because they're afraid that something bad might happen with a shop owner or police etc.”

“Being mindful of my environment, being aware of things, knowing where to go and where not to go. I have to survive for my children, teach them how to be safe. I have to have the racial talk with them, that knowledge is what supports me unfortunately we can't do too much in America and that needs to change but until then we need to tread lightly unfortunately. I hate to put that on my child I want them to be free and think free but thats the same support I got from my father. You will get in the world and in the workforce and things won't be the same for you so try to rise about that and do the best that you can while still being you, theres nothing you can do about that. My parents knowledge supports me in navigating life here.”

“I become more uncomfortable when I try to talk to individuals about this, specifically white people who say they want change to happen. I do not sense a wellness there.”

One of the most important pieces of information in this report is that, in both thoughts about threats to community safety and later in experiences that Black community members had with all community safety systems, Black and non-Black specified people of color respondents shared, in detail, many many accounts of unequal treatment, dishonesty, antagonism, violence, assault, profiling, and punishment for speaking up and attempting to make change. This harm occurred at the hands of federal, state, and local government departments and workers, including border patrol, DCF, designated hospitals and agencies of the Department of Mental Health such as The Retreat and HCRS Crisis response, social services, hospitals, and state and local police. We have addressed elsewhere the trade between safety and protection of the people who shared these experiences with real losses in transmission of the impact of these experiences to you.

This project risks buffering decision makers charged with ending or continuing this racist violence from the intensity of this pain, potentially diluting this pain to make it more accessible and palatable. We must share their messages while keeping the details of their accounts very minimal, not only due to our commitment to confidentiality from the outset but also because some respondents shared legitimate fear of consequences for speaking in official spaces about state sanctioned violence they had experienced or witnessed.

Many of the harms spoken were utterly heartbreaking, enraging, and sickening. Physical violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, manipulation of policy, racial profiling, non responsiveness to racial hate crimes, arresting the person who called for help, and many other utter failures of the system to support Black life were detailed at length in highly identifiable stories shared with us.

Many of the experiences respondents had, in and outside of Brattleboro, caused them real, life altering trauma. The trauma extended not only to the person an intervention was targeted toward, but also to their families and neighborhoods and broader communities, often measurably over generations. The impact of this ripple effect cannot be overstated, nor divorced from conversations about ending harm and making change.

Among non-Black specified people of color[22], which includes Latinx people, people who specified another race that was not Black, people who specified being multi-racial or mixed race but did not specify that they were Black, or who identified as being a person of color but did not further specify, respondents named systemic racism and white supremacy as the strongest threat to community safety. Other strong themes included classism and anti-poor policies, opiates and addiction, and police/policing as threats to community safety.

> **"Racism, Classism, Ableism, Sexism, Homophobia, Transphobia, essentially all forms of bigotry and the continued support of oppressive systems or imbalances of power. The constant denial or dismissal of our lived experiences. The queer friend liberal population who neglect to recognize their own privilege's or acknowledge the ways in which they uphold white supremacy."**
>
> **"The drug issue here needs to be rectified. This is the number one issue before homelessness in my opinion, when I first moved here people could leave their doors unlocked and feel safe in their homes and community. Whereas now that doesn't seem like the community we live in at all anymore. There is heroine everywhere around here now."**

[22] Due to the limits in ability to know people's full identities, we are using this clunky phrase which no one uses to identify themself. Some respondents shared "mixed" as their identity, but later in the context of their stories they refer to themselves as "Black" or "African American". These people's stories are represented inside of Black listening information. Some people shared their identity as "mixed race" and later shared that they were Middle Eastern and White, as an example, or didn't further specify. To honor that some of the self identified mixed race people who did not further specify may in fact also feel represented by "Black" but did not happen to share that with us, non-Black specified people of color is the most accurate wording we have for the group of people who did not specify Black or African American, though some of their stories may also live here, unknown to us.

Among LGBTQIA+ respondents, which includes respondents who self identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, queer, non-binary, gender non conforming, intersex, asexual, and androgynous, systemic racism and white supremacy were the strongest themes in respondents answers about what is causing harm and threat in the community. Other strong themes that LGBTQIA+ respondents named as threats to their own safety or their community's safety were police and policing, poverty, classism and anti poor policies, and homophobia and transphobia. A final strong theme emerged from listening to LGBTQIA+ community members' sharing about what the biggest threats to community safety were: the specific racism, white supremacy, classism, and oppression perpetrated by local governance. Others shared specific instances of racism they witnessed or experienced as queer and/or trans people of color. About police, LGBTQIA+ respondents had much to share about the harms done by police, but more specifically about the harm of policing as a systemic response to perceived danger in the community. Police presence was not percieved as increasing safety for many queer and trans respondents. Policing being tied to other community supports was named as reducing accessibly to those supports for many queer and trans community members. LGBTQIA+ community members shared many examples about the ways that police and police-like strategies in any support system made that system feel at best less welcoming, and at worst completely inaccessible, threatening, dangerous, terrifying, or deadly. Many queer community members reflected on poverty and the risks and discrimination they witnessed those in poverty experiencing.

> **"[Our community doesn't actually have official community safety systems, we have] false safety solutions that actually target BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folks."**
>
> **"If police are an option for safety for an institution, I cannot utilize that institution."**
>
> **"Brattleboro makes money off of marketing itself as queer-friendly. If people who ran the Town believed us when we say we can't live here- we can't afford to live here!"**
>
> **"The onus is always on the marginalized community to "prove" that we experience these harms." "We work so hard to share that these things aren't working for us. We bend over backwards." "It's time for other people to take up the mantle of this work and join with us."**

Among neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, or mad respondents, there were many threats shared about systemic oppression, and also specific concerns about the mental health system and some harms therewithin. The harms of these institutions will be detailed in Experiences with Mental Health below.

> **“The mental health system, particularly the Retreat, the HCRS crisis team, BMH ED, and the community education programs like mental health first aid and umatter that teach regular people to get someone "real help" [from police or a screener] (which is dangerous) rather than actually just helping them.”**
>
> **“Involuntary hospitalization. Never leaving an institution. Being labeled as "crazy" for the rest of my life. In other situations, I was concerned about the potential impacts on other people (like when my car has been broken into, etc.) who may get caught up in jail/prison and not be able to get out. The punishments seem really outsized to folks' actions over the past few decades.”**

Among people who shared that they do or have used substances, which were very few and are also represented among these people’s many other identities, the threats of policing and the lack of non police involved supports were highlighted. The people who shared the most about threats and solutions around drug use were also marginalized in their racial, gender, or sexual identities.

> **“Overdose is a big threat, but the threat is not people using drugs or the drugs themselves- its the criminalization of use. The whole system creates victimization- I've been discharged from inpatient to [an unsupportive environment] and was OD'ing, and begged for the cops not to be called. I'd rather face overdose, I’d rather face death than the police in that moment.”**

Among white respondents, racism and white supremacy, opiates and addiction, poverty and economic inequality, and police and policing were the strongest themes regarding threats to community safety. Other weaker themes were homelessness, sexual and domestic violence, and lack of mental health support. Some shared about the lack of decent affordable housing. Many white people named being afraid of being asked for money, especially when they assumed that money would be for drugs, while others named that being asked for money should not be considered threatening in and of itself. Many agreed that people in our community are struggling with substance use, and that the impacts of that ripple outward. There was strong alignment around identifying that struggle, and more divergence around solutions to that problem. A few also shared about the dangerous inaccessibility of Brattleboro’s pedestrian infrastructure for pedestrians and wheelchair users, which was also mentioned by a few respondents of other identities.

> **“Drug houses currently. I see new people move in, see them walking up and down the street and meeting with people, but if you can't provide evidence there is dealing to the police, there's nothing you can do. I feel like a community response like the CeaseFire group in chicago might be a good idea to just approach the people and tell**

them the community is watching and they're not welcome to bring that behavior here."[23]

"I am not able to be at peace in Brattleboro or to experience all of my supports with [ ] satisfaction as long as people in the town live without housing, are hungry, are sick without being able to afford health care or are sick without being treated as humans who deserve health care."

"Lack of economic opportunity, lack of truly adequate rental housing. We now own a home in town, but when we were renting we were dismayed at the level of apartments available-dirty, clearly uncared for, and the landlords were asking substantial rents."

"Lack of adequate mental health support services. Systemic racism, sexism, and bias in the police force, health profession, mental health profession, judicial system, and department of children and families. A community wide misunderstanding of trauma and how it affects those who experience it."

Among respondents who named no racial or marginalized identity, the most overwhelming theme about what was threatening the community was opiates and drug addiction. Other strong themes were poverty, systemic Racism, and crime/break ins. It's of note that nearly all non identified respondents talking about people rifling through cars or stealing associated these behaviors with addiction. Crime and break ins were a larger concern for white and non identified respondents than any other. There is a diversity of opinion about how to support drug users, end addiction, or remove the problem from view, which will be shared later on in Visions and Solutions.

"Drug houses. I live near one now, and another was active last year. Even though the cops met with us as a group of neighbors after we reached out, they said there was nothing they could do. The landlord kicked them out. Now there is a different one. Same story. We've had strangers knocking on our door at night looking for it. We've also had burglaries/break ins."

"Lack of support for those in positions of desperation: financial crises, homelessness, addiction and abuse."

"I think it's probably economically. Everything is so outrageously priced for local people that its hard to sustain a life here in brattleboro. Most people who make a consistent annual salary are struggling here. Economic insecurity leads to a host of other insecurities. May lead to risky behaviors, not just unlawfully, but even being able to access healthcare as a result of the price."

[23] https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/ceasefire-public-health-approach-reduce-shootings-and-killings

Experiences with Police

Among total responses around experiences and feelings with police, the two most common themes were that folks who had minimal interaction with police felt that their experiences were mostly polite and appropriate, and that police operate from a racist paradigm and/or are racist in their practice.

Other strong themes that emerged were the desire to defund the police and fund alternatives, that police were a threat to the respondent, avoidance of interaction, experiences of profiling or racism by police in Brattleboro and beyond, a need for more accountability, fear of the police, experiences of dishonesty or manipulation in police interaction, and PTSD/trauma responses around police due to past harm.

Among Black respondents, the strongest themes were that police are systemically racist, that the respondent had experienced or witnessed police racism or profiling in Brattleboro, and that Black respondents often felt unable to safely call for police support in an emergency due to these experiences. Black respondents' perspectives about threats to their own or their communities largely featured police and policing. Black respondents' visions and solutions for a safer community, which will be shared later, featured many suggestions on ending racism in policing and changing the way policing occurs in their communities. A few Black respondents named positive or neutral police interactions, but almost all additionally shared negative experiences, fear, experiences of profiling, or critiques of policing as a system of danger and not safety. Many named that the historic origins of policing as a system of protection of property or slave catching had not functionally changed, and there were statements of hope and skepticism around just and anti-racist policing in the future. Some respondents shared about Black-led change efforts around policing being necessary. One respondent shared an experience of getting pulled over in a busy area of town and fruitlessly searched in Brattleboro and the impact of increased racism in the larger community when white people witness a car full of brown people get searched.

We heard multiple stories from different respondents about wrongful arrests or charges and police refusal to acknowledge that profiling and mistaken identity were at play, even after charges were dropped, causing lasting damage and mistrust for generations. Some of this profiling and wrongful arrest included assault, violence, and injury, the details of which cannot be shared due to their identifiable nature. We recieved multiple accounts of Black people witnessing or experiencing police sexual harassment and sexual assault in Brattleboro, in public and private, toward BIPOC adults and minors.

Respondents shared stories of police misconduct and failed attempts at accountability. One respondent named being formally criminalized for interrupting profiling and wrongful arrest in their Brattleboro neighborhood. Some respondents shared charges staying on a person's record even after it became clear the police were at fault, which made the whole system feel unaccountable and unsafe. One respondent shared the ruinous consequences that false charges and legal injustice had on that person's life, including impacts on employment, alienation from family, inaccessibility of social supports, negative reputation with police, and a sense of alienation that comes with living with no justice and no one to call for help.

About not being able to ask for help from the same system causing so much harm, many respondents named being formally or informally criminalized when seeking help in a dangerous situation, whether by being interrogated when requesting police response, being mistaken for the person the police were called to respond about, or being wrongfully arrested upon police arrival. Many Black respondents felt like there were no good options for help in dangerous situations. In addition to the quotes from Black respondents highlighted below, there are many more quotes from Black respondents about their experiences with police that support the themes described above. These are included among many voices in Appendix H: Community Listening: Public Forum Public Comment Transcripts and make up a concentrated portion of Appendix I: Community Listening: Additional Quotes from Most Impacted People. We strongly suggest that you read the quotes in Appendix I in full. Along with the quotes below, they are some of the most concerning and actionable information in this report.

> **"This whole economic gap brings about mental distress. For black people we have the stigma of being afraid of our environment, how people weaponize the police because they don't understand what's going on, they call the police on us because they think we are behaving off in their eyes, and my biggest issue is feeling safe when you do call the police if that is the situation. It brings a mental stress on a person of color that stick with you that you cant really shake off because you are sitting here doing the right thing getting the wrong thing in return. I feel like my environment has lashed out at me. I don't want to make waves in the water I just want to be viewed as an equal person in this community and I don't feel like thats happening. It causes PTSD, depression, etc."**
>
> **"I've been in a couple situations where police were called and they didn't do anything except make the person who was scared for their life feel unsafe. They didn't make them feel safe at all the outcome was either you both get arrested or I let you both go. And that didn't seem right to me and I hoped that it would have been better that they would have diffused the situation but they really didn't do anything at all."**

"Now that they have harassed me so many times and never found drugs on me they leave me alone more."

"It made me really not like police out here. They had no liable cause to search the car other than we are brown. SO they assumed he was selling drugs or something. Thats what it felt like...racial profiling at its finest. Which sucks so bad when you live in a town with so few black people. And every single black man I know in this town have experienced racial profiling. I know more white people who sell drugs than black."

"When I call for help and I am treated badly, I am treated as if I am the criminal. that makes me feel unsafe and I feel the unequal treatment has alot to do with the fact that I am a man of color."

Among non-Black specified people of color, which includes people who identified a race that was not Black, Latinx people who did not identify as Black, people who specified being multi-racial or mixed race but not specifically Blackness as part of their identity (though it could be an accurate identifier for some of these people) or who identified as being a person of color but did not further specify, experiences shared with us were very similar to Black respondents' experiences. The strongest themes were experiencing police racism or profiling, the need for defunding the police and/or investing in alternatives to policing, PTSD and/or trauma responses from police interaction, experiencing police as a personal or communal threat, systemic racism in policing, and avoidance of police whenever possible. Respondents also shared the terror or fear they experienced around police, and the desire to remove police from substance use or mental health systems.

Some respondents named experiences with the Brattleboro PD specifically, and some people of color respondents shared about violent or abusive experiences with police elsewhere impacting their relationship to policing in Brattleboro. Many people of color respondents shared about feeling unable to reach out to the system for help. When asked about what experiences or considerations helped a person decide where to ask for help, some people of color named feeling criminalized or put at risk by police responses to their calls. Respondents shared experiences of police being dishonest or manipulating the system against them, which cannot be shared in any detail. Many people of color had suggestions around police funding and alternatives in the Visions and Solutions section later in the report. One person of color shared exclusively positive feelings and experiences with police, and did not name experiencing significant police contact. In addition to the quotes respondents highlighted below, there are many more quotes that support the themes described above. These are included among many voices in Appendix H: Community Listening: Public Forum Public Comment Transcripts and make up a

concentrated portion of Appendix I: Community Listening: Additional Quotes from Most Impacted People.

> **"[Safety means] A place where myself and my [child] are not racially profiled."**
>
> **"What I shared isn't even close to full detail of what occurred nor can I adequately express the harm it caused. I acknowledge that this assault didn't occur in Brattleboro but the police are a system built from and operated to uphold the false ideology of white supremacy… I do not trust any officer regardless of how many people of privileged identities consider them necessary or trustworthy. My experience was minor compared to what countless others face and I absolutely hate being in a community of people who gaslight us into accepting the presence and authority of systemic abusers."**
>
> **"[Reaching out for help from police was] Traumatizing; won't ever do it again."**
>
> **"Being tricked by workers ie police social advocates who manipulate the [ ] system to further their own motis operandi."**
>
> **"I did not anticipate the police looking up my criminal history and then charging me when I was the one who made the phone call."**

Among LGBTQIA+ respondents, many respondents shared avoidance and fear around police. Systemic racism in the institution was a strong theme, as well as an inability to safely call for help and a need for defunding the police and investing in community support and alternatives to policing. Some queer respondents shared that the punitive nature of policing is opposed to the goals of community wellness, and the need for greater accountability. Several queer respondents named fear based on past violent or harmful experiences with police, in and out of Brattleboro. Several white queer people named feeling personally safe around police, but largely framed this as a function of white supremacy in policing, not good policing. Several queer respondents described policing as a system that is more capable of punishment than care and witnessing instances of police being harmful to marginalized community members. There was a sentiment shared among many LGBTQIA+ respondents that there is no acknowledgement of the historical and current police violence that queer and trans people, and particularly queer and trans people of color, experience. There were also sentiments shared about the lack of accountability around this violence. Another queer community member shared about trust and institutions that have historically done violence to queer and/or trans people, and the need for a "truth and reconciliation" type process in order to build trust. When asked about how folks decided who to reach out to for help and what consequences they anticipated when doing so, some queer people named fear, including the fear of death. Another person shared that after being targeted in Brattleboro

for queerphobic violence by a group of men, they were unable to safely access support due to past traumatic experiences with police during a mental health crisis.

Multiple queer survivors named being unable to access support from the police or other safety systems for intimate partner violence or sexual violence, which sometimes happened at the hands of partners or aquaintances and sometimes happened at the hands of police elsewhere. In each of the few instances of directly experienced police sexual violence shared with us, all of which happened elsewhere, the police used their police status to threaten or coerce the victim into silence or punish them for seeking accountability.

Though less strong than many other themes, some queer white people, like many other respondents, named that Brattleboro police were more polite and appropriate than many other police forces they had encountered, including Vermont State Police. These people largely were grateful for Brattleboro police's workability and willingness to collaborate and listen in certain instances. Most of these people still mentioned the systemic racism of policing and supported defunding the police and/or investing in alternative supports and frameworks to provide greater safety to their communities. More quotes about LGBTQ+ Respondents' experiences with police can be found in Appendix H: Community Listening: Additional Quotes: Experiences With Police: LGBTQ+ Respondents.

> **"I am white and have had fairly respectful interactions with law enforcement most of my life, wherever I have lived. I have access to that resource when I want/need it. I can expect not to be profiled, to be treated well, to be heard. I know this is not the experience of many in my community."**
>
> **"This was [not in] Brattleboro - but because of the experience I had I will *never* call the cops in my life. Seeing a cop car sends me into fight or flight, and I immediately become non-verbal, which I know will make me more of a "threat" to cooperation with them."**
>
> **"As a white person with many privileges, I hardly ever interact with [Brattleboro police]. I feel anxious around them. I once observed a police officer gleefully stealing a homeless person's tent poles in a public display, effectively destroying what little shelter they owned, as well as my confidence that the BPD is really here to 'protect and serve'."**
>
> **"There is no consequence when they do violence or harm or abuse to us. I've been hogtied and beaten by cops [elsewhere]. There is no consequence, no recourse. No accountability. Nothing ever happens when they do this."**

> **"When I see police wearing blue lives matter masks I feel especially uncomfortable and imagine that others feel unsafe. I have seen two officers with these masks in Brattleboro just this summer alone."**
>
> **"These systems owe the people they've harmed recognition. They inhabit a legacy, and without acknowledging all of this harm- that's not how we build trust and move forward together."**

Among respondents with disabilities who did not specify psychiatric disability, there were some concerns about policing and disability. Though the amount of respondents who named a disability that was not psychiatrically specified was small, a few concerns arose. One white respondent named police racism as a danger to the community. Another named that they felt the police practiced discrimination, and had experienced significant police involvement. Some white respondents with disabilities felt served well by police, and others felt that policing was ineffective for drugs and other struggles in their neighborhoods.

> **"My Whiteness gives safety. Deafness is unsafe—can't hear police and cannot hear on phone calls to them. They are too white male supremacist aggressive in traffic stops. Usually polite but too militaristic. ...Why are some laws like speeding a police duty but other laws like environmental protection just unarmed regulators? Who decided what the police work on?"**

"I have witnessed double standards in the community myself and the discrimination of the homeless, mentally ill, the poor, and those who stay [in shelters] in emergencies."

While not many respondents named "survivor" as an identity (though some did), several people identified having experienced sexual or domestic violence somewhere in their sharing. While much of this violence was perpetrated by partners or acquaintances or strangers, some of it was perpetrated by police, especially police in other departments. Among survivors of domestic or sexual violence, there were mixed feelings about the efficacy or usefulness of police and carceral responses to domestic violence, the accessibility and safety of reaching out for support, and concerns about challenges with police accountability in responding to domestic and sexual violence. Some survivors named the need to retain armed police response to domestic violence, regardless of the changes that may be made in the community around policing. Others named never feeling served by police in the first place, or police response putting them in more danger. Survivors of color, particularly, named more often experiencing support outside of policing, either through family and friends or through The Women's Freedom Center or another community support organization. Some female survivors of color, particularly, named the

struggles they experienced in being believed by police and the larger criminal legal system due to racism. Some white survivors named that while police had not been involved in their experiences of abuse, they felt comfortable calling the police for other community matters, like supporting them in removing tenants with substance abuse issues or when someone was rifling through cars at night.

We heard from one respondent who had witnessed police sexual harassment and unwanted sexual touching in Brattleboro. Multiple people shared experiences of sexual coercion, harassment, and assault by police in other places and departments. Among those survivors who experienced sexual coercion, harassment, or assault or domestic violence by police, the cover ups, harassment, stalking, threats, and deep power imbalance and fear surrounding their experiences eroded trust in policing as an institution and often led to PTSD responses and terror in routine interaction with local police. It is also notable that almost all of the few survivors of police sexual or domestic violence that spoke with us held at least one marginalized identity.

It is important to acknowledge that some of the experiences survivors shared about police responses to the sexual and domestic violence they experienced, as well as some of the sexual violence that survivors experienced from police, was experienced many years ago. This is not to excuse any current police departments or communities from responsibility to consider and be accountable to the impact of the larger problem of police sexual and domestic violence or responses to this violence in the community, but rather to acknowledge that the impact of these traumatic violations often impact our community's felt sense of safety over state lines, entire lifetimes, and generations.

> **"I am a survivor of DV and the police didn't know how to handle women's crises. Arresting the man is great, but then they get out of jail and come back to beat the individual. Women are sometimes fearful about contacting the police because of the consequences, so they don't say anything and the violence just continues. Partners control you and "steal your soul" it's hard to get out of a relationship. There were times where I wanted my partner to get arrested and be held accountable but I didn't because I knew I would have to pay and I would be unsafe."**
>
> **"I was forced to do sexual services for a male [ ] police officer . I left the state where it happened. I was stalked and harassed by the police officer [when seeking accountability]."**
>
> **"I once accepted a ride home from a police officer when I was a teenager [elsewhere]. I really needed it, even though I didn't want to. And when we got to my house, he wouldn't let me out until I gave him my phone number. He coerced me when I was underage, and he gave me the ride so he knew where I lived. What could he do to me if I refused? I still won't answer calls from numbers I don't know."**

There were varying perspectives on the relationship between police and domestic violence shared by survivors in the Public Forums. These are included among many voices in Appendix H: Community Listening: Public Forum Public Comment Transcripts.

Among neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and mad respondents, a strong theme in answers to questions about police interaction, threats to the community, and visions and solutions for a safer community was a desire to limit or remove policing from mental health response. Among these respondents who had experienced police in mental health interventions, several people shared about supports that collaborate with the police being unsafe and unusable. People shared detailed stories of drawn weapons, tackles, restraints, handcuffs, and doors being broken down. People shared stories about entering a support experience voluntarily and having police arrive mid way through seeking emotional support, often unexpectedly. Respondents who also held another marginalized identity especially named these interactions as terrifying and trauma inducing.

Several neurodiverse, psychiatrically labeled, or psychiatrically disabled people also shared about their experiences with policing when discussing the mental health system and when sharing about visions and solutions for a safer community, featured later in the report. While experiences in the mental health system were named by many community members and professionals as carceral or police like, one respondent shared an experience of being terrified and hurt that police had been called by a service provider after a clear other plan had been made, and named that the police were actually less punitive than the mental health workers in that instance. Some respondents brought up questions about why The Retreat stopped utilizing police support at the volume they once did, and whether or not their use of alternative police like responses were now more or less accountable

Noting that there is sometimes tension between neurodiverse, psychiatrically labeled, or psychiatrically disabled people and the advocacy work done by families of those people (who are perceived by some to be speaking *for* these people instead of following their leadership, sometimes to harmful effect), we did also hear from the parents of neurodivergent youth about their fear of police interaction with their children and their struggles to access accountability or safety for their children when attempting to use police to investigate harm done to those youth by institutions.

> **“Sometimes when I am in a lot of distress I need to lie down outside, and because it's not really physically accessible to me to go into the woods, I can't do this without being afraid of someone calling 911 out of concern.”**

[What were your concerns about reaching out for help?] "Myself or those around me with more targeted identities could be harmed or hurt. I just don't want to engage with them so I avoid any interactions at all costs. If I do have to, I am overly polite and "submissive" out of fear."

"Cops are not needed in modern society. Homicide investigation sure. But beat cops whose job is to give exuberantly expensive tickets to speeders and apparently kill innocent black folks. Those cops are unnecessary and should be abolished."

"Police used a bunch of dissuasion and gatekeeping tactics… I can't find justice in VT. Civil rights will never be restored, restitution will never be paid… "It's a web of deterrence." You get a lot of hyperbole. You get nothing. No one wants to answer your questions. No one wants to be held accountable."

Multiple advocates who have experienced extensive psychiatric intervention shared their experiences and visions in the Public Forums. These are included among many voices in Appendix H: Community Listening: Public Forum Public Comment Transcripts.

Among white respondents, a strong theme was that the police are not a threat to them, personally. White respondents' ideas diverged in whether or not that was seen as evidence of good policing or evidence of racism in policing. Many echoes were heard in these themes. White and racially unidentified people who shared no other marginalized identities shared the strongest approval of the police's work around racism and community policing. Some others shared that the larger institution served white supremacy to its core, despite the progressivism or performance of the department. Fear was a theme among white respondents around policing. When asked about folks' day to day interactions with police, many shared that they had little interaction, and that interactions were appropriate or helpful. Few white respondents shared experiencing police violence. When they did, it was during cases of mistaken identity or while being removed from their families as children by police in collaboration with DCF. Some white people shared fears about what would happen to the person they were calling about regarding petty theft or other concerns, especially if that person was not a middle class straight white person. Observing almost no police presence in wealthy neighborhoods and much more aggressive policing in poorer neighborhoods, a few white respondents reflected about resources versus policing as a safety strategy.

Around policing of substance use, the few white drug users who shared experiences with us shared a desire for alternative supports with less police contact, such as safe injection sites, free narcan and safer use supplies, and less police collaboration in supporting those using drugs. Many white people named that policing is ineffective around drug use and the problems they associate with it, whether they

supported more aggressive policing around drug use or limiting the reach of policing in solving an addiction crisis rooted in trauma, poverty, or lack of belonging.

White respondents who shared no other marginalized identities expressed a greater diversity of opinion about what appropriate policing around these issues would be. Some advocated that police aggressively (and sometimes even, seemingly, permanently) incarcerate or institutionalize all drug users, people perceived as mentally ill, and people who are poor in public or asking for money. The desire of some community members for the police to remove visible human struggle from public life, while an impossible task, seems to be one pressure the department faces. These respondents often had minimal further suggestions about how to support the people struggling with homelessness, poverty, mental illness or emotional distress, or addiction, who themselves often responded that fear of institutionalization and incarceration prevented them from being able to access adequate support and safety.

A strong theme among white respondents was that we need alternatives to policing for many community concerns.

> **"The impacts of constant policing, judgement, racial bias on people living on streets like Canal has a huge emotional and mental impact on peoples nervous systems and has so many subtle impacts on the ways they are able to live their lives. I have had passive interactions personally with the police, they have been willing to help me [ ], ive seen them watching BLM protests. Majority of them want a job and based on my interrelations with them they just want to watch out for the town. My concern with them is the inequity they seem to act out in the community, there is an oversight problem here, there are things happening in town here that are not responsibly addressed. My experiences with the police have been helpful and brief. I don't see them as an enemy but I do see the construct of what they have become as unhelpful to the community because the job they have been tasked with has become lengthy and it doesn't seem fair to the officer or the community."**
>
> **"I have limited interactions with police, but those that I have are cordial and respectful. It's easy for me though, I'm a middle class white guy."**
>
> **"I fear interaction with police and I don't trust the criminal justice system."**
>
> **"As a privileged white woman who looks educated and middle class, I do not feel threatened by the police in my daily life. I assume they are there to protect me. I think our police chief has done a good job in many areas like community policing, diversity training, de escalation training. I know the department does have a Use of Force protocol but perhaps it might need to be strengthened."**

[Regarding witnessing a drug deal] "There wasn't really anything they could do. I kind of feel like the police just keep arresting folks and then the court just lets them go. This never-ending circle. Prisons are overcrowded. It is never ending."

"I've never felt in danger from the police. But I have wished my community invested more in the things that would make me feel safer… Also, looking at the town's long range financial plan I was astounded at how much of our town budget goes to policing compared with social service or community programming. Within the policing budget I was astounded at how little goes to crime prevention. Something does seem wrong. I'm so glad our town is looking at this."

Among respondents who named no racial or marginalized identity, there was a diversity of perspectives and experiences shared with us. The strongest themes among unidentified people was that their experiences with police were minimal and positive or that they had called the police and felt that the police handled things in a satisfactory manner. Others shared a fear about police taking on too many support roles in our community, to the detriment of the officers, the community, and the people struggling. Some respondents shared dis-ease or fear around police. A few unidentified respondents shared that policing was systemically racist, or that they had significant negative experiences with police.

Several respondents also shared that they felt policing was ineffective for substance use and the problems they associated with it. Much like white respondents, a theme that was less strong but notable was a desire for police to be harsher on drug users and dealers. Many wished someone (the police) would "deal with the drug addicts." How this would function was often left unsaid, or sometimes specified as removing drug use and users from visible public life or incarcerating them seemingly indefinitely.

"I've never been the focus of police interaction, merely been nearby when someone else has, nothing was done inappropriately by officers with me present."

"Policing is systemically racist and harmful, no matter the place/size of town."

"The police don't police the drug addicts."

"The Brattleboro police chief and most of the cops should be dark-skinned Black women -- pay enough to attract them -- place help-wanted ads in [more diverse communities]."

"The police in Brattleboro seem to be responsive, personable and professional. Not always a fan of some of the younger state police officers - can be overly excitable and escalate versus calm situations."

"Sending a person to jail is not very often the proper solution."

Experiences With the Mental Health System

Less respondents with significant lived experience shared experiences with the mental health system than those who shared about policing. As one respondent with significant experience in psych institutions shared,

> **"Our experiences often happen behind closed doors. We aren't even allowed to have our phones to record it. So it's hard for people to see what happens to us."**

We will share themes among total respondents first, and then prioritize sharing information from neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and mad people first, and then share short breakdowns from other populations in the community.

Among total respondents, the strongest themes in responses about the mental health system were that it was a threat to the respondent, that the current system was inadequate or ineffective, or the need to remove police and policing from mental health. Other strong themes were that involuntary support caused harm and that truly voluntary support was necessary for healing. Other themes were that the person experienced treatment at The Retreat that caused harm or trauma, that Emergency Department staff were ineffective or harmful during mental health stays, and a need for greater accountability or regulation in mental health interventions and treatment. Many community members named the need for more support for those in emotional or psychic distress.

Among neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and mad respondents, there were many experiences shared with us. Concerns with feeling like the mental health system and crisis supports (as they currently operate) are unsafe options and fearing police involvement and psychiatric incarceration/forced hospitalizations/confinement in hospitals were themes.

One of the most concerning themes in this report is that some respondents named their experiences in the local mental health system as torture, particularly around experiences of coercion, forced drugging, restraint, seclusion, and use of force or violence. Being punished for non compliance in totally non criminal situations, enforcement of mental health warrants, and other carceral responses to non consensus beliefs or extreme or altered states were described by one respondent as the functional criminalization of mental illness. Several respondents shared about the way that locked wards and tiny emergency seclusion rooms functioned nearly identically to jails and cells. Multiple people identified police showing up for wellness checks or as "supports" to agencies or institutions as damaging and threatening. These types of interventions left some respondents unable to use any existing emergency response services due to PTSD responses and terror. Safety was defined by some

respondents as a lack of force or coercion and an ability to consent and have autonomy over one's body.

A theme among those who shared about witnessing and experiencing forced or coerced mental health interventions was that the providers in these situations did not understand the *causal relationship* between the force, coercion and lack of consent patients are faced with and the resistance and the risk or danger that providers perceive. Multiple respondents questioned the way that violence and risk are coded in these settings, and expressed concern and hopelessness about the erasure of systemic violence toward patients.

Some respondents spoke about what caused the distress that led to suicidality and various crises in the first place, which were often the result of threat, violence, or abuse that the person had experienced or a lack of resources to meet basic human needs, including belonging and connection. Relatedly, at least one person talked about population based suicide prevention as more effective than suicide prevention based on calling in authorities that add danger, encouraging a shift to asking about what makes groups of people more suicidal than others and working to right those inequities.

Some people with experience of interventions shared appreciation for individual workers and other patients, who made their experiences more bearable or helpful. The diverse community of people impacted by this system are already organizing alternatives in and outside of official channels, and many of their visions and solutions for a safer community are represented in that section of this report. Many additional quotes about these experiences can be found in Appendix I: Community Listening: Additional Quotes from Most Impacted People.

> **"[Safety means] folks not forcibly medicated on useless and torturous doses of psych drugs. It's the 'modern' hot pokers in the ears. Y'all enforce drugs for innocent things. [ ] This is a serious issue because these drugs can only be resisted through physically fighting for one's life. It's like a real scene from an asylum horror movie. It's often people who've seen past the materialistic nature of society due to hardship or love who experience this. Also there are some bad telephone games or outright evil [mental health] employees that lie in records and push the drugs maybe not knowing they can be psych torture, a viscerally painful qualitative drug suffering. I don't feel safe here knowing professionals do not follow protocol AND from substance users and the mentally ill who are maltreated leading to criminal behavior."**
>
> **"Rules at the Retreat are very arbitrary and restrictive, which makes you go mad."**
>
> **"Our needs for safety are not being discussed- instead it's about how the community needs safety from us. I'm in distress so I must be posing a threat. Fear is often prejudice. The changes that need to happen are really big and cultural."**

“I only have ever reached out in crisis moments to friends, because I don't trust the cops, or social workers/doctors.”

“What groups die by suicide most in Brattleboro, and what are their needs?”

“Once, in the ER after feeling suicidal, the calm and pleasant nature of the staff and doctors made me feel much better.”

Among Black and non-Black specified people of color respondents, themes connected to experiences with the mental health system were that supports connected to policing systems were sometimes experienced as unsafe or inaccessible, that involuntary support caused harm, that voluntary support was needed for healing, and that treatment felt more like punishment than support. Very few respondents named experiencing interventions at The Retreat that they described as torture, and a few named the need for more POC competent support. Some also named that the mental health system itself was biased toward colonial models of healing, and that BIPOC led healing spaces were necessary. Some of these people’s experiences are reflected in the descriptions of experiences of neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and mad people who shared experiences with us, above.

“Finding support as a person of color in Brattleboro is difficult because the people you are supposed to go to for support don't understand you, they don't understand your angle or experience, they are part of the systematic problem. Instead of them being willing to work with you on it they are defensive, they say "I'm not doing that racist stuff" but they are, they are doing it everyday.”

“My [ ] therapist got me sent away [ ] so I kind of hate therapists.”

Among LGBTQIA+ respondents, several community members had experienced significant contact with the mental health system. Many queer and trans respondents also identified as neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and mad and many of their stories are recounted above, and not only about experiences with LGBTQ+ specific care. Themes among queer, trans, non binary, and gender non conforming respondents were similar to those shared above- that the mental health system as it currently operates is often threatening and inadequate, that involuntary interventions caused harm and felt punitive, the need for removing police from mental health welfare checks and other interventions, the need for more accountability, and friends and community providing support when faced with an inadequate, inaccessible, or queer incompetent landscape of care. Another respondent shared concern about high rates of queer suicide attempts, especially among queer and trans people of color. Lack of queer competent non coercive supports were a theme.

“What does it mean that the only designated LGBTQ support space in town is a locked ward?”

“I had a hypomanic episode [ ]. I was sat in various ERs, given a few tests, never talked to as though I actually knew what was happening. I just wanted someone to tell me the stuff running through my head was not important so I could stop thinking about it. I was saddled with [thousands of dollars] of debt for [several] hours sitting in an ER room doing nothing and a psych eval that I did not need. I do not feel any part of the experience was what I would want someone else to go through.”

“People would not just talk to me like a person.”

[What concerns did you have about seeking support?] “I didn't want to get caught up in a system I might never escape. I didn't want to lose control over my life. I reached out to trusted friends and queer family for support. People I knew could help me through that time and shared my values around not seeking an existing system intervention.”

“... I know from experience of people in my life the harm that has at times come to them from police involvement or psychiatric interventions. Forced hospitalization or incarceration, and trauma from those experiences, as well as other negative impacts. I also know people who are like, "I'm glad I went to prison 'cause it got me clean" and stuff like that, which I try to honor when I hear, but also believe that if we had more non-coercive ways to meet needs, folks wouldn't need prison for that stuff!”

“I've been trained to think about the Retreat as what I need for safety when I'm in crisis, and have been cyclically hospitalized. But I've [seen serious abuse in the psych hospital]. The staff openly mock people, and pulled a chair out from someone who was trying to sit down who was "difficult." None of that is safety. They taught me to be afraid of myself. The only good thing was that in the LGBTQ unit I got to meet other queer patients and connecting with them. They became my safety.”

“Inpatient- locked door- cede humanity.”

“I have received support through the retreat many times. My experience has overall been okay. I was put on the LGBT unit, but there were "allies" there who wouldnt use my pronouns.”

“In a safe Brattleboro, I could check into the Retreat and not get abused or assaulted.”

Many white respondents’ experiences are illuminated above, as many of the neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and mad respondents and LGBTQ+ respondents were also white. **Among white respondents who shared no other marginalization,** there were diverse perspectives about community mental health, which ranged from the desire to remove police from mental health to the desire to increase police readiness to participate in mental health interventions. Some advocated for alternative spaces and more access

to voluntary supports, and one named that mental health assessments should be required for every job and every child.

> **"I think we need a safe place other than the Emergency Room for people in a mental health crisis. I think police need more training in dealing with mental health crises."**
>
> **"Less police involvement in mental health/ addiction/ homeless issues. More community-based possibly peer support for these issues."**
>
> **"Stress, depression, anxiety in life was my first experience with reaching out for help. It was very helpful, and I wish I could continue but its way to expensive now."**

Among respondents who named no racial or marginalized identity, some of the largest themes around the mental health system were that it was a threat to the person in some way, that it was not effective, the need to remove police from mental health and/or addiction support, that truly voluntary support would increase access and be more supportive, and that the person witnessed or experienced treatment that they named as harmful at the Emergency Room or the Retreat. One respondent described experiencing physical aggression and force by Brattleboro police while being forcibly taken to the Retreat, where they shared about more force and restraint they experienced, despite not understanding what they had done to deserve such intervention. Respondents shared witnessing or experiencing being taken in shackles and chains to The Retreat, being dragged against the pavement, being placed in a hood, being slammed against vehicles. It was not specified if there were any charges associated with this use of force. Notably, several racially unidentified respondents who shared no other marginalization and did not name having any experience with the mental health system did name a desire for the community to have access to better mental healthcare, and affordable, accessible mental healthcare were features of some unidentified respondents' visions of a safer Brattleboro.

> **"I've watched friends try to seek help with addiction and mental health issues. It's hard to find good support here, and a lot of them have died. It's probably what's been most significant to my experience living in Brattleboro. Losing friends I love. I also [observed first responders and BMH ER] and was really blown away with how folks with mental health and addiction issues were treated by first responders and hospital staff. Shit talking, watching nurses and doctors laugh and smirk at "regulars," cheering on patients being yelled at for being upset. Patients who didn't warrant a room being put on beds in the common space where they were treated like an exhausting spectacle and laughed at. [First responders had] a shitty culture that was not dealing with daily trauma well, exhausted from overworking and being underpaid. The hospital was worse."**
>
> **"I was repeatedly injected with [psychiatric drugs] in the emergency room, restrained**

and secluded, despite my advanced directive indicating that all of these are harmful to me and make every situation much worse."

"A 'show of force' is calculated to instill fear and force a person to behave differently but that is also the definition of assault...to deliberately induce fear by means of threatening behavior! I wish police and ER were made aware of this and held accountable (as they never learn that this ALWAYS makes the situation worse not better.)"

"I was brought to BMH [several years ago] due to a mental health breakdown. I was left alone in a cold room with no blankets and no one checked on me for the 3-4 hours I was there. I was treated like a "none" person and it was very humiliating. I was taken to the Retreat, in handcuffs, by [police] even though I had not been unruly or violent in any way. Terrible way to treat someone with an illness. The Retreat was awful! Dirty, people out of control, no help and was discharged after 48 hours. What a joke!"

"When a family member experienced a mental health crisis a few years ago [ ] we were told the police were the only recourse to find help for them. In fact the police proved to be a threat, they ignored a request to bring a social worker on a call [ ], the family member's crisis was escalated, another [person] was endangered by the police response, and a [criminal] sentence [ ], rather than mental health help, was the result. This was traumatic for several [people] and impacts our interactions with police to this day. On the other hand, it was nowhere near what some people experience."

Experiences with DCF

While a fairly small number of people shared direct experiences with DCF and child protections, responses about DCF were fairly consistent across people with all types of relationships to DCF. **Whether listening to youth who experienced DCF intervention or custody, foster parents, adoptive parents, or parents who had children removed,** people shared about the trauma, lack of accountability, fear, dishonesty, and racism and classism in their DCF experiences. The few people who experienced familial violence as youth that shared with us named that they had nothing positive to say about DCF, that DCF took autonomy away from them and hindered their healing when they experienced harm, and that DCF removal led to significant and sometimes intergenerational trauma. Only one family who shared about DCF shared experiences that did not involve significant trauma due to DCF's actions.

No matter who shared experiences with us, whether they be youth who experienced DCF as children, foster or adoptive parents, or parents who experienced DCF intervention, there were grave concerns about a perceived total lack of accountability and an organizational opacity in the department. When sharing about what needed to change, parents shared many ideas for change.

"I'm afraid that if I ask questions about the process I will be punished. I've been punished for asking questions about informed consent before."

[Shared one parent seeking DCF support around danger to their child,]

"I sought out DCF but I didn't feel like they were helpful… [I found] that some organizations and support systems are not open to recommendations or criticism."

"The affidavit is a picture drawn for the judge- there are zero checks and balances that go into those reports. Therapists/psychiatrists have too much power. The workers read into the situation with racial bias and class bias.One small misunderstanding or misreport from a therapist or other figure in power can cause so much harm. It was many months before my children were returned for a miscommunication, never got any apology. I missed time with them."

"More accountability for when DCF messes up. Advocacy for families. Neighborhood level community supports that are not connected to police or dcf, where folks can get resources, connect with each other, support each other, and have a sense of belonging."

Among respondents who had experienced DCF or child protective system involvement in their youth, though few, none who shared with us shared a single helpful thing about DCF presence in their life. Among people who had experienced DCF intervention as youth, there were concerns about lack of survivor autonomy, a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability, and disproportionate impacts of child protection systems on Black, Brown, queer and trans, immigrant, indigenous, and poor youth.

"I knew that my mind was overwhelmed by what I had experienced, and I knew that I needed help. I went to [a trusted adult] because I thought she was safe, but her status as a mandated reporter actually made me feel unsafe, in the end. ...I had experienced chronic sexual abuse ... Once I shared that information, which I had kept safe for years, I was swept into a DCF investigation, which resulted in me having to attend state-mandated psychotherapy, as well as group therapy for sexual assault survivors. [As a young person] this was the last thing I wanted to do. But I HAD to. So I suffered through it, and it was incredibly damaging because I wasn't ready to process my feelings in this way. Subsequently, I suffered from [ ] chronic depression and anxiety. It took me a long time to heal the psychotherapeutic process for myself. I think there is room for minors to participate in restorative justice processes that don't penalize us for being victims of abuse. [ ] Being placed in mandated therapy as a young teenager was infuriating and isolating. Being placed in a group with other teenagers who had experienced sexual assault that was often more violent than my own was also incredibly isolating, and made me feel shame for thinking of my own abuse as abuse. [ ] I wish I had had an advocate in the DCF system to hear my concerns about my experiences."

> **"DCF workers do not care about you. They pulled me out of perfectly safe homes and put me into worse homes multiple times with no explanation. I have nothing good to say about my time there."**
>
> **"Social services need more training about racism and diversity. Children should not be punished for their parents' poverty. Indigenous people should not be removed and put in white households. The solution isn't to remove people from their own poor community, but to give that community more resources."**

Among parents who experienced DCF intervention and child removal or sought DCF support, several respondents shared the way that DCF's operations hurt, rather than helped, their families heal over time. DCF interventions were not perceived as addressing the roots of struggle in many families and communities. One respondent shared about fear of past DCF involvement in their family being weaponized when trying to access other supports. One parent shared that the only reason DCF gave them for taking their child was that the parent had been in foster care themself and that was considered a risk factor. One person who had been in DCF custody as a young person was terrified to have their own children, for fear that the children would be removed without warning due only to the parent's status as a formerly fostered youth.

DCF's disproportionate removal of children of color was cited as troubling and terrifying to some parents, as were many individual experiences perceived as racist by families. One Black community member who witnessed a DCF intervention shared about how unnecessarily traumatic it was. Several parents of color or parents of children of color named that they felt racism was part of their DCF experience. Around the connections between DCF, racism, and the mental health system, one respondent shared about the coercion and pressure DCF put on them to take psych drugs that caused them severe harm. They named their experience of coercive DCF involved treatment as torturous. Others shared about the power wielded by biased mandatory reporters (namely social workers, including police social workers) to write notes that could trigger an investigation, with zero collaboration or accountability around racial equity or accuracy.

A compelling contradiction emerged when listening to people of color about their experiences with DCF. While many Black parents, other parents of color, and community members named experiencing or witnessing DCF's punitive or harmful actions seemingly targeted at youth and parents of color, multiple parents of color named that in seeking safety for their children, especially from the abuse or neglect of white parents, they were neglected and disbelieved by the court system and DCF.

Survivors shared concerns about being punished for the actions of their abusers. Multiple parents and community members shared that DCF seemed to have a fundamental lack of understanding of trauma. Multiple people across many identities shared that DCF had done so much harm in the community that they wished there were alternative organizations or community based networks of support to reach out to or connect with when concerned about a child, due to fear that DCF would exacerbate instead of support the family's struggles or harm and traumatize the child, especially if the family was poor and/or BIPOC.

Multiple parents named that DCF involvement limited their ability to speak up, ask questions, or attempt to push for accountability, because they had been punished for asking questions before. The terror around DCF's ability to cause permanent separation from their children if they were perceived as difficult prevented some parents from being able to seek accountability. Though few, all attempts at accountability through official channels shared with us were fruitless.

> **"I went to the OBGYN and they had a question about past DCF involvement on their intake form. I wanted to know why. It made me afraid. What will they do with that information? I'm afraid that even if I have a closed case they will take my newborn."**
>
> **"They took my child [ ] hours after they were born and no one would tell me why. There was no warning, no support. The only reason I was given was prior dcf involvement when I was a youth. So they did this to me by putting me in foster care, and now they do it again by putting my kid in foster care, just like they did to me?"**
>
> **"I was forced on medication that I hated for [many] years due to DCF. It was a medical hate crime. I was pressured to do that, even though I knew it wasn't good for me. The doctors, nurses, and screeners are all coercive. They forced me to take drugs, no one should ever be forced to take drugs that don't help them. They are the white system drug dealers who always get away with it. Forced drugging is the new lobotomy. There is real torture happening in the mental health system and at the retreat, and people just accept it."**
>
> **[A parent of color who sought support about danger to their children] "WE shouldn't have to prove our goodness. We shouldn't have to go through hurdles to protect our children. If we were white this wouldn't happen."**
>
> **" It made me feel like DCF isn't even something you can rely on because they did this in such a terrifying manner which totally freaked this little kid out as if [the child was] in jail, [identifying information retracted]. You could just feel the judgement from the doctors and nurses. They were judging her as a mother and it was so sad. It made me never want to deal with DCF in my life because it was so unjust. It seemed so inhumane to me."**

“If you've been sheltered before [for domestic violence or homelessness], they judge that.”

“The way they removed my kids was unnecessarily traumatic. This will have intergenerational effects on our family. Everlasting effects and trauma.”

“I can't even seek out medical care for fear that something will go wrong and they'll judge me for who I dated a long time ago.”

“They do things to kids that they punish those kids for as adults.”

Though few people with experience as foster or adoptive parents shared experiences with us, among those who did**,** only one person had positive experiences to share, and almost everyone shared serious concerns about DCF’s lack of accountability, racism, lack of trauma informed practice, and the negative impacts on the children they cared for.

“I was witness to a DCF and police intervention on behalf of [a] foster child as they were brought into custody. It was incredibly traumatic and scary. I believe a fundamental misunderstanding of trauma allows DCF and the police force to operate in ways that continue to harm rather than help. I am often confronted by professionals in the community who cling to an outdated belief in a punitive system rather than a holistic and supportive one.”

“When [I was] a foster parent, I found the DCF support system to be completely inadequate. I very rarely heard back from workers when asking for help, and when I did hear back from someone it was often with unhelpful or terrible advice. Very few workers appear to be trauma informed. [ ] Most complaints go unanswered, at every level of the DCF political hierarchy. [The respondent shared failed attempts to share concerns with DCF]. To date there is still no whistleblower protection for foster parents in Vermont. The system continues to be punitive rather than supportive, for everyone involved.”

“I have [ ] PTSD trauma kids. police, fire, ambulances, trigger my children. [ ] My kids were foster kids and taken away by police and DCF workers. They have a lot of trauma around it.”

Visions and Solutions

A constant source of hope throughout this project has been returning to the visions of a safer community articulated by so many brilliant, caring, knowledgeable, and dedicated community members. Our community shared so many ideas with us about what safety meant to them, suggestions about resources they wish had been available to them in times of need, organizing and alternative models that are already being built, and visions for the life giving community we want to live in.

The following original poem was shared with us in a public forum about community safety by Gillian Lucero-Love.

"What if Brattleboro was a town where not a single person in need of mental health support was terrified of returning to the Retreat or traumatized by their time inside?

What if Brattleboro was a town where instead of being put away many times against their will people were provided the type of community support that allowed them to stay in their homes, safe in their own beds?

What if in Brattleboro beds were provided to all who don't have them, without judgment on their appearances or past, instead just loving helping hands nd fresh hot meals?

What if in Brattleboro those beds became homes free of charge and the homes that are rented didn't force people into poverty?

What if instead of fearing evictions, we celebrated spaces and community relief for all of whether we are in a pandemic or not because even under "normal" circumstances too many of us still suffer?

What if the people of color in Brattleboro didn't ever have to fear being profiled, targeted, harassed, assaulted or even murdered by the police, because instead of a system built from literal slave catchers, we had community responders made up of all of us?

What if BIPOC in Brattleboro could share their stories of harm without having to experience white denialism, pity, or inaction?

What if Brattleboro was a town where the BIPOC were equal in all places of power and had just as much say as white people if not more in making decisions and implementing policies that impact us all?

What if differently abled people didn't have to speak up when they aren't granted equal access to buildings, places, and spaces because they never had those experiences, and instead were always considered so they'd always be included and safe?

What if families weren't torn apart through a system that is punitive and instead every parent and child in need of support, received it, compassionately, in a form that honored the good in them and helped bring that out until together the family thrived?

What if the people of Brattleboro recognized that harm is more than the extreme, brute violence we see depicted across the nation and in the ways that so many deny exist here,

What if the town of Brattleboro accepted, honored, and celebrated people of all identities, whether they understood them or not?

What if no child or adult had to fear sharing their gender identity or their rejection of the gender binary because they know that they would still be loved and welcomed for who they are?

What if no child or adult had to live in shame and guilt for being attracted to anyone other than the opposite sex? Because they knew that their family, loved ones, and even the strangers in Brattleboro will accept and love them just the same!

What if the children of color in Brattleboro got to learn about their culture, their heritage, their language, their food from people who share in their identities instead of white people who had the privilege of claiming ownership of a culture that was robbed or denied of those youth?

What if Brattleboro was a town that made everyone feel at home, because we all are heard, loved, honored, and cherished.

What if"

Among Black respondents, the strongest theme in visioning a safer future is a vision of Brattleboro free from systemic racism. To many Black respondents, a safer Brattleboro means more people acknowledging the degree to which racism impacts people of color in all aspects of life. Many visions and solutions for more safety for Black respondents are predicated on first acknowledging, as a larger community, the depth and breadth of racial harm they experience in this predominantly white community and area, in violent encounters and everyday actions, and reckoning with that harm.

Other strong themes in Black visions for a safer future included financial support for Black-led organizations and projects, an end to police racism, and increased accountability for police, DCF, mental health and social service organizations, downtown businesses, schools, and the Selectboard. The Selectboard and local government listening to Black voices (in this report and beyond) and shifting power toward Black-led visions and organizing were themes among a community who named over and over again in our listening that the current systems purporting to uphold safety actually cause many Black residents great harm. There were many people who shared the desire for the BIPOC community to hold far greater power in decisions that impact their community disproportionately. People shared visions of a world that relies less on control and enforcement and more on resource shifting and care, and some respondents felt confident that this world awaits on the other side of reckoning, sitting with the deeply uncomfortable truths of racism shared here and beyond, and learning from communities who have never been able to safely rely on policing about how to take care of each other outside of systems of punishment. Other themes respondents shared were moving actively toward an end to addiction, poverty, and violence by supporting those communities without coercion and control.

Some of their visions are also represented elsewhere, because Black people hold many intersecting identities. Additional quotes about Black visions for a safer community can be found among many voices in Appendix I: Community Listening: Additional Quotes from Most Impacted People.

"A Brattleboro free from systemic racism, bigotry, making sure that POC specifically black people are protected under the same laws and protections as white folx are… but you don't see that in the state of VT or Brattleboro or the surrounding areas. They would have to be accountable for all the systemic racism that people throughout the years that people have had to endure. That needs to be taken care of… other than that there won't be a safe Brattleboro because you aren't including the marginalized people. One that wouldnt have any kind of discrimination against any marginalized people."

"[We need] really well resourced and healthy black organizations with decision making power in our community."

"Safe spaces all through downtown where you got to get support, voice your opinion, etc. run by people trained in trauma healing and resolution who can truly hold space for you and also do the leg work of your voice being heard in a real way."

"Make programs for black and brown people to express their opinions about schools, how kids are treated, places where we can express our mind. These people need to sit down with us to see what they can do WITH us. Not just what they want and what they say but what we actually want."

"It would look like not having police officers and other people in charge of our safety who are not taking care of themselves… who have racist bias, who support beliefs that are against the well being and safety of the community and especially the people who are most impacted by carceral systems like black people, poor people, immigrants, etc."

Among non-Black specified people of color, many respondents shared visions for a safer community, some of which are shared under other identifiers which the respondents used to identify themselves. Strong themes were supporting BIPOC led efforts and programs, ending police racism, defunding the police and investing in prevention and alternatives, working toward police abolition, creating alternative, voluntary supports for mental health as alternatives to The ER and The Retreat, greater accountability, and capacity building for the community to build skills in de escalation and support.

"More services, less police. Also, no police with guns. Guns should only be used or worn by a selective few. Also, police should have independent reviewers for alleged misconduct/criminal activity against [the] community; and investigation should be made public once concluded."

"A place where homelessness is abolished by having more shelters and life coaches"

"Safety means that the entire community ensures people's physical, mental, and emotional needs are met and supported. That people of all identities and backgrounds can exist in the same space without fear of being targeted, harassed, assaulted, or

> **killed by anyone else in the community. Safety means personal autonomy and collective care."**

More visions for our community were shared in Appendix H: Community Listening: Public Forum Public Comment Transcripts.

Among LGBTQIA+ community members who shared with us, housing for all, food for all, and meeting basic needs were some of the strongest themes in visions for a safer community. Another strong theme was that a safer community would feature supports decoupled from policing that did not use coercion or force, that were based in organic support networks, that empowered people to support one another in distress or conflict. For some respondents, this included lines to call instead of police for emotional distress that don't threaten arrest or institutionalization for talk about suicide, and truly voluntary alternatives to the Retreat and the ER. LGBTQ+ respondents envisioned a community that was much closer to ending abuse and racism and homophobia and transphobia. Among queer and trans respondents there was a theme in the vision of reduced roles and funding of policing, more access to conflict mediation and restorative justice, more support of and access to de escalation skill building, and resourcing neighborhoods, friend groups, or community groups to better support each other.

> **"A totally safe Brattleboro would have non-punitive networks of support and restorative justice. People would all have the resources they needed to be safe, fed, housed, educated, and to access public spaces. Police would be phased out over time. Drug users and people experiencing homelessness/mental illness would not be given opportunities for support and getting their needs met instead of being policed for existing in public."**
>
> **"More support for circles of friends [to support one another in crisis outside of official systems]. More resources (money!) to support everyone having access to those kinds of supports. I wish that was more of a formal thing that everyone could have access to."**
>
> **"Open offices for community based safety /restorative justice works with walk-in hours. More public spaces to exist for free, like the library. And more bike lanes, too."**
>
> **"Everyone has enough food to eat, a place to live, enough money to meet their non-food or non-housing needs, no one is afraid of how much it will cost to go to the doctor, people are able to be downtown and co-exist without conflict. Or if there is conflict, they are able to resolve it restoratively with the support of community experts."**

Neuro Divergent, Psychiatrically Labeled, Psychiatrically Disabled, and Mad Respondents shared many visions for a safer community, some of which are also represented among other responses. Some

themes included ending the violence experienced in the mental health system, people's basic needs met without struggle, alternative supports that won't call the police, truly voluntary respite and alternative crisis spaces, police abolition, and expanding existing organizing efforts to hold institutions accountable and follow the leadership of this community in learning about how to best support them.

> **[What resource do you wish had been there when you needed support?] "A helpline run by queer folks, trained in de-escelation, and crisis intervention. The line would be confidential, and the cops would not be called unless I EXPLICITLY asked. I would have called them instead of other vulnerable friends, and sought out support."**
>
> **"Training for community members in connection and support in tough situations that doesn't perpetuate pathology and funnel people into carceral systems. This could be intentional peer support, ecpr, or something new."**
>
> **"Mobile peer support/human response connected to dispatch."**
>
> **"Freak out/drop in space 24/7."**
>
> **"Peer respite similar to Afiya in Northampton."**
>
> **"Change in state statute definition of "person in need of treatment" to exclude threats of suicide."**
>
> **"Advocates always optionally available for when people interact with mental health system, police, DCF."**
>
> **"Population based suicide prevention- what groups die by suicide most in Brattleboro and what are their needs?"**
>
> **"Alternatives to Suicide" groups, Death Cafes."**
>
> **"Grants and support for local people to provide CEU trainings for medical professionals, mental health professionals, teachers, etc. on competencies with groups of people who regularly experience harm in those systems- people who are Black, trans, intersex, fat, disabled, homeless, etc."**
>
> **"Ordinance(s) that would limit the amount or type of restraint, seclusion, forced drugging used at the retreat and BMH. Something similar was attempted in Berkeley in the 80s to ban electroshock."**
>
> **"Affordable housing!"**
>
> **"Rotating neighborhood on-call support for personal or family crisis, maybe organized through time trade and financially supported by the town. Support could include listening, child or pet care during an emergency, giving a ride when a car breaks down, etc."**
>
> **"Continuation of the community safety review committee."**

“Increased support for civic engagement from a wider range of people: increased pay for Selectboardselectboard members, childcare during town meetings, meals provided when possible, chat open, etc.”

Persons with disabilities **who did not specify psychiatric disability** shared many visions for a safer community, some of which are also represented among other responses.

“Happiness. Equity. Disability equality for deaf. Arts programs and movies accurately captioned. More happy lower income people. Equity for all. Healthcare and good wages for all.”

“Less drug usage. The ability to walk downtown and not being asked for money or drugs. Safer housing for low-income people/families.”

“Safety to me means that there are community members ready to help people with disabilities with their day to day tasks. It means that people do not expect you to provide a diagnosis to believe you or help you.”

“Not feeling like in order to care for (or protect) myself I need to ignore the needs of others. & Feeling like I have a range of GOOD options to turn to when help is needed for myself or others.”

Parents of children with disabilities also shared suggestions for a safer community, as well.

“Crosswalks. More actual sidewalks and a mandate to keep them clear. ADA compliance. Not having to walk in the street with a wheelchair or stroller. Having a safe place to cross the street. An ordinance requiring people to keep their sidewalks clear.”

“Inclusive. Not feeling afraid or judged - Having community trained in how to communicate with someone like my son… I wish there had been a hotline I could have called for help when I needed help with my son. Someone to help us de-esculate...keep us safe…”

One identified sex worker shared their vision of a safer Brattleboro, some of which is also shared elsewhere.

“A safe Brattleboro would have a strip club, or a store front for sex workers to work out of. A safe Brattleboro to me looks like infrastructure, and accountability on behalf of the community, to meet the needs of everyone in town. A safe Brattleboro is not free of stigma, of hate, etc, but it has the resources to safeguard those most impacted by those things.”

Very few **self identified drug users or people in recovery** shared their ideas for a safer community, which are also represented elsewhere, as drug users hold many identities.

"A totally safe Brattleboro would be free of cops, and patrol. It would be filled with sharps disposal containers, and safer injection sites. A totally safe Brattleboro would have vending machines stocked with free needles, alcohol swabs, tourniquets, pipe screens, etc."

"Safety to me means that I know I have somewhere to go when I am in crisis, other than the police, or fire dept. because they are so intertwined. It means that I know when I walk home alone at night, that there are folks nearby who will assist me if I need. It means that if I need to use, I am not using alone, and that those around me are trained in overdose response. It means that people believe me when I express harm was caused, and that people hold accountability amongst themselves and their communities to engage in restorative justice, instead of exiling either party. It means that we believe the survivor, and listen to them before engaging the perp. It means that every marginalized person in this town is provided with mace or a taser if they cannot afford it."

Some survivors of sexual or domestic violence shared their visions of a safer community with us.

"Having conversations with police to find solutions to police interactions that some people have found too aggressive."

Several youth, including queer and trans youth, youth of color, and DCF involved youth shared their visions for a safer Brattleboro with us.

"More acceptance of problems and actually working through them instead of denying them."

"More people of color, youth, and queer people in positions of leadership in the town and in all organizations, including art organizations."

"It would be a place where everyone is supported and has enough money, food, water, housing, etc. and no one would have to steal things in order to survive because I think that if we give everyone what they need then no one would have to do bad things to survive. In Holland, in the jail systems, they help the prisoners with whatever's going on with them and help them get through whatever they did to be in jail so the number of people who go back into society and commit more crimes is way less than here where we just punish people. I think that a safe Brattleboro would just be a place where everyone has what they need and everyone is free to be themselves without having to worry about what might happen."

"An education system that supports queer and trans BIPOC experiences. The school having crisis responders and people trained in de-escalation and no school resource officer."

"Businesses held accountable for how they treat QTBIPOC workers and customers."

Several people who had experienced DCF involvement (as youth or parents, including families of origin, foster parents, and adoptive parents) shared visions for a safer community.

> **"Being asked this is not possible to answer and very painful. Its unimaginable when you've experienced so much harm."**
>
> **"More supports and less punishment. More accountability for when DCF messes up. More POC living in the community. White supremacy ended. A statewide ombudsman office for families to provide accountability and advocacy. Neighborhood level community supports that are not connected to police or DCF and won't report things to them, where folks can get resources, connect with each other, have a sense of belonging. NOT neighborhood watch, NOT calling the cops on each other when we are struggling. People finally hearing our pain. People understanding that The Retreat tortures people- the definition of torture is happening down the road from you right this minute."**
>
> **"Community supports outside of the system."**
>
> **"We need more supports that are not DCF or the Police or Crisis for when people are struggling. We need to shift resources into families who have been impacted by DCF for generations- they pay foster families to take care of kids and then punish families for poverty. It makes no sense. We need immediately available voluntary drug treatment and support that's not in a locked mental prison. We need resources that keep people out of the DCF system- volunteer childcare for people struggling, more support for families that doesn't come from DCF. Alternative places to call that won't get you locked up. Community supports for people in distress that aren't forced and won't escalate into being thrown in a jail or a mental prison where they torture people or treatment that you can't even get into and doesn't always work. We need accountability.**"

Among white respondents, there were many themes that emerged in visions for a safer community. These included housing for all, basic needs met without struggle, access to good quality mental health care and addiction support, walk streets without fear, town prioritize prevention over police, food support, resources to call instead of police, medicine, no violence, less poor people in public life, mutual aid, child care, no police for drugs, remove police from mental health, all support truly voluntary, lines to call for help with no fear of being locked up for mental health/addiction/poverty, disarm, defund, abolish, increased accountability, alternatives, alternatives to police for mental health and other every day non criminal matters, access to conflict mediation/restorative justice/non punitive support, increased capacity for de-escalators/alternatives to police (on beat, on call).

“People would feel secure-econimically, physically, emotionally. There would be jobs available that paid a livable wage, landlords would provide clean and safe apartments, people would know and trust their neighbors and other people in the community”

“I'm not sure, but it should include mental health access, sexual behavior education, more active and attractive and usable public spaces, more access to community programming in more neighborhoods, and better sidewalks and transportation for non-car users. There would be public art installations that would help us get to know our neighbors - especially those who might be assumed to be "dangerous." And there'd be more visibility and administrative support for neighborhood mutual aid organizations. Police would be mostly "civilian" de-escalation workers and would be leaders in making us feel safe with each other - perhaps by leading or facilitating some of the above activities. Restorative justice would be the key program for EVERYONE involved in harm, and community service would be a preferred "punishment." Economic justice would be ensured in every altercation, and existing economic safety nets would be more easily accessible for those who need them. The community would celebrate our connectivity and love for each other - and would not be constantly commenting about our fear of each other.”

“People can meet their physical needs (food, clothing, shelter, bathroom, health, and dignity) and avoid danger (police force, white supremacy, economic oppression, sexual assault)”

“A safe Brattleboro, to me, looks like town funds being directed to non-profit organizations to ensure that folks in need of housing, mental/emotional/physical health support are having their needs met as a priority. It looks like a dis-arming of and a redistribution of funds from the Brattleboro Police Department.”

Among respondents who named no racial or marginalized identity shared many ideas about a safer community, many themes emerged in visions of a safer community. Many respondents wanted access to housing for all and an end to homelessness, less people experiencing addiction, people ‘s basic needs met without struggle, food supports that help us end hunger, access to immediately available and accessible mental health care, access to addiction supports, and good jobs.

Respondents named that in a safer community, everyone would have freedom of movement without risk of harm. Some respondents who shared no racial identifiers or marginalization wanted more police presence, some wanted less or no police presence, several wanted the community to have a better handle on crime and break ins, and many wanted us to fund alternatives and prevention.

“Housing for all those experiencing homelessness, safe injection sites, fully accessible free clinics, persons trained in deescalation techniques walking the beat, continued free food and clothing programs, and a comprehensive plan for panhandling.”

“E911 should be able to triage and send out services other than just the police or the police with some other provider to address a crisis with a person or a child.”

“to create a downtown that is safe and accepting and accessible for everyone, no exceptions. A brattleboro that is embracing, not negatively impacting minority communities or merely tolerating them.”

Organizational Listening

What We Heard from Community Organizations

Methodology and Contacts

In addition to the experiences, wisdom, and needs that we heard from so many individual members of our community, we had 39 unique responses to our de-identified online survey for folks working in community safety and support organizations, representing workers in at least 22 local organizations, and had direct conversations with workers from about 25 community support organizations. These conversations were sometimes one on one and sometimes in groups, sometimes brief and sometimes long, and included many people in key leadership positions as well as many direct support workers. The questions that these conversations explored were collaboratively designed with the Community Safety Review Committee, who provided excellent questions, feedback, and accountability to this piece of the work. We continued to work throughout our process to center those impacted by these systems, while collaborating with those inside of them to understand more about the complex picture of Brattleboro as it currently functions We asked questions that illuminated some of the functions of the official safety supports available in the community and the ways that those working inside these systems observed them to be providing safety or adding harm. We also observed some areas of apparent alignment or contradiction with others in the system and where there appeared to be some coherence or dissonance with the other areas of learning in the review (in What We Heard from Community Members and What We Learned from the Police Department). The organizational listening information helped us assess points of alignment and dissonance that informed the way that we tailored recommendations to fit our community.

Our conversations were based on these questions co-developed with the Community Safety Review Committee:

- What’s your role?
- What would a totally safe Brattleboro look like to you?

- What are the biggest threats to the people you support, serve, or organize?
- What is our community already doing well to support community safety?
- What part of the web of community safety is your org's responsibility?
- Who are your collaborators? What kinds of collaboration do you do within the community?
- What are limits to collaboration?
- Are there orgs, projects, or services you won't work with or call for support? If so, why?
- What biases (conscious or unconscious) do you recognize in your system/org?
- What inequity or inequality do you recognize in your system/org?
- How are biases being addressed? In what ways aren't they being addressed?
- Have you had any training that is powerful around bias or equity? What was it like?
- What trainings do you wish that everyone working in your org/field could have to reduce bias, increase equity, or increase positive safety outcomes for marginalized people in our community?
- De-identify please: What's an example of a success within your work re: safety, danger, harm?
- Analysis: Did success happen because of the way the system is designed or despite how the system is designed?
- De-identify please: What's an example of a failure within your work re: safety, danger, harm?
- Analysis: Did this failure happen because of the way the system is designed or despite how the system is designed?
- What harm, if any, is added into the situation by the system/responses that you see?
- Are there gaps in the web of community safety or areas of safety response that need improvement?
- What are barriers to people getting their safety needs met?
- What are resources that aren't well known? Other than 211, what resources should people know about, especially during this pandemic?
- In an ideal world, if given the resources, what would you add to your org? What would you add outside of your org?
- Are there any responses to difficult situations/dangerous situations/crisis situations that you are excited about?
- What cultural changes/changes in the community would make your job obsolete?
- What is your vision for a safer Brattleboro? You have permission to imagine!
- Anything else you'd like to share with us?

The generous and candid answers to these questions helped us gain insight into some of the other questions that emerged, as well; what does policing and safety response in Brattleboro currently look like? What does safety in Brattleboro currently look/feel like? What does harm in Brattleboro currently look/feel like? The information provided in this listening area includes mostly raw quotes and some analysis.

Limitations

COVID-19 and a short timeline were the strongest limits to this work. We met exclusively over the phone or through video chats due to the pandemic. Given that this portion of the listening happened in just over one month, we were impressed with how many listening opportunities we created. Having said that, there are many key players working in community organizations that we did not speak with. Another limit to this listening was fear. Many organizational respondents shared that they felt unable to share feedback about policing and DCF particularly due to the power that these organizations hold over the lives of the clients of many organizations in the community.

Further listening work to learn more deeply about specific work in the community may be compelled by the new questions that emerged from this initial, broad listening attempt. Ongoing listening may also serve ongoing work to create more safety for all of our community and to increase accountability, which we believe is compelled by our findings. To our knowledge, this is the first time an effort like this has occurred in Brattleboro in recent memory, and it is to be expected that this process would create many, many new questions in its wake. We hope that the inevitable questions created by the space around this listening will serve as a launch pad for continued necessary work, and not as a dead end.

Presentation

We will summarize this listening information below about policing and the legal system, the mental health system, and the child protection system, by field. We will begin by defining the field, present perspectives shared from workers within the field, and then present perspectives from those working in other or adjacent fields about the field in question. We will then share other perspectives that focus on community needs and safety that do not focus on policing, the mental health system, and the child protection system.

We will not be presenting information by a specific organization or department, and we will not be sharing information that we believe to be identifying. There will be some summary analysis, and otherwise we will present de identified quotes that will remain fairly decontextualized.

Anonymity

While much of the short assessments are clearly supported by the accompanying quotes, some summary analysis may appear somewhat under-supported. As was also true of the Community Listening information, much of what we heard is totally unshareable in its direct form or by inference due to risks

to people supported by these organizations, workers, and our commitment to confidentiality and anonymity. Especially in a community of this size, the positionality of organizational respondents is often very unique, relevant to their observations, and might immediately identify them to anyone working in proximity to their work. For some readers, the lack of named sources may impact the weight of this information as compared to other information in the report. For others, the strong tradition of the value of an unnamed source who is able to share freely is not a deterrent to integrating this information. It is also notable that several organizational respondents we spoke with shared fear of expressing their beliefs about policing and the criminal legal system, the mental health system, or DCF publicly due to concerns about the negative or punitive consequences this could have on their career, organization, or more commonly and seriously on the vulnerable people they support. We believe that the methodology that we proposed and used created access for many many people who said that they could never speak on the record about these pressing community concerns.

What We Heard from Community Organizations about Police

Among those working inside the most directly carceral systems of Brattleboro (which here include law enforcement, the court system, and the Department of Corrections), there was acknowledgement that there is already some movement in reassessing the role of policing in our community. There were mentions of the lack of accountability these systems have, including the inefficacy of the CPCC, and the many limits to the roles of police or the court in solving the root causes of violence, danger, harm, addiction, mental illness or emotional distress, homelessness, and poverty. Many spoke about the ways that policing and prisons cause harm. No one from these systems advocated increasing the reach of these systems. **(It is of note that no one in these systems suggested shifting budgets, just roles, elsewhere.)** Many noted myriad challenges in deciding where to go from here, while other suggestions about where to go next were clear.

These are some de-identified perspectives shared with us by people working directly inside of our community's carceral systems about how policing and interconnected systems are functioning in Brattleboro.

> **"Our systems do not function effectively. Jail is a core part of the system but after millenia of civilization one would think we would have developed better solutions to violence and disregard for the safety of others. Vermont's mental health care system and the intersection between that system and the criminal justice system are totally broken. Substance abuse should be addressed as a treatment rather than a criminal justice issue."**

"[The CPCC] don't provide recommendations to the Police. There is a lot of work the CPCC could do but it just doesn't happen."

"[ ] I do not believe safety can be legislated. It takes a full cultural shift, meaning combining policy change and people needing to do work within themselves to let go of violent tendencies and not pass along violent tendencies to people in their family, toward anti-violence and all the anti's (anti-racism; anti-sexism; etc.)"

"Treating substance abuse as a criminal justice issue damages the fabric of the community."

"We would need a foundational cultural shift for there to be someone else to respond [to crises], or for people to not call the police right away."

"I do not see bias adversely impacting our work."

"[Many people] would be very happy to have mental health wellness checks handled by different people, but the economic reality is that the police are the ones that are hired 24/7."

"Crisis response [should stay] intact for [Domestic Violence] even if [our community] defunds the police."

People who work in other fields shared many things with us about the function and impact of policing and the courts in our community. Very few people working in community organizations thought that increased police presence on the streets or in mental health interventions or addiction supports would help Brattleboro, or the people they support, be safer. Many were grateful for the department's willingness to collaborate and their ongoing work to resist a push from some community members to use police to punish those in poverty and who experience addiction and mental health challenges. Almost all professionals we spoke to discussed the immediate need to reduce the scope of policing, the reach of police into social services, and the size of the larger prison industrial complex police function inside. **While otherwise fairly aligned with carceral system workers about the benefits of reducing the scope of policing and prisons, the budgetary and strategic planning aspects of the transition away from carceral responses were discussed in far greater detail by workers in other social services.** The need to reinvest police budgets into other community based supports had strong advocates in many organizations and fields. There were multiple concerns shared, some too identifiable to share specifically, about the ineffectiveness of the police social worker program. Some workers had concerns about police force and violence or inequity they witnessed the police enact, a lack of accountability they observed, and a lack of openness of some in the department to address concerns brought to them. Some were grateful that the department was so open to collaboration, even when discussing the slow, systemic, societal need to reduce formal collaborations and decouple support from policing.

Below are quotes from people who work in mental health, housing, violence response, restorative justice, social justice, and other community support systems about police, policing, the courts, DOC, and their work. These quotes represent top leadership through custodial workers and every level in between.

“The police social worker program is ineffective. The money should go elsewhere. It doesn't help in the places where people are most likely to be harmed or killed- they don't go instead of police to anything potentially "dangerous". It doesn't reduce the amount that PD or DCF are involved, which is what people need. It functions as an extension of law enforcement. The legislature wants to increase it, which is too bad. If they saw how it was really working in departments across the area, I don’t think they’d want it to expand. The primary function of embedded social workers is warm referrals. There has to be a better way to do that.”

“Definitely need way more diversity in, and access to, decision-making committees and oversight bodies for police, no question. And from within whatever community policing model different localities may choose, we need more sustained deep-dive conversations about social justice, bias, harm-reduction, restorative avenues, etc.”

“Restorative justice should be woven into every level of our institutions and support systems. If they were, everything would look different. Moving out of a mindset of punishment and harm to handle problems into a mindset of care is the only way the cycles of harm will stop. The police have to stop retraumatizing themselves through their work- they have to connect to themselves and they can't do that while armed and seeing their community as a threat.”

“Incarceration and policing are not the solution.”

“White supremacist culture impacts all of us. It is in the fabric of how our institutions are run. All aspects of how we run our society need to shift if we are going to create safety. People's fear of communication and disinterest in building better communication and relationship skills cause huge huge problems and violence. The presence of weapons on routine business, like in community meetings, where everyone else present in a professional capacity is unarmed, makes it hard to understand why weapons are needed so often. We are all doing our jobs without it- if the police can't disarm for meetings, what does that say about the lens they hold about safety and danger? What does it say about how safe people can feel with them? It's such a low bar, and it shows that there's not a true curiosity or openness to what might be different. We need to be curious about what else could work.”

“[A safer community would have] More neighborhood level capacity building around conflict and alternatives to policing and more support for people upon reentry from incarceration.”

“Removing school resource officers seems like a great and easy place to start.”

What We Heard from Community Organizations about Mental Health

Among those working inside the mental health system (which here includes HCRS, The Retreat, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital's Emergency Department, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors, The Hive Mutual Support Group, private therapists and prescribers), there are many areas of alignment about strengths and areas that need improvement. Regarding mental health supports and interventions, many people identified that police were not a safe or appropriate solution for mental health welfare checks or interventions, that the locked wards of The Retreat function as a form of incarceration, and that removing force, coercion, and criminalization of distress are necessary for the safety of the community. Many professionals and institutions are already looking critically at the role of police crisis response and forced hospitalization and incarceration as responses to mental health struggle, emotional distress, or extreme states. Many people we spoke with who work in the mental health field, in direct support and leadership, want to remove police from these interventions over time.

Many people agree that there is a need for more voluntary supports in the community, including alternatives to The Retreat and The ER that function less coercively than those spaces. People from multiple organizations working on mental health and substance use talked about models like Intentional Peer Support as helpful to moving their process forward to increase support, decrease a focus on liability, pathology, and screening, meet people's actual stated needs, or think critically about the potential harms of force and coercion. Alternative models for respite beds and crisis response were shared generously with us by content experts with lived experience of psychiatric harm, which you will see in Appendix F. There is already some community organizing work happening to build up grassroots networks of outside-the-system supports for those who don't feel like they can safely access the official supports in our community, none of which are currently truly voluntary.

There were also serious concerns shared by mental health professionals about the patient conditions and treatment inside of The Retreat (and to a lesser extent The BMH ER), which is coherent with our listening to community members who have been hospitalized in those spaces. The concerns shared by workers in the mental health system were sometimes more also about worker safety, though perspectives shared often contained both concerns. At times, some professionals reproduced stigmatizing and harmful narratives about the people these systems are supposed to help, including that people in emotional struggle are taking resources away from people with actual health concerns, character judgements based on specific diagnostic labels, and minimization of the potential harms caused by forced injections, coercive practices, and other interventions. Workers named a lack of accountability in inpatient settings that was strong and concerning. We cannot share much of those conversations directly due to anonymity and risk, but the severity of concern for patient and worker safety may compel further investigation. There were also many people who work in these systems actively trying to raise awareness about these problems and working to find solutions, often in collaboration with content experts with lived experience.

These are some perspectives shared with us by those working in the mental health system about that system.

“[We need] openness to learning about the ways systems harm those they wish to support.”

“The thing that needs to change in a mental health emergency is everyone except the person in crisis.”

“[The biggest threats to the people I support are] The police; contact with carceral systems including criminal justice & prison systems, psychiatric incarceration, and the Western medical model of diagnostic labeling; school-to-prison pipeline; intergenerational trauma; intergenerational poverty; racism.”

“We need responses that are separate from law enforcement. If social struggle is not criminal, we need to remove law enforcement from the response. What can we take back from policing? Welfare checks? Street outreach? There's no reason police need to be the ones holding that. [We need a] better version of a police review committee. [We need] Wellness checks that don't involve policing or threat of incarceration. [We need] Restorative strategies on every level.”

“People need more spaces for belonging and connection long before the crisis moment. When there aren't opportunities to connect and feel belonging, there is a high risk of overdose death, suicide, judgement, discrimination.”

“[A totally safe community would look like] Food security, housing security, people feel welcomed everywhere, people are not policed. The community is already largely safe for white, homed people. My neighborhood is not policed, we have resources- we need that for everybody. People making their own decisions about treatment and their life. People free from coercion, incarceration, and hospitalization which is really incarceration. Care without trauma. No police in mental health and substance use care. Other kinds of interventions led by peer support or most impacted people. A safe injection site.”

“No one should have to wait for 80 hours in the emergency room for mental health care. Patients wait for 72 hours for DMH to talk in circles. [The hospital loses] beds that should be for other people who are waiting in the waiting room, waiting to die, while all care goes to de escalating situations. It's lose lose lose.”

“Calling for help is like playing Russian roulette. It's not good, not good at all.”

“Collaboration with grassroots organizations and those which fall outside the traditional model of mental health services; non-hospital and non-Retreat based space for people experiencing suicidality and self harm; more resources for peer support projects [which already exist], more widespread training in non-traditional models of mental health support, like Intentional Peer Support.”

“Locked wards expose people to risk, force people into a situation that is harmful. They are physically detained, they give up all their rights- all of this adds trauma. They're exposed to behaviors from other patients and staff that can be traumatizing. People lose civil rights in this situation. Mental health hospitals are jails.”

"[HCRS Crisis Team] adds harm. They have a negative impact. LNH's are not ok. People's mental health crises are not criminal but are criminalized by crisis response and the threat of forced hospitalization, which is not appropriate. The amount of seclusions and restraints that happen at The Retreat are a problem. If you have a crisis, the options are ER, Retreat, or jail. What has been solved when you get out? What happens next? These interventions impact employment, and cause a loss of sense of self and autonomy. The costs on a life are high… We need to have a greater awareness of what is actually harmful about the ways we're responding. We get that from listening to people who have been through the system and acknowledging the inadvertent harm, and making changes so our responses are less harmful."

"To be honest, folks on the ground [ ] starting to presume there are nefarious political purposes for allowing what's happening at The Retreat to continue unabated. The decline there is just not to be believed. Travel nurses who come there, without exception, talk about being horrified at the way the place is run compared with all of the other hospitals they have been to."

"[Our community needs] a middle ground space like Alyssum or Soteria. Spaces that are not a locked psych ward but are run in a more progressive way, that folks have easier access to."

"There used to be more out patient programs that helped people identify when they needed to get help prior to it becoming a mental health emergency. Over the years, I've watched budgets decline cutting programs. This has lead to increased emergencies & overall more dangerous outcomes. Pts are more acute when they come in leading to unsafe outcomes for both staff dealing with these emergencies & patient outcomes. This includes other pts who end up with these more dangerous admits."

What We Heard from Community Organizations about Mental Health

Many workers in other fields agree that police involvement in mental health interventions and other roles needs to be reduced. Workers in other fields largely aligned with those in the mental health system about adding more community supports and reducing force and coercion. Concerns were shared by workers in many fields about many aspects of The Retreat.

"I've witnessed the police serve a mental health warrant and 5 minutes into talking with the client, the police forcibly removed [the person] into a police car."

"[The gaps in community support are] crisis response is a significant one. Gaps in family support- a lot of families don't have natural support, they just need help. Family support is like another type of crisis support that doesn't exist. The supports that do exist aren't creative and flexible enough. We need to be looking at very tangible needs that families face. We have to be careful about systemizing responses and causing the same harm again."

"Inadequate housing stock coupled with insufficient social and financial support for those that cannot support themselves. Adequate cultural understanding for what it means to suffer with addiction and not be able to support oneself. Lack of adequate health care including mental and dental. Physical and mental dangers created by the criminalization of addiction including the dangers of a black market system and police intervention. The physical and mental trauma implications of traumas sustained from living in a society that values human life by one's ability to contribute to the system."

"The police are actively engaged in punishing and oppressing folks for their addictions while we're trying to approach addiction as the medical condition it is."

"Asking holistic questions of and challenging the systems in place. Challenging the status quo of current governance. Seeking input from those with lived experience."

"I think that the police need more support around situations regarding folks that are struggling with mental health problems."

What We Heard from Community Organizations about DCF and Child Protection

Among those working inside the the systems dedicated to protecting children and providing parental supports (which here include the Department of Children and Families, EES, Lund, Winston Prouty, and schools), there was very little alignment observed between those working within DCF and all other workers and community members about others' observations about the challenges with accountability, (unintentional) harm, or bias that were named by so many community members and professionals throughout our listening. This was a strong area of dissonance in our listening. While some workers in the larger child protection and advocacy system appeared to be engaging deeply and transformationally with learning trauma, antiracism, restorative practices, collaboration with grassroots movements, and engaging with the leadership of people impacted by these systems in making change, we did not encounter much evidence of these larger trends in this department. The strongest theme in DCF's own understanding of any bias that might impact their work that we encountered was "the implicit bias of professional networks and the community" against DCF itself. We did not encounter evidence of significant readiness to engage about the inadvertent harms or racial biases that many other community members and professionals identified in their own work or the work of DCF. We did encounter some apprehension on the part of some workers in this system about this review and its connections to police reform. Workers in other organizations supporting child safety shared about the ways that restorative practices and a greater look at inequity, bias, and anti racism were informing their work.

Below are quotes from workers in the field of child protection, advocacy, and support about that field.

"There are not enough changes to make this job obsolete. Changes to lessen our workload would be increased MH services and quick access to those services, speedy

access to substance abuse services and inpatient services for substance abuse and services to provide safe respite care."

"There are great Risks of harm and the potential for injury to workers and children"

"People in our lower income strata, I believe are treated differently in all kinds of situations. I feel these people need to know that they are part of the community, have more presence of help in their communities, making sure that their homes, their neighborhoods feel safe for their children. Our systems need to be examined to make sure that policies do not continue to perpetuate inequalities."

"Emergency MH beds for youth in crisis - so children don't have to sit at the Emergency Department waiting for days until a bed can be found."

"At times Police are unavailable to assist when commencing or making first initial contact with families when there are safety concerns. Due to timeframe restriction. Workers are forced to meet with families alone. Thereby creating a safety concern for workers."

"Every relationship created with every child and family, leads to growing success, whether it can be measured or not. Relationships transform lives."

For many working outside of the child protection system, there are many who appreciate the immense challenge of DCF's work, and more who named serious concerns about structural inequity, lack of accountability, and a need for more trauma informed and anti racist methods of increasing child protection in our community. The collaborative work of other organizations that serve children fit into the web of safety that so many workers named supported the conditions that create safety for families.

Here are some perspectives about DCF and child safety from those who work in other organizations.

"Some people I have worked with literally, (2) weeks together, then another worker, then another worker, and then the case was delayed. Too many cooks in the kitchen."

"Inequality among parents/families-who DCF is being called on."

"I will call both DCF and the police when required, but would almost always rather not. DCF because they often lack nuance when families are in crisis and the harm done from separating families is often far more devastating than the harm taking place within the family."

"We need alternatives to DCF. We need a state ombudsman or family advocate to provide more accountability/oversight to DCF. We need DCF to be using money to support families for whom poverty is the primary driver of danger."

"DCF intervention and forced hospitalization are the most wielded carceral interventions against people with substance use disorder.

What We Heard from Community Organizations about Addiction and Recovery Supports

Those who work in supporting people experiencing addiction or in recovery (which here includes Turning Point, COSU, HabitOpco) shared many perspectives with us about one of the most agreed upon struggles in Brattleboro. There is alignment in some areas among organizations and also with the (small) group of drug users we spoke to. There is largely agreement about the need for more harm reduction supports and immediately accessible free voluntary treatment options. There is agreement that there is incredible bias and stigma against those with substance use disorder or who are using drugs or experiencing addiction, in jobs, housing, social services, the criminal justice system, and in interactions with child protection workers. There is alignment between almost every professional we spoke with about the need to decriminalize substance use and treat it as a social or medical issue, and there appears to be some divergence between some professionals' visions of the role of police in substance use support. There were also concerns named by those in and outside of the field about the efficacy of Project Care, the process and transparency of its budget and hiring, and its lack of data collection about outcomes other than inpatient treatment for the people it works with. Concerns were also expressed about conflicts of interest between the police department and the program, as well as an observation that preferential treatment seems to be given to programs that formally collaborate with the police in Town and budgetary processes, despite a fundamental lack of understanding of the function of those programs on vulnerable people in the community by those in power. Some professionals also expressed concerns about a lack of appropriate professional boundaries and a minimization of power imbalances in their observation of the work of some recovery coaches working at Turning Point. Many professionals named that overdose, homelessness, poverty, forced treatment, DCF involvement, and criminalization were significant risks to the people they support. Many had concerns about The Retreat's recent decision to close its outpatient and medication assisted treatment programs, naming that our community needs more and not less resources for those experiencing addiction. Multiple people from multiple organizations and programs shared some hope and admiration for the ways that the COSU program was holding their work. Appreciation for their self reflection, course correction, transparency around resources, and thoughtfulness around what pre work would be necessary to set content experts with lived experience for success to hold true power in decision making was apparent in our conversations with several people in the field and was named as a model for how other work could function.

Below are quotes from workers in the substance abuse support and recovery field about that field.

"Police intervention makes people less able to share their needs and experiences without fear of consequences. Coercive treatment as a condition of release, police violence, focus on getting folks into treatment instead of meeting them where they are and understanding what they need, lack of police accountability, the belief that project CARE or police social workers will solve the problem, lack of accountability in non profits and treatment and police are all threats to people with substance use disorder."

“There are serious limits with the police social worker, Turning Point, and the police- essentially, all of them can incarcerate someone.”

“We need most impacted people in authentic leadership roles with pre-work done to make the space safe for them to enter. We need these people at the center, and not just in under supported tokenizing roles- impacted people should be the wind in the sail of the boat, determining it's direction.”

“Funding goes to programs that collaborate with police, not those outside the systems. The way money gets handed down from above is often problematic. We need better and less competitive ways of distributing grant funds collaboratively so that the least people die and suffer.”

“Coercion, forced treatment, and psychiatric incarceration are functional criminalization of poverty. These don’t happen nearly as often to people with well resourced networks or private therapists.”

“[The biggest risks to the people we support are] Overdose. Poverty. Homelessness. The pandemic means relapse and new substance use struggles for folks. It’s a threat that people need to "feel suicidal" to get support, then they are punished if they are.”

“Help is paternalistic. People distrust the system, which often strings together bandaids without permanent improvement to what's making them unsafe in the first place. People avoid care due to fear of consequences, especially mothers and pregnant people.”

“Intentional Peer Support and Harm Reduction frameworks are helpful.”

“[We need] Immediately accessible, voluntary treatment.”

“ Project Cares should be led by people in recovery and in active use. Great River Terrace has been improving- removing barriers. Clinicians will come there. We need to reduce intake requirements to everything. Increase access. We need options instead of pressure and autonomy and choice over referrals.”

“Hotels and some shelters aren't safe for people in recovery. We need a safer sobriety space. Some people are staying homeless voluntarily due to relapse risk in shelter. Policing puts people at risk and makes people less likely to reach out for support.”

“People hold so much bias against homeless people and drug users. They assume that the reason you are homeless or using is because you can't think, don't understand, or are stupid. It's so so so much more complicated than that.”

Other Perspectives We Heard from Community Organizations

So many organizations in our community, many of whom function further out from policing and intervention, are working to help community members meet their needs, experience belonging and connection, prevent and heal harms, address inequity, and get needed support. We heard from workers who support survivors, care for people with disabilities, organize tenants, advocate for and organize marginalized people, educate the community about skills and supports, provide medicine, care for youth, provide life giving recreation, support creativity and culture, provide re-entry support to those returning to the community following incarceration, hold space for people who have been harmed or caused harm, and so many more. We heard over and over in our Community Listening that organizations that created space for belonging, connection, visioning, mutual aid, grieving, reckoning, and mutual support (especially among marginalized people) were an accessible, appreciated, and visionary part of the web of community safety in Brattleboro. These organizations range from very informal and even criminalized (like a small network of drug users providing clean supplies and overdose prevention information to those in their friend community) to long standing pillars of community, and many between and beyond. In observing the patterns in responses from community members working for a better world by creating a better local world, we heard many themes that suggested that it was these spaces that needed attention and resourcing to improve our community's safety, because when people's needs for good food, safe shelter, connection and belonging, healthy relationships, healthy recreation, freedom of movement, autonomy over their bodies, safety in their identity, and feeling valued and equal are met, we are all more well, safer, and less likely to be in situations that involve dangerous interventions.

Here are quotes from many workers in our community about other aspects of community safety.

> **"A totally safe Brattleboro would include folks of color, immigrants, and people out of status feeling confident to be part of public and private events without fear of discrimination or threats of deportation."**
>
> **"Inadequate housing stock coupled with insufficient social and financial support for those that cannot support themselves. Adequate cultural understanding for what it means to suffer with addiction and not be able to support oneself. Lack of adequate health care including mental and dental. Physical and mental dangers created by the criminalization of addiction including the dangers of a black market system and police intervention. The physical and mental trauma implications of traumas sustained from living in a society that values human life by one's ability to contribute to the system."**
>
> **"We are working on confronting our tendency toward paternalism, closely tied to white supremacy and colonialism. We've been hosting antiracism trainings to talk about solidarity and mutual aid over a charity model."**

“Get rid of police, invest in community resources.”

“The state attempts to repair harm with more harm. Fines for poor people, incarceration, and family separation are not solutions to our problems. We need responses to harm that don't replicate and cause more harm. We need to build community up so we can stand in our power together and solve problems together. Police imprison and arrest and carry guns. All of these things mean that the power imbalance is so deeply unequal, and it's hard to build relationships with such unequal power.”

“Need advocacy for BIPOC communities. Need more racial accountability.”

10 point programs of Young Lords and Black Panthers [are visionary ways of responding to dangerous situations]. Deepening understanding of transformative justice and the meaning of abolition.”

“Not enough housing in this town leads to more vulnerability for DV/SV survivors.”

“Mutual aid! The Root mutual aid, Out In the Open Mutual Aid, and Brattleboro Area Mutual Aid. People have the knowledge and connections to support each other through so much. This process of the town reviewing safety is good and overdue and needs to be ongoing. The Community Justice Center, creating alternatives to incarceration and policing. Networks of folks we've built trust with who are committed to justice, liberation, and safety. People are resources to one another, and in Brattleboro there really are some people who work inside systems who care and are excited about making change.”

“We [ ] believe in prison abolition. So having no cops in schools or other places would be great… The community working together to provide support and resources that WE ALL NEED.”

“Pay The Hive or HCRS Peer Support or psychiatrically labeled people to develop or support a mental health crisis response that doesn't involve carceral systems. We need support that has less arbiters from the nonprofit world gatekeeping who gets support. We need support that's free from coercion, force, and barriers. That doesn't replicate what exists, with leadership roles for impacted people with lots and lots of support to make it safe and sustainable for those people to be there. Rushing can put those people at risk of being set up to fail.”

“We are an abolitionist organization.”

“State violence is never called "violence" the way interpersonal violence is. Denying people housing, movement, and freedom is violence.”

“Safety means healthcare for all, safety of movement and freedom for undocumented people. Housing, transportation, medicine, and food for all.”

“We need Brattleboro to adopt Fair and Impartial Policing Policy improvements! The first four will cost nothing, the last one may impact federal funding.”

“[The biggest threats to the people we support are] violence from both intimate partners but violence from the system -- anti-poor attitudes, misogynistic attitudes, stigmatization from service workers, hospitals, and police, low housing vacancy, low-paying jobs, policing around DCF.”

“A totally safe Brattleboro looks like safe housing for all / supervised injection site / street medic trainings / community trainings on de-escalation / community trainings on how to help a community member in distress / jobs for all / community gardens / business in town that serve the people / more educational programming / addiction support services / coffee house for everyone”

“Systems don't work for many survivors.”

“[A totally safe Brattleboro looks like] actively anti racist, solidarity built between those experiencing oppression, addressing all facets of white supremacy, reasonable expectations of police officers including more training on de-escalation and less on target practice, an awesome response to mental health challenges, increased support for those who are dealing with addiction, everyone having access to safe housing, open dialogues across differences about various issues, all our community members needs being met with respect and dignity.”

“[What the community is doing well about safety is] the fact that this process is happening.

“People are so incredibly at risk, incredibly under-served. It’s really hard to get the supports they need. People are harmed by the community at large and by the systems they are trying to get care in. There’s a high risk for police intervention, due to the way they get their basic needs met while struggling with homelessness/substance use. Lack of protection. The people we serve don't really get to have choices about what happens to them. It's great that people have housing in motels during a pandemic, but all of the rules and structures around it, people have so little control or say in how it happens. People are so at risk of having needs unmet, being underserved, being exploited.”

“[The gaps in community support are] crisis response is a significant one. Gaps in family support- a lot of families don't have natural support, they just need help. Family support is like another type of crisis support that doesn't exist. The supports that do exist aren't creative and flexible enough. We need to be looking at very tangible needs that families face. We have to be careful about systemizing responses and causing the same harm again.”

BPD Review

What We Learned from the Police Department and Associated Programs

Data Context and Overview

The data provided in this report includes mostly raw data and some data analysis. One of the flaws and limitations of data, in general, is that they can be used and interpreted to inform or justify any argument or practice. It is important to note that data and algorithms have been used to perpetuate racism and racist societal structures.[24] In her article *5 Steps to Take as an Antiracist Data Scientist,* Emily Hadley provides several articles that demonstrate ways in which data and algorithms have been used to perpetuate racism[25] and offers strategies for ways to review data from an antiracist lens. Neither of the co-facilitators of this project are data scientists, and the data reviewed in this project were limited to the data the Brattleboro Police Department collected and other data we were able to access. The data gathered and reviewed illuminate questions as well as answers. There are areas of deeper review that could occur in future phases of this work. The data below provide some information about what our current model of policing in Brattleboro looks like.

The majority of the calls that police respond to are coded by dispatch as Suspicious Person or Circumstance (PSC) (15-16%).Followed by Animal Problem (5.9-6.7%), Agency Assist (5.8-6.2%), Trespassing Violation (4.7-5.1%), Welfare Check (4.8-5.5%), and Public Speaking Engagement (4.7-5.7%)

The arrest rate is between 7% - 7.8% for 2019 and 2020. Of the 92.2-93% of police contacts that do not end in arrest, it is likely that some of those contacts are related to crime in some way. *However, these data indicate that the vast majority of the police activity in Brattleboro is not related to criminal activity.*

The majority of the Suspicious Activity and Welfare Check calls involve someone calling the police on someone else, most often leading to an unsolicited and unwanted contact by the police for a noncriminal behavior or experience. This contact may result in a positive, neutral, or negative or harmful way. From our listening data, it is clear that those most impacted by these unsolicited encounters, including BIPOC folks, people who are psychiatrically labeled, people who are experiencing a mental health or emotional health need or crisis, people experiencing homeleness, poor people, people who use drugs, LGBTQ+ folks, and other marginalized people largely experience them as negative and/or harmful. There is significant fear and terror associated with calling the police or any safety response system for help among these communities. Our listening showed that the likelihood of an organization or institution utilizing police for safety is inversely correlated with those communities being able to access the support or services of those organizations or institutions.

[24] Hadley, E. 5 Steps to Take as a an Antiracist Data Scientist, towards data science, 2020.
[25] Angwin, J., Larson, J., Mattu, S., Kirchner, L. Machine Bias. ProPublica, 2016.

It is important to note that decisions that lead to arrest, as well as determinations about what behavior gets formally or informally criminalized, is subject to bias and discrimination. The lack of attention to the injustices of the larger criminal justice system (which includes the State's Attorney's office, the court system, judges, the bail system, the prison system, and more) in this review is NOT an indication that these systems are unproblematic, or that the police is the only place where injustice occurs and needs to be address and accountability is needed. It is simply a reflection of the limited scope of this review.

Quality Review of Brattleboro Police Department Data: 2019 and 2020

Methodology

A project facilitator and three committee members reviewed documents and data from the Brattleboro Police Department. The Brattleboro Police Department Review included a document and data review and tracer methodology.

Tracer methodology is an auditing strategy (developed by the Joint Commission[26]) that involves a deeper review of specific incidents or cases that are identified randomly or through another method. In this review, we used a blend of random and judgment sampling to select cases within specific sub-groups. From the 2019 and 2020 law incident reports, we randomly selected and reviewed 3 cases that involved the DOMV (domestic violence) circumstance code, 3 cases that involved the WELF (welfare check) nature code, and 3 cases that involved the PSC (suspicious person or activity) code. From the 2019 and 2020 Use of Force data, we randomly selected and reviewed 9 incidents that involved mental health/welfare check and/or no enforcement action (arrest) action, and 7 incidents that involved subjects whose racial identity was coded as Black. These sub-groups were identified from the analysis of aggregate UOF data as areas in need of further inquiry. The tracer audits involve an in-depth review of all documents related to the incident. In this review, the purpose of the tracer audit was not to address the individual incidents, but instead to gain understanding and context for the data by learning more about the kinds of situations that lead to Use of Force responses in this department, and specifically in situations that involve these sub-groups.

Document Review: Policies and Procedures

We reviewed all of the BPD Policies and Procedures. The following are notable excerpts and analysis of these documents to frame the reviewer's findings and recommendations.

[26] Tracer Methodology Fact Sheet, The Joint Commission, 2020.

Languaging

Use of language such as "right/wrong," "just", and "moral" pervades the documents. *"Always do the right thing"* is listed as a core value in the Mission Statement Policy (General Order 101). The Discipline (General Order 200) and Professional Conduct and Responsibility (General Order 210) policies are heavy with this tone of language, including promoting "*high morals*". This kind of language assumes objectivity (that there is such a thing as "the right thing", and that officers should always know what that is) without attunement to the actual complexity of socio-political factors such as who determines legality of a behavior and who gains power from these determinations, as well as socio-contextual factors such as lack of access to housing, resources, safety, wellness, health, health care, etc. The tone set by the use of this language implies a moral authority held by the police that is being actively challenged across the nation as well as in our community.

Throughout the policies, the onus of accountability is heavily placed on individual officers, supervisors, captain and chief and is generally focused internally. *"Always hold yourself and others accountable"* is listed as the first core value in the Mission Statement policy. The burden and privilege of the department and its officers being expected to manage their own accountability internally is in conflict with the spirit of accountability itself; who is the department actually accountable to, and what are the mechanisms for that accountability to those stakeholders?

There is a notable lack of antiracism, anti-oppression, anti-bias language throughout these documents. Evidence of racial bias and discrimination exists throughout this report in community experiences and data review and is a key finding. We recommend that the department engage in reflection on its responsibility to acknowledge and reckon with this evidence and the cultural transformations needed to address it, as well as how to operationalize a commitment to antiracism in its policies.

Language throughout the documents is gender-exclusive; "he/him" is used as the default pronouns. We recommend transitioning to gender-neutral language using singular "they/them" pronouns as the default.

The Harrassment and Discrimination Policy's (General Order 215) stated purpose is:

> *"The purpose of this policy is to prohibit illegal harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination within this agency. The policy also provides for the reporting and department response to all forms of harassment or discrimination."*

We encourage the department to consider the reactiveness of this approach to the policy's purpose. Consider language focused on creating a culture of respect and reverence for all people and for consent and respectful treatment. Change "sexual discrimination" to "gender and sexual discrimination".

Policing Philosophy in Policy

Crime Prevention efforts in policy (General Order 102) are focused on "aggressive and conspicuous patrol." Excerpt from the policy:

> *"The most effective means available to the police for crime prevention thus far is aggressive and conspicuous patrol, with meaningful deployment of available personnel in accordance with demonstrated need, combined with a meaningful preventative program which solicits and encourages community help through information, technical assistance, and sponsorship of self-help efforts ."*

This philosophy of policing practice seems to combine aggressive patrol and citizen and community policing. Aggressive and conspicuous patrol as a crime prevention strategy, while common, lacks any root cause analysis on crime and or critical analysis on criminalization and there is a lack of clear data that support the idea that aggressive police presence/patrol acts as a deterrent to crime. Police presence is not considered safe in all communities, especially those more likely to be subject to police interaction. This crime prevention policy is in direct conflict with the listening information we heard from community members about their experiences with safety, danger and harm.

Policing Practices in Policy

The Police Chaplain policy (General Order 104), while likely a commonplace policy in police departments, seems outdated and an inappropriate and insufficient approach to supporting officer mental and emotional wellness. There is a growing body of research and recommendation around the need for appropriate trauma-informed mental health care and access to EAP programs for police officers and the risks associated with the trauma of this type of work. We recommend that the department modernize their policies to reflect current best practice in trauma-informed approaches to officer wellness.

The Hiring Procedure for Police Officers (General Order 312) Procedures articulates that "the agency will not consider persons for hire where the background examination, interview, or any other portion of the application process puts the agency on notice that the candidate has a propensity to engage in conduct that could harm a member of the public." Racial bias and discrimination (based on race, gender, sexuality, disability, or any identity) cause harm to members of the public, as articulated in the listening

sections as well as the BPD data review. This harm should be acknowledged and addressed in this policy and in the department's practice.

The following excerpt from the Department Weapons and Training Policy (General Order 603) outlines the required carrying of weapons:

> *"Required carrying of weapons*
>
> *A. Officers will carry a handgun at all times while on duty, unless authorized by the chief or his designee for investigative/tactical purposes.*
>
> *B. OC spray will be carried by all uniformed officers.*
>
> *C. An impact weapon or CEW will be carried by all uniformed officers.*
>
> *D. Plain clothes officers are encouraged to carry non-deadly force weapons as appropriate to arrest and tactical situations.*
>
> *E. Supervisors will insure that at all times at least one CEW, shotgun, rifle, and SIM are being carried by the current complement of on duty uniformed officers. The carry of additional authorized weapons is encouraged.*
>
> *F. Off duty carry – Officers may carry their issued handgun off duty consistent with applicable laws where the officer is located. No other department weapons will be carried off duty without the permission of the chief or his designee.*
>
> *i. BPD weapons will not be carried when under the influence of alcohol or other drugs or circumstances where judgement may be impaired."*

We recommend that the department formalize S.A.F.E. policing plan in this policy, starting with recommendation to disarm police for nonresponsive tasks like community speaking, meetings, and community events. We recommend removal of the permission to carry department issued handguns while off-duty.

The Domestic Violence and Disputes Policy (General Order 802) states:

> *"The Brattleboro Police Department observes a proactive and pro-arrest approach when responding to domestic disputes. The primary goal of this policy is to increase victim and family safety followed closely by perpetrator accountability."*

We heard from some people in our listening that the pro-arrest practices around domestic violence cause harm, and from others that police responsiveness to domestic violence feels important for safety. Our recommendation around this practice is to engage in further review and analysis of the risks versus

benefits of a pro-arrest approach to domestic violence in a way that centers the voices of those most impacted and most harmed by these systems[27].

In the reporting section of the Domestic Violence and Disputes policy it states,

> *"If a person under 18 was present in a residence where a domestic assault occurred, the incident will be reported to DCF within 24 hours consistent with procedure."*

While mandated reporting laws must be considered, it is also important to consider how a pro-arrest approach may increase risk of harm to families impacted by DCF intervention.

The Detention and Arrest Policy (General Order 830) states:

> "*Public safety detentions*
>
> *1. If a police officer has probable cause to believe a person will cause serious bodily injury to themselves or another unless immediately detained, they may detain the person consistent with the above procedure.*
>
> *a. In addition to other sources of information, an individually named medical/mental health provider who explicitly states this need satisfies this requirement.*
>
> *b. The purpose of such detentions is to prevent injury and transfer custody of the subject to mental health or medical providers as soon as possible.*
>
> *c. When using force in this type of detention, officers will be aware of the potential to cause injury, especially if the intent of the police action is to prevent the person from injuring themselves."*

Our recommendation is to remove the power of medical/mental health providers to effectively detain "by stating this need" from this policy, and include language explicitly discouraging use of force in these circumstances. Revisit this section of the policy entirely as mental health crisis response is decoupled from the police. Also, consider rights of youth and risks to youth of current policy on juvenile detentions. This policy needs to be viewed and reconsidered with an antiracism approach, as the department acknolwedges and reckons with the realities of racial bias, profiling, and discrimination in police practices of wrongful identification, traffic stops, arrests, searches, and use of force.

The Working with Mentally Ill and Emotionally Disturbed Persons policy (General Order 835) needs to be entirely revisited, renamed, and rewritten, preferably in paid consultation with content experts from impacted communities. The labels, definitions, and claims in this policy are outdated and harmful, and many are unfactual and stigmatizing. Currently, this policy can be rewritten to include procedures on

[27]Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalitions Moment of Truth Document, June 2020.

minimizing police contact with impacted communities and avoiding use of force (there is some language in the current policy on limiting observable indications of force). As alternatives are developed and mental health response is decoupled from policing, this policy needs to be replaced with a policy that articulates the procedure for accessing the alternatives.

This policy articulates that time is a critical factor in de-escalating situations. We recommend retaining this section of the policy (while changing some of the language, such as “command voice”), and considering how officers can be held accountable to this piece of the policy. Tracer reviews of documents associated with Use of Force incidents that involved mental health crisis and/or suicidality showed that the average total length of time that officers spent in responding to the incident (from arrival to completion) was 47 minutes (further explained in the Use of Force section). This suggests that at times, officers are not following this policy and taking the time needed to resolve situations in nonviolent and noncoercive ways.

> *“Time is the concept of elongating the encounter, rather than hastening it:*
>
> *1. History has shown that the longer the encounter is allowed to occur, the better the chance for a successful and safe resolution.*
>
> *2. Increasing the time of the encounter and using defusing techniques allows the subject to reflect upon his/her predicament.*
>
> *3. Creating time also allows for the field units to be supported by the deployment of additional police personnel, specialized equipment and medical support personnel.*
>
> *4. Time encourages the ability to communicate and create a relationship between the subject and the command voice.”*

It is important to note that while we identify many problems with this policy and recommend rewriting it, it is currently the only place where there is any evidence of what could be considered trauma-informed language throughout the policies and procedures. For example:

> *“3. Verbal communication should be non-threatening. Whenever possible, use open-ended questions designed to facilitate the subject’s participation. If the subject does not respond, use other communication techniques. It may be necessary to change the person designated as the command voice and determine whether that might be beneficial.*
>
> *4. Sharp, authoritative commands should be avoided. Officers should use calming communicative attempts.*
>
> *5. It has been found that threats to arrest or use force are not productive when dealing with persons with diminished capacities. Reassure the subject that the police are there to help them.*

6. Be truthful at all times.

7. Officers must constantly analyze what affect, if any, their efforts are having on the subject. This is essential to identify areas that appear to agitate the subject that should then be avoided."

We recommend that some of this guidance, such as using non-threatening and calming verbal communication and creativity and adaptability in communication, remaining truthful, avoiding violent and threatening communication, and reflecting on one's effect and impact, be adopted in general policing policy and practice when dealing with any community member.

The policy outlines "Commitment procedures", which is not really a procedure. We recommend removing this section from the policy when it is rewritten. When alternatives to police and police-like responses to mental health crises are developed, the policy should direct officers to noncoercive and voluntary support.

"Commitment procedures: The primary purpose for police response to an incident involving a person of diminished capacities is to control the situation and ensure that the person receives the most appropriate form of professional resources.

1. In determining the most appropriate form of professional resource and referral officers should consider the information provided by professional resources persons and family members.

2. It is important for the officers on the scene to determine what, if any, on-going threat potential the subject poses to him or herself, family, community and the officers. This threat potential may necessitate an involuntary commitment procedure rather than simply hand off the subject to the family for a voluntary commitment.

3. If an officer has probable cause to believe a subject may be subject to or cause serious bodily injury they may take the person into custody consistent with Vermont law.

4. When possible, people of diminished capacity or suffering a mental health crisis should be transported by ambulance

The Lockup Procedures (General Order 1301) articulates the purpose and policy of the "safe, secure and human confinement" of detainment. The policy addresses "male" and "female" detainees but does not provide any guidance on the detainment of transgender people. This lack of policy can have a harmful impact in that it invisibilizes transgender people and leaves it up to discretion how someone is treated when detained. Consult with content experts from impacted communities on adapting this policy, and BPD policies in general, to address specific needs of transgender people. We also recommend articulating prisoners rights in this policy.

For analysis and recommendations on Use of Force (General Order 601) and Vehicle Stops and Traffic Enforcement (General Order 820) policies, see related sections further in the report.

Document Review: Job Descriptions and Supervisor Manual

We reviewed job descriptions for officer, lieutenant, sergeant, detective, and detective lieutenant roles. The following are notable excerpts that inform the reviewers' findings and recommendations.

Officer

General Duties and Responsibilities:

- *Detect, investigate, and deter motor vehicle violations and other civil violations.*
- *Identify traffic obstructions and other problems and address them in order to restore efficient traffic flow.*
- *Utilize armed and unarmed physical force to defend him- or her-self or others, restore order, make arrests, and subdue violent, resisting, and tumultuous people.*
- *Possess and maintain sufficient personal, moral, and emotional fortitude in order to endure physical and psychological stress and still accomplish the duties of the assigned position.*
- *Proactively initiate contact with individuals and groups of citizens, business owners and patrons, and other members of the public in a cordial, non-enforcement or call response capacity in order to integrate the officer and the department's overall community service function with the interests of the community.*

Sergeant

General Duties and Responsibilities:

- *Be accountable for the actions or omissions of subordinates under his or her supervision which may be contrary to department rules and regulations. a. Take appropriate corrective action as appropriate b. Report such actions and omissions and action taken to superiors and recommend additional action by superiors if appropriate.*
- *Determine by personal investigation and review that subordinates perform their duty completely and on time.*

Lieutenant

General Duties and Responsibilities:

- *Identify areas of strength, weakness, and interest in officers and assist in career counseling and development.*
- *Identify training needs of subordinate officers and submit same to command staff with recommendation for or against.*
- *Issue discipline as appropriate for violations or repeated unacceptable performance.*
- *Forward to command staff recommendations for higher levels of discipline as appropriate for violations or repeated unacceptable performance.*

- *Actively identify areas of potential deficiency or improvement in department operations, policy, and procedure and present them to command staff.*
- *Actively identify problems or problem areas within the community, proactively innovate and plan to resolve them within his/her authority, and seek authorization for such plans that exceed his/her authority.*

We also reviewed the department's Supervisor (OIC- Officer in Charge) Manual. The following are notable excerpts for consideration of current police department practice that informs the findings and recommendations in this report.

> *Call for service prioritization*
>
> *Some calls for service are inherently urgent such as assaults in progress. Others are inherently administrative in nature, such as VIN inspections and unoccupied vehicle unlocks. OIC's should prioritize the police response to calls for service in order of urgency. The following is a guide for call types and prioritization order. Recognizing that it is impossible to categorize all calls, a general priority of 1) life safety, 2) public order, then 3) protection of property will be followed consistent with the BPD mission.*
>
> *1) Physical injury is occurring and will likely continue without police intervention.*
>
> *2) Physical injury has occurred and medical care is needed.*
>
> *3) Physical injury is likely to occur, but has not yet.*
>
> *4) A property crime is occurring and will likely continue without police intervention.*
>
> *5) A property crime has occurred and should be investigated.*
>
> *6) Administrative calls for service.*

This information provides context for how the department prioritizes calls in relation to the percent of total incidents by call type/offense (see Tables 3 and 7).

> *Bail, release, and holding*
>
> *The court will be called for conditions/bail if:*
>
> *1) Any felony arrest*
>
> *2) Domestic related crimes including assaults, APO violations, etc*
>
> *3) VCR's on domestic charges, APO violations, or any drinking prohibition where there are new charges (not just blowing numbers).*
>
> *4) The officer reasonably believes the crime could occur again in the near future.*
>
> *5) Other times bail or conditions would be appropriate for a case or defendant with OIC approval.*

Court after hours protocol and contact information can be found in dispatch. The officer may make requests, but if an officer is dissatisfied with the decision of a clerk or judge, they should notify the OIC. If the OIC agrees he may contact the on call SA. Only the SA can request a modification or argue for a change in bail/conditions with the court.

If a subject is held on bail and it will be more than 48 hours before his arraignment, the officer must call a judge, review the facts of the case, and request a finding of probable cause.

This process does not address the subjectivity of officer discretion in determining which situations they seek conditions/bail for, the complexities of root causes and socio-cultural factors in criminalization (including factors that increase likelihood that a crime could occur again), the consequences to the community of these discretionary conditions/bail, critical analysis of class implications in the bail system and the effectiveness of conditions/bail on recidivism.

Welfare Checks

Child welfare check

At the discretion of the OIC, it is recommended that DCF be requested to accompany BPD officers to child welfare checks in order to minimize police exposure to needy children and to provide faster services to children in need. The results of this request will be documented in the report. If DCF is not available or refuses the request, BPD will conduct the check without them and document the unavailability or refusal.

An effort will be made to locate and assess the child. Tactics used to locate and check the child will depend on the nature of the report. When a child is located the officer will determine if there is no need for intervention, need for a DCF referral, or a need for the immediate seizure of the child based on all of the facts and circumstances known to the officer. OIC will be directly involved in any decision to remove a child from a home without a court order.

Mental health welfare checks

Call from general public:

If the call is of an active incident where there is information the subject is actively suicidal, BPD officers will respond. Dispatch will contact HCRS and request a mental health worker to respond. BFD or Rescue may be staged as appropriate.

If the caller has simply not heard from a relative or close friend in an unusually long period of time, PD can conduct the welfare check. This is a lower priority call for service. If the incident is not occurring now but is mental health related, the caller will be referred to HCRS or other mental health agency to request a check.

Call from HCRS: If the request is simply for a check of one of their clients, the request should be denied on the basis that HCRS is better equipped to assess and treat MH problems than police are.

If HCRS requests that police accompany them to a check based on specifically articulated safety concerns, we will honor that request. It is recommended officers wait for HCRS to arrive before contacting the subject unless there is clear urgency.

Procedure:

When a welfare check is made, efforts should be made to meet with the subject and determine whether or not medical or mental health intervention is required. If the subject refuses assistance, such as a physical or mental health evaluation, the OIC must determine if an involuntary evaluation is warranted. Subjects of physical or mental health evaluations should be taken to BMH for evaluation.

An involuntary evaluation is only warranted[28] if there is probable cause *to believe that the subject is at* risk of serious harm to self or others *if an evaluation is not done* immediately*. All three pieces must be present for this decision to be made. The only other circumstance is if a medical provider (including Rescue) clearly states that the person must be taken into medical custody. The name of the care provider will be documented.*

Every attempt will be made to transport MH patients in medical vehicles, not police vehicles.

If the officer is unable to contact the subject of the welfare check, they should attempt to gather information from the dispatcher or complainant to determine whether an emergency exists that would authorize a non-consensual entry. Such circumstances are rare and must be supported by significant evidence that serious injury will occur if police do not enter. A ranking OIC (sergeant or lieutenant) should be notified as soon as possible if a non-consensual entry occurs.

If exigency is not present, HCRS should be contacted to do a mental health evaluation warrant.

If the shift is unable to contact the subject of a welfare check, the case should remain open and should be passed on to the oncoming OIC for additional checks.

Subjects that are contacted as part of a welfare check should be requested to contact the complainant. ***Police department personnel must be cautious in advising private complainants of the status or location of subjects of welfare checks. Domestic abuse victims, victims of harassment, and other subjects have been inappropriately located by abusers using the police in this manner. DO NOT provide information to the complainant related to the location or status of the subject unless legally required (minor child, etc).***

This section of the supervisor manual is highly relevant to information we heard in the listening work and community safety practice related to welfare checks, mental health, and non-consensual forced treatment. See this section for more information related to this procedure. We encourage the department to heavily consider the balancing of potential benefits and risk of harm associated with their involvement in child protection and mental health welfare checks and agency assists, and determine

[28] Emphasis in original document.

where practice needs to better meet their current policy, while working towards reducing and eliminating police presence in mental health response.

The acknowledgement of risk associated with sharing status or location of subjects with complainants is a strength of this document.

Use of Force Incidents

UOF incidents on shift

The OIC will ensure that proper medical care is provided to all injured parties related to UOF incidents. The OIC will ensure that BPD UOF policies are followed. The OIC will ensure that all UOF reports are written and if required, notifications are made, consistent with current policy and procedure.

Approving UOF reports

All UOF reports will be reviewed by a sergeant or lieutenant that was not involved in the incident. A separate face-sheet must be completed for each person that was the subject of force, although the same narrative may apply to several subjects.

If satisfying the above steps will result in a delay in the UOF report being moved up the chain of command, the reviewing supervisor will notify the captain via email or message of that fact.

Information Release

Press releases

The OIC will ensure that press releases have been completed for all noteworthy incidents that occurred during the shift. The release should include details of public interest, including details of the event, names where appropriate, the extent of injuries, road closures, etc. Refer to the current press release guide. Incidents that will have press releases include but are not limited to:

1. *Any arrest or citation.*
2. *Any vehicle collision if any of these occur:*
    a. *A road is closed for a period of time*
    b. *An arrest is made*
    c. *A pedestrian or bicycle is involved*
    d. *There is serious injury*
3. *Any reported robbery*
4. *Any reported larceny or burglary over $1000 in value stolen*
5. *Any reported felony assault*
6. *Any crime committed at a school, bus stop, or school related event*
7. *Any pattern of similar incidents (series of collisions during a storm, series of car break-ins, etc).*
8. *Any incident that you expect the public should know or media may call on.*

The OIC will ensure the following is not released[29]:

1) *Information on whether a suspect made a statement or asked for an attorney.*
2) *Information on evidence that may have been seized except volume of alleged drugs.*
3) *Information on any chemical/physical test results (including alco results)*
4) *Victim name or residence information (You may release gender and age).*
5) *Victim business names unless doing so is relevant or serves the public (ie: the location of a fraudulent ATM).*
6) *Names of anyone under age 18, unless they were a legal driver in a collision.*

We recommend clarifying this practice to prioritize protection of any identifiable information due to risk of exposure and strengthen this procedure to reflect that priority (remove "you may release gender and age", and put guidance in procedure on how to limit identifiability). Risks of victim identifiability outweigh any potential benefits to including any information about a victim's identity.

Citizen Complaints

BPD maintains a detailed policy on citizen complaints and internal investigations. OICs and supervisors should read that policy and act accordingly.

The OIC will treat all citizen complaints as legitimate, regardless of their source. Anonymous complaints will be taken, however, are inherently less credible. The OIC will remain neutral during the complaint process.

Formal vs. informal complaints

Citizen Complaints are a complaint made by any source regarding the conduct of an employee, or the provision or lack of provision of services.

***Formal Complaints** are those involving a serious allegation (excessive force, improper search, for example), or are made formal by the wish of the citizen to go beyond mediation.*

***Informal Complaints** are less serious in nature, and often stem from miscommunication between the officer and the complainant, personality conflict, or a misunderstanding of the law or circumstances. Informal Complaints can generally be handled by mediation or simply educating the complainant.*

Process

Upon being notified of a Citizen Complaint, the OIC will have dispatch open a case. Preferably, the OIC will meet with the complainant and determine if the complaint is formal or informal. For a formal complaint, the OIC will go over the Citizen Complaint Packet with them. Dispatch should wait to give the complainant a Citizen Complaint Packet to fill out unless the complainant doesn't have time to wait for a supervisor, or does not want to meet with a supervisor but still wants to file a Formal Complaint.

[29] Emphasis in original text.

If the OIC is the subject of the complaint, he will still provide the complaint packet to the citizen. He will take the citizens contact information and pass it to the next oncoming OIC. That OIC will call the complainant and take the report.

The OIC taking the report will complete the supervisor report portion and other steps as described in the policy.

***SUMMARY**:*

Meet with complainant
Determine Formal or Informal
Complete Citizen Complaint Packet and supervisor packet as needed
Gather information and media
Prepare memo and turn all forms in to Captain

The Captain will determine if further investigation is needed, and will take further steps if needed. The OIC will not put any narrative in Spillman other than the words, 'Citizen Complaint'.

See section of report entitled Practice: CPCC and Citizen Complaints.

Document Review: Agreement Between the Town of Brattleboro and NEPBA

We reviewed the union contract between the town and the union, effective July 2019-2022. The following excerpts from the agreement serve to highlight the scope of the union contract as it relates to recommendations made in this report.

Management Rights

The Employer will have a right to discipline and/or discharge for just cause as specifically set forth in section #7 Disciplinary/Discharge Actions and section #8 Grievance Procedure/Arbitration.

Management rights are included:

- *Direct the work force*
- *Hire and assign employees of its own selection*
- ***Determine the number to be employed in the police department***[30]
- *Maintain efficiency*
- ***Extend, maintain, curtail, sell or terminate all or any part of the police department operations or positions***
- *Determine size and location of facilities*
- ***Establish new methods of work***
- *Prepare, establish or revise job qualifications and classifications*
- *Assign and reassign work to be performed*
- ***Transfer, promote, demote, lay off; or discipline employees for just cause shown***
- ***Maintain and enforce rules of discipline***

[30] Bold emphasis added by reviewers to demonstrate content most relevant to our key findings and recommendations.

- ***Determine number and time of shifts, hours of work, days of week and number of hours and days in work week***
- *Determine need for new positions*

The above rights of management are not all-inclusive but indicate the type of matters where rights shall belong to or are inherent to management.

Suspension

After consultation with the Town Manager, a department head may suspend an employee without pay, when:

- *An employee repeats an action for which a written reprimand has previously been given;*
- *Takes unauthorized absence from work;*
- *Is* ***negligent in the performance of work such that a safety concern is present*** *or the Town may, or does experience a delay in work;*
- *Engages in conduct, on or off the job, which effectively limits or curtails the ability of the employee to perform an assigned job as set forth in the employee's job description;*
- ***A more severe disciplinary action is warranted due to the seriousness of the infraction or behavior.***

An employee may be suspended without pay for up to three working days by the department head after consultation with the Town Manager. Notice of such action must be forwarded to the Town Manager immediately. No suspensions longer than three days may be made by a department head without Town Manager approval.

A record of the suspension of an employee shall become a permanent part of the employee's personnel record.

Dismissal

An employee may be dismissed from the Town's service when, in the judgment of the department head, and concurrence of the Town Manager, the employee's work or conduct so warrants, and such action will serve the best interest of the organization. *A Department Head recommending dismissal of any employee shall submit, to the Town Manager, a written description of the reasons for such action, including all evidence prior to any action being taken. The employee shall be given written notice of the reasons for the dismissal and a notice of the grievance procedure found in this handbook.*

Reduction in Force

Town Management staff will assess and determine what positions will be identified for reduction. The assessment and decision will therefore be a cooperative one that will be concluded by final determination by the Town Manager. A reduction in force will be undertaken only when the best interest of the Town requires. Any reduction in forces will be undertaken in a manner which minimizes the adverse effects on the Town and affects the least number of employees as possible. In the event that a reduction in force is necessary, lay-offs within the affected department or classification will be made in accordance with the following procedure:

Employees within the affected department or classification who have not completed their probationary period will be terminated. Such employees shall have no recall rights. The Town Manager will determine which probationary employees will be terminated if fewer than the total number of probationary employees are to be terminated. This determination shall be based upon the qualifications of the employees, the evaluation received, the length of time with the Town.

Employees with the least departmental seniority shall be laid off first. However, a more senior employee may be laid off if that employee does not have the skills and qualifications required to do the available work, and a less senior employee does have the required skills and qualifications.

Employees who are notified that they are to be laid off shall have the right to "bump" a less senior employee in the employee's own department, provided that the employee has the skills and qualifications required to do the work of the "bumped" employee. Such an action shall be considered to be a voluntary request for demotion, if the position being sought is a lower classification.

Internal Investigations

The Town and the Association agree that Internal Investigations shall be handled in accordance with Policy and Procedure #2001 (as amended).

We recommend that the BPD engage in some accountability work to stand up against the reports of NEPBA's executive director's racist and misogynistic comments and jokes about receiving sexual favors[31].

Practices: BCJC and the Justice Alternatives Program

The Brattleboro Community Justice Center (BCJC) empowers people in the Brattleboro area to maintain community well-being through restorative justice principles, practices, and programs.[32]

The BCJC provides the following information about its programs on its website:

- ***Justice Alternatives****: Individuals are referred to the Justice Alternatives program by the police or State's Attorney for misdemeanors such as noise violations, unlawful trespass, unlawful mischief and other offenses* ***before*** *someone is charged with a crime. If the individual participates successfully in the Justice Alternatives program, they will not be charged. Each pre-charge process is crafted for each situation; individuals might participate in a Restorative Justice Panel process, a restorative conference, or other activities. Victims and affected parties have the option of being involved.*
- ***Reentry program/COSA:*** *A Circle of Support and Accountability (COSA) is a team of trained community volunteers who meet with individuals recently released from prison. The group helps with challenges like finding a place to live, finding work, healing relationships, and building new ones. Volunteer commitment is one hour once per week.*

[31] Police union chief makes racist, misogynist comments about Democrats - Business Insider
[32] Brattleboro Community Justice Center website.

- ***Restorative Justice Panels:*** *A group of four to five trained community volunteers meets monthly with those who have committed or been impacted by crimes such as retail theft, leaving the scene of an accident, or disorderly conduct.*
- ***Restorative Schools:*** *Our Windham County restorative practices team is available to work with schools who want to build community and solve conflict using restorative practices. We provide trainings for adults and youth, circle facilitation and mediation, and coaching. We work with elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges in the Brattleboro area.*
- ***Community Forums:*** *Our staff and volunteers can work with community members to coordinate and facilitate conversations or circles on difficult topics. Over the years, we have facilitated forums about policing in Vermont, an anti-Semitic chalking incident, the impact of drug use on our community, diversity and inclusion, and more.*
- ***Speakers and Trainers:*** *Over the years, our staff and volunteers have spoken at or led trainings at hundreds of events in as many spaces, from church basements to prisons to fancy colleges.*

The BCJC and its programs are a strength in our community safety system as they provide alternatives to the court system and diversion from incarceration. We were unable to review data on the BCJC or its programs in the scope of this review; a deeper review of the BCJC's outcomes would give a clearer picture of the impact of these programs.

We reviewed the procedure and flow chart for the Justice Alternatives Program, a program of the Brattleboro Community Justice Center, under the authorization of the Windham County State's Attorney's Office, to process and resolve petty crimes outside of the court system. The program requires the willing participation of the person identified as the "offender" and the person(s) identified as the "victim/affected party." The following criminalized activities (labeled "crimes" by the program) are eligible for the Justice Alternatives Program:

- Noise Violations
- Unlawful Mischief Cases Under $500
- Simple Assault by Mutual Affray
- Petty Larceny
- Credit Card Fraud or Bad Checks under $300
- Disorderly Conduct
- Unlawful Trespasses that do not involve Residences
- Civil Ordinance Violations
- Home and Neighborhood Conflicts

The CJC also has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Brattleboro Police, the Brattleboro Food Coop, and the Windham County State's Attorney's Office to articulate the use of the Justice Alternatives Program for petty crimes that frequently led to police contact. The BCJC and its collaboration with the police, the state's attorney's office, and the Brattleboro Food Coop, one of the

largest downtown businesses, is a model that can be replicated with other downtown businesses that are affected by petty crime. The BFC and the BPD have been able to reduce use of no-trespass orders through this MOU.

Practices: No Trespass Orders

The department currently does not have a formal policy on No Trespass Orders. At some point in the last three years, the department issued a No Trespass Order procedure that includes an introduction that explains some context leading to the creation of a written procedure, which appears to have not existed prior. The following excerpts reflect some of the content in the Introduction:

> *"in the past years, No Trespass Orders were issued by Brattleboro police officers for any violation committed on public property. The violations consisted of all criminal behavior along with various civil violations of Town Ordinances. The No Trespass Orders issued did not expire. On a case by case basis, at the request from the Directors of Groundworks or the Brattleboro Restorative Justice Center, I have met with them along with the recipient of the No Trespass Order in order to mediate disputes...*
>
> *As the opiate crisis ravaged our community, we issued No Trespass Orders along with information explaining the resources available for medical help in combating addiction. The trespass order and informational packets were issued in lieu of arrests for low level criminal offenses. It became apparent that the amount of No Trespass Orders were quickly becoming unmanageable. The Brattleboro Police Department, State's Attorney office and Brattleboro Restorative Justice Center began to and continue to hold meetings addressing this issue...*
>
> *The State's Attorney office volunteered to help "purge" the list to a manageable level. The SA's office undertook the task of contacting the owners of private property to inquire if they still wanted the order in effect against the individual. If the property owner decided in the affirmative, we reviewed the order to determine if the officer which issued the order was still employed, the date of the order and the whereabouts of the individual. ...Attempting to locate these individuals was a daunting task due to their transient nature. It was determined that the best course of action would be to leave the order in effect and if a violation occurred, along with the arrest, we would than reissue a new order and update the data in our system. This procedure has worked well...*
>
> *BPD undertook the same task with orders issued on public property. We used the year of 2017 as our baseline. If you were issued an Order in 2017 or prior, had no violations from 2018 to the present, the Order was not accompanied by criminal conduct, then the Order was rescinded. This review is complete. A total of 137 public property Orders were reviewed and 130 were rescinded, leaving a balance of 7 orders still in effect. Every effort is being made to locate and inform these individuals of there status. "*

The following excerpt is the current procedure for issuing No Trespass Orders:

Below are the procedures the Brattleboro Police Department will follow when issuing a No Trespass Order.

1. *No Trespass Orders for public property will only be issued when there is probable cause to arrest for acts of criminal behavior. There is no change to the Orders issued at the request of a private property owner or their agent.*
2. *No Trespass Orders issued for public property will self-expire one year from the date of issue if there is not a violation. If the Order is violated, the subject will be arrested and a new Order will be issued. The expiration date of the new Order will be one year from the date of issue of the new Order. Orders issued for private property are valid until the requesting private property owner or their agent rescind the Order. In either incident, BPD will send narratives to the WCSA for review.*
3. *If an Order is issued for public property, the defendant has 14 days from the date of issue to appeal the Order to the Town Manager. The Town Manager has 14 days from receipt of the appeal to schedule a hearing. The Town Manger has the authority to rescind or modify the length of term of the Order. The Order remains in effect until the appeal process is complete. There is no appeal process for Orders issued at the request of a private property owner or their agent.*
4. *The Trespass After Warning Affidavit has been updated to reflect this process.*

It is a strength that, at the urging of Groundworks Collaborative and the Brattleboro Community Justice Center, the department reviewed its practice of issuing and managing its No Trespass policy. Recognizing how unmanageable the practice became is an important step in taking accountability and addressing the problem. Other than mentioning the opiate crisis, this memo does little to acknowledge issues of power and root cause issues of the criminalization of poverty that are factors in so many situations in which no trespass orders are issued. The MOU between the BCJC, BFC and BPD is a good example of an alternative strategy for handling these issues that doesn't restrict belonging by exiling people from spaces and that minimize, rather than increase, criminalization.

Our recommendation to build neighborhood-level restorative justice programs is an area where alternative mechanisms, such as conflict negotiation skill building, for these kinds of community and neighborly conflicts between property owners and communities most impacted by policing (and specifically no trespassing orders) can occur.

Practices: CPCC and Citizen Complaints

Community oversight and accountability of the police is a historical and present-day challenge across the nation. Issues such as political alliances, corruption, lack of time, knowledge and resources for a commission or citizen review board based oversight and more often render attempts at citizen police oversight ineffective and at times harmful. Lack of accountability allows abuses of power to go unnoticed and unchecked, especially those that impact marginalized communities, such as people of color, queer

and trans people who live in poverty and/or homelessness, people who use drugs, people who do sex work, and other marginalized folks.

From a Review of National Police Oversight Models by the Police Assessment Resource Center (PARC):

> *"The lack of expertise in police tactics, strategy, and policy has prevented many review boards from effectively overseeing the police, and has often resulted in boards agreeing with the police department 90 percent or more of the time. Additionally, many review boards have been starved for resources and lacked adequate staff, leading to a large backlog of unresolved cases. As a result, many review boards have had difficulty providing meaningful insight or oversight."*[33]

Brattleboro's five-member Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPCC)'s charge was amended by the Selectboard on October 21, 2014 as follows "The mission of the Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPCC) is to facilitate mutually respectful communication between citizens and the Brattleboro Police Department regarding complaints, compliments or information concerning police procedures."[34]

In reviewing CPCC meeting minutes and hearing from a committee representative, it became clear that the scope of this committee is focused on negotiating, mediating, and resolving individual complaints made to the BPD about citizen encounters with the department. The committee meets monthly for approximately 30-45 minutes, and their work appears to be focused on reviewing complaints, interrogating the department representative who attends the meeting on the department response to the complaint, and potentially reaching out to the complainant to see if they want support from the committee to talk with the police and resolve the complaint. The CPCC does not appear to focus on trend analysis or accountability.

Based on a review of the last two years (2019 and 2020) of the CPCC meeting minutes, we have found the following concerns with this model of police oversight:

- The committee appears to be scheduled to meet monthly, and appears to meet for 30-45 minutes. In 2020, there was not a CPCC meeting that occurred until June, on 6/22/20. January, February, early June, October, and December 2019 meetings were cancelled, with no information (agenda or minutes) present for March, April or May. This frequency and duration of Committee meetings does not seem sufficient to build the capacity needed to address police accountability.

[33] Review of National Police Oversight Models, Police Assessment Resource Center, February 2005.
[34] www.brattleboro.org

- Of all complaints and resulting BPD investigations reviewed by the committee in 2019 and 2020, it appears that they were all accepted and none were challenged or questioned by the CPCC, even despite circumstances in which complainants joined the CPCC meeting to express their dissatisfaction with the police response, amidst concerns of racial profiling and discrimination. In our review, we heard several concerns from the community, as well as internal to the systems involved, that the CPCC has "no teeth" and has a history of "rubber stamping" the police investigations. This culture not only lacks accountability, but is potentially complicit in resulting harm and protecting the police from real accountability.
- A review of all complaints over the last two years show observable themes of complaints related to discrimination: racial profiling, racial discrimination in enforcement action, and discriminatory and aggressive enforcement action towards people living with homelessness. It does not appear that these deeply concerning themes, or any themes, are identified, discussed or reviewed by the CPCC. Selective enforcement/policing/detainment of people living with homelessness in accessing public spaces serves to punish and criminalize issues related to poverty and lack of access to resources. This is an example of a community safety issue that could have been identified and highlighted through review of complaints, and an area where police and the Town could be held accountable. As a community, is it really safe to arrest a person without a home for unlawful trespass for sleeping on a park bench? And then post bail that the person cannot afford?
- There does not appear to be space held during CPCC meetings for any Policy or Procedure review, discussions about accountability/philosophy, national trends in police accountability and brutality, or related topics.

Internal Investigations and Citizen Complaint Policy (General Order 2001 and Appendices)

We recommend changing the word "citizen" to "community member" to be more inclusive.

> *I. Purpose*
>
> *The purpose of this order is to establish procedures for the prompt, objective, fair, legal and transparent processing and investigations of complaints against the department personnel as well as allegations of misconduct in order to improve service while protecting employee rights. Such complaints and allegations may come from the public, another organization, a department employee, anonymously, or via another source."*
>
> *II. Policy*
>
> *It is the policy of the Brattleboro Police Department to assess and if needed investigate all allegations of misconduct or complaints regarding service made against the department or its personnel. Such assessment and investigation will be made in a prompt, objective, fair, legal and transparent manner. This department recognizes that members are sometimes subjected to intense and rapidly evolving circumstances during the performance of their duties. While professionalism and proper conduct must be maintained, these circumstances can result in safety and prompt action taking precedence over niceties and refined discourse. Officers and supervisors are encouraged to take the time to explain actions and decisions to citizens when safety permits.*

While this policy seems to be trying to acknowledge that there are situations in which people may be treated less than ideal by officers, it reads as defensive and minimize the very real harm that can and does happen in police and community interactions by stating "prompt action taking precedence over niceties and refined discourse." This language is inappropriate given the accounts of racial bias, profiling and discrimination that lead to harm. We recommend removing this sentence.

> *Anonymous Complaint: A complaint made by a person whose identity is truly not known to the person receiving the complaint. In order to preserve the legal and due process rights of all parties, requests for anonymity by known complainants will generally not be honored.*
>
> *1. We accept all complaints, but anonymous complaints are inherently less credible.*

It is not explained why anonymous complaints are "inherently less credible". Given the fear and risk of retaliation that many people reported, even in sharing their experiences with policing with us in this project, we feel that it is important to note that anonymity allows for a degree of safety and protection while also allowing people to use their voice and share their experience. In our review, we did not discredit or disbelief experiences that were shared with us anonymously. We anticipated fear and risk of retaliation and designed an anonymous option for sharing in an effort to take care of this need and concern. We encourage the department to consider why anonymous complaints are considered less credible. One consideration may be because they cannot be responded to. This would indicate that the administrative task of responding to a complaint may take precedence over the opportunity for self-reflection and accountability work that complaints provide.

In this policy, it is articulated in

> "*IV. Procedure E. Investigation and Processing*
>
> *The chief of police or his designee retains the authority to place any employee on paid leave during an investigation. Such a duty status will not be considered an indication of wrongdoing."*

We recommend that the department clarify the accountability process for when a complaint is sustained.

We recommend changing this policy to indicate that administrative leave will not be paid in complaints and investigations that find wrongdoing associated with excessive force and other disciplinable harms.

Citizen Complaint Investigation Report- Appendix

We recommend removing the sections on the responding officers observation of complainants clothing.

It is important to note that citizen complaints are currently the only mechanism that the police department has to document and track allegations of bias, profiling, discrimination and general misconduct. While demographic data such as race and sex are captured and able to be reported on, there is no evidence in this review that any accountability measures are being taken to analyze this data for bias or misconduct. Additionally, there does not appear to be attempts made in the last two years to analyze trends in complaint information related to bias or misconduct. As is articulated in this policy, all investigations of complaints are handled and resolved internally by a supervisor or other manager on an individual basis. The only external body reviewing the complaints and responses is the CPCC, which has not challenged a department response to a complainant in two years and has not performed any deeper analysis of misconduct or bias and discrimination.

Based on these findings, we recommend that the current model of the CPCC be disbanded and impacted communities, especially people of color leadership, be consulted (and compensated) to determine process for systemic accountability. We also recommend more oversight from the Town Manager on police accountability in the following areas:

- Citizen complaints and department responses
- Racial profiling, bias, and discrimination
- Use of force
- Policing of/functional criminalization of homelessness, poverty and substance use
- Policing of/functional criminalization of mental health and emotional crisis

Practice: Welfare Checks, Mental Health Crisis Response and Non-Consensual Forced Treatment

"We are not mental health experts. I have never said we are mental health experts. I have never went out and proposed that we were mental health experts. Basically what happened was as mental facilities around the state and in the country closed their doors it became a law enforcement problem. It was dumped at our doorstep. There was no chief that went around and said 'Hey we want to do mental health calls! We're all over it.' It became our problem, by default. It became our problem. And that, that created some pretty tragic incidents where we weren't trained in it."

-BPD Chief M. Fitzgerald, in a community forum on policing, Summer 2020[35]

The BPD collaborates with local health and mental health agencies in formal and informal ways. These collaborations are often lauded as successes that increase access to appropriate supports for community members in need. It is likely that sometimes these programs do serve to connect community members with resources such as voluntary substance use and mental health treatment and case management support, however this was not a finding of our review. It is a strength in our town that there are

[35] BCTV, "Community Forum: Policing in Brattleboro 6/17/20". Quote is at Timestamp 1:15:29.

organizations that support impacted communities who are adopting best practices to involve the voices of those experiencing harm and oppression in program feedback and development. It is also a strength in our town that the police department recognizes that mental, emotional, and spiritual health crises, disabilities, homelessness, and poverty should not be criminalized/police issues and actively resist community pressure to further criminalize these experiences.

Some of these formal collaborations include the Police Social Worker Liaison and Project Care and the informal collaborations are noted in the high use of the "agency assist" and "welfare check" dispatch codes in police response. (see Table 3.)

While it is important to consider the intentions of these collaborations, our listening work and systems data review found harmful impacts of these programs in practice. These collaborations strengthen the power of the current system and its players, a power that some professionals that work within these systems identified as paternalistic and leads to increased policing and functional criminalization of common human experiences like psychic and emotional distress, spiritual and existential crises, panic, fear, profound confusion, altered or extreme states, and substance use. The practice of the police performing welfare checks on community members when contacted by a concerned bystander, neighbor, or loved one is another example of the policing of mental and emotional health needs. The listening information from community members who have been impacted by these programs and professionals who work within relevant agencies demonstrate the harm caused by these powerful collaborations that reduce a person's agency and autonomy in their life and their personal healing. The data collected on these programs is scarce and does not demonstrate that the current programs as designed are making their intended impact.

One of the major areas of danger and harm that we heard about in our listening was the fear, trauma, and terror associated with coercive and involuntary psychiatric treatment, which often involves the police and/or Windham County Sheriff's Department, the HCRS Crisis team, Rescue, Inc, and other systems such as The Retreat or other inpatient psychiatric hospitals, the Police Social Work Liaison, and more. The lack of mobile, responsive, and truly voluntary support for mental health and emotional crisis unfortunately strengthens the alliances between these system responses, with some negative and harmful consequences.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission has issued an appeal to do away with non-consensual psychiatric treatment.[36]

> *"Locked in institutions, tied down with restraints, often in solitary confinement, forcibly injected with drugs and overmedicated, are only few illustrations of the ways in which persons with disabilities, or those perceived to be so, are treated without their consent, with severe consequences for their physical and mental integrity.*
>
> *Globally, persons with developmental and psychosocial disabilities face discrimination, stigma and marginalization and are subject to emotional and physical abuse in both mental health facilities and the community. And every year, the rights and dignity of hundreds of thousands of people across the world are violated as a consequence of non-consensual psychiatry interventions.*
>
> *All too often persons with developmental and psychosocial disabilities are formally or informally destitute of their legal capacity and arbitrarily deprived of their liberty in psychiatric hospitals, other specialized institutions, and other similar settings.*
>
> *Dignity cannot be compatible with practices of force treatment which may amount to torture. States must halt this situation as a matter of urgency and respect each person's autonomy, including their right to choose or refuse treatment and care.*
>
> *Without freedom from violence and abuse, autonomy and self-determination, inclusion in the community and participation in decision-making, the inherent dignity of the person becomes an empty concept. The international community needs to acknowledge the extent of these violations, which are broadly accepted and justified in the name of psychiatry as a medical practice.*
>
> *The concept of 'medical necessity' behind non-consensual placement and treatment falls short of scientific evidence and sound criteria. The legacy of the use of force in psychiatry is against the principle 'primum non nocere' (first do no harm) and should no more be accepted."*

Police participation in mental health crisis response appears to increase the use of intimidation, coercion, force, and violence in attempts to direct people into forced, involuntary treatment (drugging and functional incarceration via hospitalization). In most of the tracers reviewed for use of force related to a mental health need or crisis, the police spent less than 1 hour with the person (an average of 47 minutes). See the section on Use Of Force data in this report. In the authors of this report's professional experience, for those experiencing mental, emotional and spiritual health crises it often takes many hours of non-violent and non-coercive support and counsel, often just sitting with people while they are in distress, to help someone move through their experience and settle. Sometimes, this support needs to

[36] Devandas-Aguilar, C. and Pûras, D. "Dignity must prevail - An appeal to do away with non-consensual psychiatric treatment," United Nations Human Rights, World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2015.

be available for days. This is demonstrated in the phenomena we see in our community of people staying at the ER for hours or days and is even acknowledged in the police department's policy on Working with Mentally Ill and Emotionally Disturbed People (see section on Policy and Procedure review in this report). It is unreasonable to expect that police or police-like responders will be able to safely resolve these needs or crises in 30, 45, or 90 minutes. Because the police and the HCRS crisis team are almost always unable to spend the length of time and attention needed in these situations, threats, coercion, and force are more likely to be used to get compliance and to hasten the response. Often, force is used to bring people to the ER or to keep people at the ER, which is not a sufficient or appropriate location or level of support for folks experiencing mental or emotional health crises. The Brattleboro Memorial Hospital also uses coercion, restraint, seclusion, and forced drugging to keep people at the hospital and compliant, or what they call "safe," as a means to justify such unsafe and violent responses.

We feel it is important to make a clear distinction between voluntary and truly voluntary support. It can be posited that there are voluntary mental health supports currently available, including the HCRS crisis team and outpatient and inpatient mental health services. However, there is ample evidence in our listening and in the tracer reviews that when these supports are sought voluntarily there is a significant risk that, if the person changes their mind about accessing treatment or becomes "non-compliant" in some way (like wanting to go home, or wanting to self-direct their treatment), medical, mental health, and safety professionals have the power to involuntarily commit people against their will and use it. When a person's status changes from voluntary to involuntary (which often amounts to an administrative shift done without a person's knowledge or consent), force or threat of force is very often used to contain, restrain, and transport a person. The force used may be physical restraint, mechanical restraint,and/or forced drugging (sometimes all of the above) and may be administered by the police, Rescue, medical or mental health professionals (sometimes all of the above).

Due to the high risk of involuntary commitment/forced treatment and use of physical and medical force that people who seek support for mental, emotional and spiritual crises face, many community members report that they avoid engaging with any support system at all costs when having these experiences. The primary task of the HCRS Crisis Team is to assess a person for level of care, including whether or not they meet criteria for involuntary commitment. While many community members use this resource as it is also the only currently available 24/7 crisis support option in town[37], many who do so risk their freedom to access support with dignity and choice, and many in our community will not

[37] Pathways, Vermont does have a state-wide 24/7 warm line.

reach out to this resource for help. In addition, there is a common practice among outpatient therapeutic providers to violate confidentiality and report someone to the police if they are expressing suicidal intent and often in acute and non-acute situations of psychic distress. These practices have led to a high level of mistrust for many in the current system of mental health response and are seriously lacking in any effective accountability, change or repair mechanisms when someone is harmed. Furthermore, due to stigma and bias related to sanism[38] and the intensity of the experiences, survivors of these experiences face a lot of incredulity and disbelief.

Just like a community could never close their hospital emergency room and expect that community members will or should never have medical emergencies, it is unreasonable and harmful for a community to lack safe and appropriate services and spaces specifically designed to support people in moving through intense mental and emotional health experiences and emergencies, or to expect that community members will or should not have these needs. Furthermore, torturing people with coercion, intimidation, force and violence to force them to access unwanted treatment, that very often increases risk and trauma[39], because there are no better options available is a community safety issue that we must address. These human rights violations are recognized as a global health issue; see policy recommendations on mental health, human rights, and legislation from the World Health Organization[40]. We recommend that the Town focus its efforts in this area on eliminating police response to the vast majority of mental health crises that do not involve deadly weapons or imminent risk of harm, following suit with other police departments across the country[41].

Practices: BPD Training

We reviewed the training records for 2019 and 2020, which included the training title, length/duration of training, and number of officers who attended. Fully staffed, the Department has 26 officers; however, they have been chronically understaffed for the duration of this review period. The Lists of 2020 and 2019 Training Attended By Brattleboro Police Officers can be viewed in Appendix A.

[38]Vermont Psychiatric Survivors. What is Sanism? March 2019.
[39] Jordan, J and McNiel, D. Perceived Coercion During Admission Into Psychiatric Hospitalization Increases Risk of Suicide Attempts After Discharge. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior: The Official Journal of the American Association of Suicidality, June 2019.

[40] World Health Organization (WHO). Mental health, human rights, and legislation policy recommendations.
[41] New York City Announces New Mental Health Teams to Respond to Mental Health Crises | City of New York (nyc.gov).

Based on the documents provided, in 2020 BPD officers attended 48 training opportunities totalling 300.75 hours. Almost all officers received some diversity, equity, inclusion, & bias training, for a total of nine hours. The following trainings were mandatory or attended by all or almost all officers:

- Domestic Violence (2 hrs)
- Equity, Diversity, Creating a Welcoming Community (7 hrs)
- Stop Stick (.5 hrs)
- PACIF Bloodborne Pathogens (1.5 hrs)
- Surviving Verbal Conflict (4 hrs)
- Firearms Qualification Course (6 hrs)
- Implicit Bias (2 hrs)
- VT Roadside Data Collection (1 hr)
- Narcotic Impairment (DRE)/Transports (.5 hrs)

The vast majority of the remaining 39 training opportunities were attended by one officer; some training opportunities had two to seven officers in attendance. The reduced number and hours of training in 2020 is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and reduced opportunities for in-person training opportunities.

In 2019 BPD officers attended 102 training opportunities, totaling 1,627.74 hours (881 of these hours were a Basic Police Course through Vermont Police Academy that 3 officers attended; the other 101 training opportunities totalled 746.74 hours). There were no training opportunities in 2019 specific to implicit bias, diversity, equity, or inclusion. The following trainings were mandatory or attended by all or almost all officers:

- 2019 Windham County State's Attorney Update (2 hrs)
- After Hours Bail/Conditions of Release (.5 hrs)
- Building Clearing (2 hrs)
- CJIS Security Test (Crim Justice Info Security) (.5 hrs)
- Compliant Cuffing Refresher (.25 hrs)
- Fair and Impartial Policing (1 hr)
- First Aid (1.5 hrs)
- Fleeing Felon/Use of Force Reporting Tips (.5 hrs)
- Low Light Firearms/Fall Range (4 hrs)
- Police/Dog Incidents (.75 hr)
- Remington 870 Handling (.5 hrs)
- Spring Firearms Range (6 hrs)
- Stop Stick Use (.75 hr)
- Survival Stress Response/Pre-Assault Clues Refresher (.5 hr)
- Taser Recertification (1.5 hr)
- Use of Force Modules A, B, and C (7 hrs total)

- Vehicle Operation and Pursuit Policies Refresher (.5 hrs)
- Vicarious Trauma (.5 hrs)
- Warm Zone Operations/School Crisis (2.5 hrs)

The majority of the remaining training opportunities were attended by one officer; some training opportunities had two to nine officers in attendance.

It is encouraging to see that the Department is making a concerted effort to include training on diversity, equity and inclusion and implicit bias. The FY 2022 Town budget shows a projected 48% increase in the police training budget line item, from $27,000 to $40,000. When we inquired about this projected increase, we were informed by the Town Manager that "the BPD intends to invest significantly in DEI, cultural humility, and related training, as well as in continued development of de-escalation skills."

The proposed investment is certainly well-intentioned. However, we recommend caution when proceeding with this plan for two reasons:

1. Increased sensitivity and bias training is not necessarily shown to be effective in reducing bias.
2. There may be discrepancies between the Department's level of readiness and receptivity and the training opportunities provided, which may further reduce the effectiveness of any bias or DEI training offered.

We recommend that the Department further assess the readiness and receptivity of its officers to improve detection of their own biases, racial and otherwise. We also recommend that if and when the Department does move forward with DEI and/or implicit bias training, it engages local BIPOC and antiracist facilitators and trainers for consultation on potential trainers and training opportunities that might be a good fit for the Department. We recommend that the Department consider a broader approach to reducing bias than simply offering training opportunities, which are unlikely to produce the desired results. Acknowledging and reckoning with the presence of racial bias is a good and necessary first step.

Considering that in 2020 there was a 60% reduction in offered training hours from the prior year, we do not recommend increasing the department's training budget; but instead assessing how to utilize current training resources to identify individual training needs and readiness and match officers with appropriate training.

BPD Data: Offenses & Arrests

Spillman Data[42]

The Brattleboro Police Department uses Motorola Solutions "Spillman" Public Safety Command Center Software to capture and manage data. Many of the following tables depict data analyzed from reports generated for 2019 and 2020 from the BPD's Spillman software, unless source is otherwise noted.

The Department uses a series of Codes in the system to organize incidents. The codes are applied at different points in contact. When dispatch receives a call, they apply a Nature code (indicating the nature of the call). Then when the officer writes their report after responding to the incident, they apply an Offense code (indicating type of offenses involved in the incident) and Circumstance codes (as well as other codes). Disposition codes are also added to signify the status of the case— ACT signifies an open, active case; COM signifies a closed, completed case with no enforcement action; and CAA, along with a few other codes, signify arrest or enforcement action.

Table 3. Top 6 Offense Types by Percentages in 2019 and 2020

Offense Code - Descriptor	2019- Offense type/total incidents	2019- % of total Incidents	2020- Offense type/total incidents*	2020- % of total Incidents
PSC - Suspicious Person/Circumstance	1,680/10,626	16%	1,204/7,874	15%
ANPR- Animal Problem	716/10,626	6.7%	468/7,874	5.9%
ASST- Agency Assist	657/10, 626	6.2%	454/7,874	5.8%
2621- Trespassing Violation	545/10,626	5.1%	369/7,874	4.7%
WELF- Welfare Check	505/10,626	4.8%	437/7,874	5.5%
PUBL- Public Speaking Engagement	501/10,626	4.7%	452/7,874	5.7%

*YTD 2020 is as of 12/10/20.

Table 4. Arrest Rate per Year

Year	# of Incidents	# of Arrests	Arrest Rate

[42] https://www.motorolasolutions.com/en_us/products/command-center-software.html

2019	10,626	752	7%
2020*	7,874	613	7.8%

*YTD 2020 is as of 12/8/20

Table 5. Arrest Rate by Race

	2019	% of Arrests	2020*	% of Arrests
Total Arrests	755	-	481	-
White/Male	404	54%	302	63%
Black/Male	70	9.3%	30	6.2%
Hispanic/Male	10	1.3%	3	<1%
Asian/Male	4	<1%	1	<1%
Indian/Male	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Male	5	<1%	0	0
White/Female	226	30%	133	28%
Black/Female	14	1.9%	7	1.5%
Hispanic/Female	6	<1%	3	<1%
Asian/Female	1	<1%	2	<1%
Indian/Female	2	<1%	0	0
Unknown/Female	13	1.7%	0	0
Total POC	107 or 125	14-17%	46	10%

*Data obtained from BPD spreadsheet; 2020 YTD as of 10/1/20

See Overview of the Town of Brattleboro section for comparative demographic census data.

Table 6. Arrest Rate per Offense, 2019 and 2020 (WELF and PSC)

Offense Code (descriptor)	Total # of Incidents in 2019 & YTD 2020	Total # of Active Cases	Total # of Arrests in 2019 & YTD 2020	Percentage of Incidents that resulted in enforcement action (arrest)*

WELF Offense Code (welfare check)[43]	968	9	14	1.5%
PSC Offense Code (suspicious person/activity)[44]	2071	88	128	6.5%

*For the final column (percentage of incidents that resulted in enforcement action/arrests), the Total # of Arrests column was divided by the Total # of Closed (*non-active*) incidents (Total # of incidents - Total # of active cases). 2020 YTD as of 11/18/20.

We attempted to review and trace data on how domestic violence cases are handled by the department. Because the DOMV circumstance code used by the department is specifically used for domestic violence cases that lead to an arrest, data related to this code do not give us good information about how all domestic violence situations are handled.

In 2019 and 2020, there were 75 incidents in which the domestic violence (DOMV) circumstance code was used. Of those 75 cases in which the DOMV circumstance code was used, 70, or 95%, of these incidents ended in arrest. Again, this indicates that the code is dominantly used for domestic violence incidents in which an arrest takes place.

There is valid concern that has been expressed about unpacking police response to calls that fall into the Suspicious Activity/Person offense code, which represents the highest volume of police contacts in one single code (15-16%). For respondents who feel supported by police response in domestic violence situations (many respondents who have survived interpersonal violence did not feel supported by police response), there is concern about changes that may lead to reduced response times for situations involving domestic violence that may be called in as suspicious activity.

Of these 75 cases in which the DOMV circumstance code is used, indicating that a domestic violence related arrest took place, only 4, or 5.3%, came through with a nature code of Suspicious Activity/Person. The nature code is the code used by dispatch when the call comes in. This indicates that dispatch appears to be effectively coding domestic violence cases upon receipt of the call, as these calls are generally not getting routed as Suspicious Activity.

[43] Report Includes: All dates greater than `00:00:00 01/01/19`, All agencies matching `1302`, All officers, All dispositions, All natures, All locations, All cities, All clearance codes, All observed offenses, All reported offenses matching `WELF`, All offense codes, All circumstance codes

[44] Report Includes: All dates greater than `00:00:00 01/01/19`, All agencies matching `1302`, All officers, All dispositions, All natures, All locations, All cities, All clearance codes, All observed offenses, All reported offenses matching `PSC`, All offense codes, All circumstance codes

The nature codes that are associated with the 75 incidents in 2019 & 2020 in which the DOMV circumstance code was used are:

Table 7. Percentage of DOMV Incidents by Nature Code

Nature Code	# of DOMV incidents	% of Total DOMV Incidents (75)
Family Fight	27	36%
Citizen Dispute	15	20%
Aggravated Assault	15	20%
Simple Assault	7	9%
Suspicious Activity	4	5%
911 Hang Up	3	4%
Knife Assault	1	1%
Crash Injury	1	1%
Noise Disturbance	1	1%
Restraining Order	1	1%
Threatening	1	1%

Once a police officer responds to a call, in their documentation they input an offense code. It is unlikely that a police officer would code something PSC/Suspicious Activity, such a generally used code, if it came through from dispatch with a more specialized code. In other words, the offense code, which happens later in the response process, is usually more specific than the nature code.

Below are some of the offense codes that may be used in situations in which domestic or interpersonal violence is occuring:

Table 8. Percentage of Incidents of Police Response by Offense Code

Offense Codes	2019	2020
Citizen Dispute	4%	4.6%
Disorderly Conduct, Other	1.3%	1.2%

Family Disturbance	1.1%	1%
911 Hangup	1.2%	1.9%
Threatening	.74%	1.4%
Conditions of Release Violation	.7%	.99%
Assault, Simple & Intimidation (2 codes)	.7%	.9%
Intoxicated Person	.75%	.6%
Aggravated Assault	.19%	.2%
Sex Offense, all (4 codes)	.02%	.1%
Domestic Abuse Order Violation	.12%	.09%
Stalking	.02%	.06%

Based on this data, it appears unlikely that many domestic violence incidents are coming through as suspicious activity. It appears that most domestic violence incidents are coming through as family fights, citizen disputes, and assaults. However, there is not enough data about these offense types to make any determination or finding about how to reduce police response to non-criminal "suspicious activity" or "citizen disputes" in a way that acknowledges the safety concerns related to domestic violence response.

We are recommending that the town invest in neighborhood restorative justice initiatives. Once these are established and resourced, there will be an alternative for non-criminal suspicious activity and disputes that could be handled without police contact. Use of these programs for non-criminal conflicts and disputes will refine the use of police resources and can potentially clarify this data.

BPD Data: Use of Force (UOF)

We reviewed the Use of Force policy and use of force data from the department.

The Brattleboro Police Department's Use of Force (General Order 601) Policy states the following,

> *"Brattleboro Police Department officers may use objectively reasonable force to control a situation, restore and maintain order, effect an arrest or detention, overcome resistance or defend themselves or others from physical harm or to accomplish a legal purpose. Officers are expected to make an objectively reasonable choice among force options based on the facts and circumstances known to them at the time as well as reasonable inferences drawn from those*

facts. BPD and all employees recognize the sanctity of human life as the guiding principle in use of force decisions.“

The BPD appears to use an internal spreadsheet to track Use of Force (UOF) incidents. The data captured on this spreadsheet include the *case number, date, time, day, call [type], charge, reporting officer, # of officers, type of force used, suspect's name, suspect's sex, suspect's race, PD injury, suspect injury.*

The types of force listed are “hand cont[ainment]," “head disp[lacement]," “knee strike," “OC," “draw," “spark," “aimed," “probes," “drive," “empty impact," “baton drawn," “baton strike," “F[ire]A[rm] drawn," “FA used.”

In 2019, there were **77** incidents in which police response led to use of force (UOF). There were a total of 10,626 police responses in 2019. If UOF data is captured accurately and completely, this means that ***in 2019, .7% of 2020 incidents that police responded to involved UOF.*** There were no incidents in which deadly force was used.[45] An average of 2.9 officers responded to incidents in which force is used.

There were 17 different reporting officers represented on the UOF spreadsheet for 2019. Of those 17, two were listed as the reporting officer on one (1) case (1.3% of UOF cases). Four officers were listed twice (2.6%), three officers were listed 4 times (5.2%), three officers were listed 5 times (6.5%), one officer was listed 6 times (7.8%), two officers were listed 7 times (9.1%), one officer was listed 8 times (10.4%), and one officer was listed 9 times (11.7%).

A suspect sustained injuries from the use of force in 18% of the UOF cases. A police officer sustained injuries in 12% of the UOF cases.

The table below depicts a breakdown of Call Types, Charges, Types of Use of Force, and Sex and Race data for the **77 UOF incidents in 2019.**

[45] While there were no UOF incidents in 2019 and 2020 in which firearms were used, there have been incidents in which firearms were used in recent years. In May 2018, Brattleboro and VSP police officers shot and injured someone suspected of conducting an armed robbery. On April 4th, 2014, a Brattleboro police officer shot and killed Michael Santiago, who was unarmed, during a search warrant. Although no weapons were found when the victim was searched, this fatal shooting was deemed justified. These were two incidents that just happened to surface in the course of the review, but were not part of this review period.

Table 9. 2019 Use of Force Data

CALL TYPE	% of total UOF incidents*	CHARGES	% of total UOF incidents*	TYPE OF FORCE USED***	% of total UOF incidents*	SEX & RACE DATA	% of total UOF incidents
Assault	29%	**Disorderly Conduct**	25%	**Hand Contain-ment** handcuffs	82%	**Male**	52%
Intoxication / DUI/ Overdose	10%	**None (no charge)**	25%	**Head Displacem ent**	23%	**Female**	42%
Disorderly/ Fight	10%	**Assault**	17%	**Firearm Drawn**	17%	**White**	77%
Domestic	8%	**Resisting**	13%	**Taser Draw**	5%	**Black**	17%
Suicidal^	8%	**Possession**	10%	**Aimed**	4%	**Hispanic**	1%
Warrant	8%	**Violation of Conditions**	9%	**Baton Drawn**	3%	***82% of the UOF cases involved hand containment (handcuffs). The remaining cases (18%) in which hand containment was not used, the UOF used in 10 of those 14 cases was “FA or baton drawn," two were “head disp[lacement]," two had no indication of which UOF was used. Of the 82% of UOF cases that involved handcuffs, in 62% handcuffs was the only force used; 38% included another	
Suspicious	7%	**Trespass**	3%	**Knee Strike**	3%		
Mental Health^	3%	**Other**:**	24%	**Probes**	3%		

Other**	33%	*Some incidents involved multiple call types, charges, and/or force used, so these percentages do not add to 100%.	**Empty Impact**	3%	type of force in addition to the handcuffs.
**Other call types include: juvenile problem, motor vehicle stops, runaway juvenile, medical/medical assist, PC, agency assist, gunshots, citizen dispute, violating conditions of release, attempt to elude, 911 hangup, restrain prisoner. **Other charges include: arrest on warrant, DUI, Unlawful mischief, DLS, Attempt to elude, Drug charges ^ All but one of the suicidal call types that resulted in UOF also had no charges. All of the mental health, medical, and agency assist call types had no charges.			**Baton Strike**	3%	
			Firearm Used	0%	

In 2020 (YTD 12/14/20), there were **47** incidents in which police response led to use of force (UOF). There were a total of 7,874 police responses in 2020 (YTD 11/19/20). If UOF data is captured accurately and completely, this means that approximately ***.5% of 2020 incidents that police responded to involved UOF.*** There were no incidents in which deadly force was used. An average of 3.36 officers responded to incidents in which force is used.

There were 14 different reporting officers represented on the UOF spreadsheet. Of those 14, five officers were listed as the reporting officer on one case (2% of UOF cases). Three officers were listed twice (4.3%), one officer was listed 3 times (6.4%), one officer was listed 4 times (8.5%), one officer was listed 6 times (12.8%), one officer was listed 7 times (14.9%), and two officers were listed 8 times (17%).

A suspect sustained injuries from the use of force in 17% of the UOF cases. A police officer sustained injuries in 8.5% of the UOF cases.

The table below depicts a breakdown of Call types, Charges, Types of Use of Force, and Sex and Race data for the **47 UOF incidents so far in 2020.**

Table 10. 2020 Use of Force Data

CALL TYPE	% of total UOF incidents*	CHARGES	% of total UOF incidents*	TYPE OF FORCE USED***	% of total UOF incidents*	SEX & RACE DATA	% of total UOF incidents
Warrant	19%	**Disorderly Conduct**	30%	**Hand Contain-ment** handcuffs	85%	**Male**	75%
Theft/ Burglary/ Robbery	9%	**None (no charge)**	23%	**Firearm Drawn**	32%	**Female**	19%
Domestic	9%	**Assault**	19%	**Head Displace-ment**	21%	**White**	77%
Disorderly Conduct	9%	**Resisting Arrest**	19%	**Knee Strike**	11%	**Black**	13%
Trespass	6%	**Possession**	17%	**Baton Drawn**	6%	**Hispanic**	4%
Suicidal^	6%	**Trespass**	11%	**Taser Draw**	2%	***85% of the UOF cases involved hand containment (handcuffs). The remaining cases (15%) in which hand containment was not used, the UOF used in all 7 cases was "FA drawn." Of the 85% of UOF cases that involved handcuffs, in 43% handcuffs was the only force used; 57% included another type of force in addition to the handcuffs.	
Suspicious	4%	**Other****	32%	**Aimed**	2%		
Welfare^	2%	*Some incidents involved multiple call types, charges, and/or force used, so these percentages do not add to 100%.		**Empty Impact**	2%		
Other**	36%			**Baton Strike**	2%		
**Other call types include: family fight, attempt to locate, agency assist, intoxicated juvenile, custodial arrest, medical assist, citizen assist. **Other charges include: Violation of conditions, Acc, Underage drinking, Add D, RT, Noise, Unlawful mischief, DUI, Attempt to elude, Grossly negligent operation				**Firearm Used**	0%		

^ All of the suicidal call types that resulted in UOF also had no charges. All of the welfare check and medical call types also had no charges.			

*YTD as of 12/14/20

We performed Tracers (see Methodology section) on a sampling of 16 UOF cases from 2019 and 2020. The cases reviewed were selected based on the data highlighted in the above tables— mental health and suicidal call types, cases in which force was used but no crime committed/no charge, and cases in which force was used on a Black person.

The case reviews provided an opportunity to read and review specific dynamics that led to use of force. The documentation reviewed includes all public records attached to an incident, including each responding officer's Response to Aggression or Resistance Report, which details that officer's account of the incident and provides the rationale for their use of force. In reviewing the reports and other supplemental documents for these 16 cases, the following themes emerged:

Use of Force Data Considerations

- ***Strengths***

The most significant strength observed is that no firearms have been used or discharged in the last two years. There has, however, been a fatal police shooting of a person of color in Brattleboro in the last 10 years (see footnote 53).

The Brattleboro Police Department captures "non-compliant handcuffing" as a use of force, which is not the case in all police departments. This demonstrates an acknowledgement that this activity constitutes force.

In the tracer reviews, there were a couple of examples of officers making sustained attempts to de-escalate and use minimum force necessary in situations that appeared to involve actual threat of safety to the officers or others.

- ***Time***

Of the nine UOF cases reviewed in which there was a mental health/suicidal call type and/or no charge, the average time that the officers spent responding to the incident was 47 minutes. This represents the total time spent on the incident; so in all cases, the time between the arrival of the first responding

officer and the use of force is even shorter than this average time (since the incident does not end immediately with the use of force).

This observed practice is in direct conflict with policy guidance in the Working with Mentally Ill and Emotional Disturbed Persons (General Order 835) that directs officers to elongate the amount of time spent responding to situations in order to encourage de-escalation and a "safe and successful resolution". One of the tracers indicated a life-threatening emergency in which an urgent response was indicated. However in most of these tracers, it is our assessment that the time spent attempting to resolve the situation without use of force was inadequate, as were many of the tactics described, as indicated in many of the excerpts from Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports in this section.

- ***Use of Training and Expertise as Justification for Use of Force***

The tracer reviews and community experiences we heard elicit significant concerns about how training is being applied in practice, specifically training in mental and emotional crisis response. "I know through training and experience…" seems to be a standard sentence starter used throughout Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports to defend one's use of force. This is alarming for a few reasons. There are many examples of officers finishing this sentence with content that is untrue, perpetuates myths and is stigmatizing. The content following this sentence starter is subjective, but is presented as objective, since it's based on training and experience. In these instances, training is causing harm as it is used to make sweeping and erroneous claims about human experiences and to justify force used.

This content and the concerns articulated are factors in our recommendation to freeze the training budget increase and focus existing training resources on assessing training needs and officer readiness for training, as well as the recommendation to decouple policing from mental health response. It is important to note that in two of these nine cases reviewed, the police were called by an agency to assist. In these instances, the agency is actually more suited to respond and even has their own security personnel, but likely contacted the police for the specific purpose of their power to use force for compliance.

Excerpts from Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports:[46]

> *"I know through training that people experiencing a mental health crisis can be violent and unpredictable. They are more likely to use force to escape detention."*

[46] All excerpts from reports are completely de-identified, including gender pronouns. [They/Them] have been used to replace gender pronouns for neutrality and de-identification.

"I know from my training and experience that people experiencing a mental health crisis can be violent and unpredictable they are also more likely to use force to get away."

"In my training and experience I know juveniles to have difficulty understanding the consequences of their actions and can be unreasonable when dealing with law enforcement."

"Through my training and experiences I know that mushrooms are a psychedelic drug and can leave consumers not in their right state of mind. Through my training and experiences I know that subjects under the influence of drugs can be unpredictable and are more likely to use violence."

- ***Insufficient Use of (and/or Documentation of) De-escalation Techniques; Insufficient Attempts to Engage More Appropriate Supports***

There are many examples from the tracers and community experiences in which inadequate supports lead to and/or exacerbate police intervention. In the use of force tracers, we see how dangerous the consequences of this inadequacy are. This includes support for mental and emotional health needs as well as needs related to communication, physical disability, and creative engagement strategies.

Excerpts from Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports:

"Based on my training and experience I know that people who are intoxicated and people who are experiencing a mental health crisis can be violent, unpredictable, and are more likely to use force or violence to evade arrest or detention. Based on all the facts we had collected I knew that we would be taking [person] into protective custody."

The person who had force used on them in this case is deaf, and although it was pre-determined before the police responded that they would be taken into protective custody, there was no documentation of any attempt to engage an interpreter.

"Fearing the subject would be able to overpower the officers I positioned myself where I could openly see [their] torso and aimed my Taser a[t] [their] lower stomach region in order to get an effective probe spread to quickly incapacitate the subject if necessary. I gave warning to the subject to stop resisting or I would use my Taser. [ ]. I immediately advised officers to handcuff the subject for our safety as [they] were still in a state of mental crisis, had overwhelming size and were acting unpredictable. When officers attempted to handcuff the subject [they] began to actively resist, tensing up and pulling away. I again advised the subject to stop or I would use my Taser."

This excerpt is concerning for several reasons, including the use of threat of violence and the use of force on a minor who was experiencing suicidal ideation. Body size discrimination is evident in this report as the officer comments on the child's body size several times in the report and uses body size as justification for use of force.

While there was a safety risk present here, the officers did not demonstrate (or report on) use of de-escalation skills or engage more skilled support and the choice to immediately threaten to Taser the child by aiming it at their belly presents as an excessive use of force.

- ***Lack of Attunement to Police Presence/Use of Force to Intimidate as an Escalation Technique***

Non-police community members have been using nonviolent, noncoercive, nonthreatening interventions to support people experiencing extreme emotional and psychic states since the beginning of human history. To support the notion that police *must* (and are therefore justified to) use force to get subjects to comply is reductionist, oppressive, and inaccurate. Furthermore, it is clear that local health care and mental health agencies utilize the police for the expressed function of their legal power to use force to get patients/clients to comply, even agencies that have their own security personnel, such as the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. This endorsement, support, and requests of the police to resort to force to obtain compliance is a community-wide safety issue.

Excerpts from Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports:

> *"As I was walking away, I was advised that [patient] had just left the ER AMA. I was asked to get [them] and return [them] to the ER. I asked if [they] were an involuntary admission and they said no. I asked if [they] needed to be brought back to the ER. I was told that [they] had not been cleared by mental health and that [they] were a safety concern to [themself] and [they] needed to be brought back inside the hospital."*
>
> *Due to [them] needing to go back inside, I decided I was going to place [them] in handcuffs for [their] safety and ours. Due to the mental health concerns, it was my belief that [they] may do what [they] thought was necessary to be able to get away and "go home."*[47] *I gave [them] a verbal command to "lay down." When I did this, [they] complied but by laying on [their] left side. I still had control of [their] right hand. I then gave [them] verbal commands to lay on [their] stomach. [They] refused. I gave [them] the same command a second time and [they] still refused. It was impossible to get [them] into handcuffs with [them] laying on [their] left side without using more force that what I deemed was necessary. Given the fact that [they] would not compl[y], I pulled [their] right hand sharply and put [their] right hand behind [their] back. When I did this, it caused [them] to move onto [their] stomach where I could gain control of [their] other hand to handcuff [them]. I checked the handcuffs for proper fit and double locked them to ensure*

[47] "go home" is in quotations in the report, possibly indicating disbelief that this was the person's actual intention. Earlier in the report, it indicates that the officer asked the person where they lived, and they responded with their street name but refused to give their street number. The report says, *"One of the hunter north security officers made a comment about how it would be hard to give [them] a ride home if I didn't know the address. With this, [they] stepped off of the picnic table and said that [they] we're going home."* This excerpt from the report indicates that some manipulation was used by the authorities to indicate that going home was possible, and that they would even give them a ride home. Then their intention to go home was questioned, and used as a rationale for use of force. It is important to note that this person was at the hospital voluntarily.

they didn't overtighten. [They] were now screaming. One of the security officers went inside and retrieved a wheelchair to transport [them] back inside."

- ***Traumatic Impact of Policing and the Use of Coercion, Intimidation, and Force***

In the listening work, we heard from many respondents about the traumatic impact of police discrimination and violence. Use of force and threats of use of force are some of the most traumatizing and violent aspects of police work. Many of the people in communities that are most policed are already traumatized and carry intergenerational trauma from policing and other institutions subject to systemic racism. And armed police presence, let alone use of force, activates trauma responses. There is a grave lack of accountability in police work across the nation for the trauma and harm caused and perpetuated in policing and the lack of attunement to trauma and its impact on human behavior, for all people, including police officers themselves. Resmaa Menakem writes in *My Grandmother's Hands:*

"But that is precisely how those words are often used, accepted, and validated— as a "reasonable" excuse for destroying yet another black body. Variations of the phrase "I feared for my life" get repeated over and over by law enforcement professionals who fired their weapons when they shouldn't have… The fear these police officers speak of is surely real. But claiming that this fear gives them the unrestricted right to shoot bullets into bodies is a form of gaslighting… What will happen if "I was scared to death" results in the acquittal of enough police officers who have shot dark-skinned human beings? Will that phrase become the standard, default defense…? …Have we crossed that line already? …If so, then should black men routinely be frightened of being shot by police, especially when they are pulled over for little or no reason? What if one of those black drivers, scared to death, were to shoot the police officer who pulled him over? Does "I feared for my life" constitute a valid defense for that dark-skinned man? If it does, then we are in deep trouble. If it does not— but it becomes one for police— then we are also in deep trouble."

We encourage the reader to resist the urge to dismiss this sentiment simply because Brattleboro has not had a police shooting in the last two years. This has happened in Brattleboro. And currently the police are armed with several different weapons during all instances they respond to and are using some of them with some regularity. The person who is the subject of police intervention is not able to know how or if the officers will use force or a weapon, and the fear and trauma activated in all levels of police response are valid and need to be acknowledged and tended to.

Excerpts from Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports:

"I asked pt politely several times to head back into hospital because the staff was just trying to help [them]"

"Throughout the incident, [person] was screaming random statements such as 'mama' and 'papa' and 'don't kill me'."

Hospital staff needed to inject [them] with medication but [their] combativeness put [them]self and staff at risk of injury. Officers restrained [them] for everyone's safety. We continued restraints for everyone's safety while [they] were placed in hospital restraints... [Their] head needed to be controlled at times to prevent spitting."

- ***Lack of Accountability in UOF Cases***

The only mechanism for accountability for use of force is internal, by supervisor and chief review. In the 16 UOF tracer cases reviewed, there were no incidents that involved deeper review or investigation from the supervisor or chief, even in cases that the reviewer found potential for excessive use of force, coercion, or manipulation to obtain compliance. The UOF cases reviewed indicated many potential issues, as articulated in this section of the report, that appeared unaddressed in the internal review. This mechanism of internal review is problematically subject to groupthink and internal protection.

A specific area that lacks accountability is in the use of "Defending Self" and "Restraining Subject for Own Safety" as the Action Officer was Engaged In (justification for use of force).

Excerpts from Response to Aggression or Resistance Reports:

"[They] turned towards me and threw [their] jacket at me. I think I used a rear supported wrist lock to control [them] as I feared [they] may try to assault me. ... [They] became even more resistant and started to yell "I hate you."

In the case below , 'Defending Self' was used as reason/justification for restraining a verbally aggressive pre-teen child who tried to hit a police officer but did not make contact. The officer then struggled to put the child in handcuffs. Once cuffed, the child "projectile vomited."

"It should be noted that [the child] did not actually land a punch on me. It should also be noted that per [child's parent], [the child] is dealing with numerous mental health issues and that all [parent] was looking for was to have the mental health issues dealt with. [Parent] said that this has been ramping up in the past few weeks and that the medications [the child] is currently taking don't seem to be working. Due to [the child's] mental health issues and the fact that [parent] is looking for help, [the child] will not be charged with any type of crime. It was evident that [the child] needs mental health assistance. I did tell [parent] that I would be contacting DCF in regards to this and [parent] was on board as they might be able to make more resources available to [parent]."

Based on these findings, we recommend that the BPD update its Use of Force policy and practice to reflect the following:

- Consider what needs to be included in this policy to recognize and acknowledge that implicit bias impacts an officer's ability to assess an "objectively reasonable" risk/response, which leads to bias and discrimination in Department's use of force.
- Perform an assessment of the Department's readiness to acknowledge and address racial bias and professional development plans that address bias before administering training in order to reduce risk of ineffective, wasteful, and harmful use of training resources. Include de-escalation and bystander training.
- Assess the department's practice and the subjectivity of this definition of "imminent" in order to refine it to provide more guidance:

  > *"Has a broader meaning than immediate or instantaneous, the concept of imminent should be understood to be elastic, involving an ongoing period of time depending on the circumstances rather than a moment in time under the definition of immediate."*

- Remove this Excerpt from UOF Policy: *"Procedure- De-escalation: Officers will recognize that subjects suffering from a mental illness, are intoxicated, or who have had traumatic experiences may be less likely to appropriately respond to police instructions."*
- Add trauma-informed language (backed by training) that explains that there are many factors, some trauma-related (and some police trauma-related), some related to emotional crisis, some related to substance use, that lead to difficulty and resistance in responding to police instruction.
- **Non-compliance does not constitute a reasonable use of force.** Formalize this into policy and deny requests from agencies that are seeking use of force.
- In the UOF Policy- section VI. C. 3. b. iv states: *"The chief of police will place an officer who has used deadly force or has caused serious bodily injury on administrative leave with pay and benefits while an administrative review is conducted. This assignment will not imply that the officer has acted improperly. While on administrative leave, the officer will remain available at all times for department interviews and statements regarding the incident, and shall be subject to recall to duty. The officer will not discuss the incident with anyone except department personnel assigned to the investigation, the officer's private attorney, union representative, chosen clergy and immediate family, and others as determined by the chief."*
    - Our recommendation is to include in this policy that officers found to use excessive force will not be paid for their administrative leave.
    - Add "therapist" into the list of privileged people with whom the officer can discuss the incident.
- Work towards decoupling police from mental health/welfare checks and traffic stops, two points of contact that tracer reviews and community experiences show can lead to bias in use of force.

Data: Police Social Worker Liaison (PSW) Program

The Brattleboro Police Department (BPD) collaborates with Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont (HCRS) on the Police Social Worker Liaison program. There is no formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BPD and HCRS for this program. The PSW position is funded through HCRS; 90% through Act 79 grant dollars from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and 10% by ADAP (Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs) block grant. The BPD does not capture

any data specifically on this program or the PSW involvement in police response. The following data represent the data that has been captured by HCRS and is reported by fiscal year (July-June).

Table 11. HCRS Police Social Worker Liaison Data: Adult and Children Impacted

Fiscal Year	# Adults Impacted	# Children Impacted
FY 2019	264	51
FY 2020	420	67

Table 12. HCRS Police Social Worker Liaison Data by Presenting Issue/Call Type

Fiscal Year	Child Protection	Domestic Violence	Drug & Alcohol	Home-lessness	Mental Health	Not Answered	Other	Grand Total
2019	data not available[48]							
2020	1	35	9	8	90	67	83	293

Table 13. # of PSW Contacts that Involved Concerns Related to Risk

Fiscal Year	Yes	No	Blank	Total
2019	data not available			
2020	59	167	0	226 (no data for two months)

On the PSW Contact Note that the social worker completes after each contact, there are the following questions:

- Was incarceration diverted due to intervention? Yes, No, Unknown
- Was hospitalization diverted due to intervention? Yes, No, Unknown

Although these data points exist, there is concern about the data integrity, as the questions are subjective and difficult to ensure accuracy around. These questions demonstrate the hope or intention

[48] Due to a transition in HCRS Electronic Medical Record system, more detailed data on FY 2019 PSW program is not available.

of the PSW program, but at this time there is no evidence that this program plays any role in diverting incarceration or hospitalization. In the listening information, there was only one professional who spoke positively about the impact of the PSW program. Several other professionals with intimate knowledge of the program as well as community members who have experienced the program expressed concern about the program and its lack of effectiveness.

From listening to community experiences with police collaboration in mental health crisis response and in assessing the data, we are concerned that the PSW Liaison program, although well-intentioned, is not having the desired impact. The funding for this program could be better utilized if decoupled from policing and coercive crisis interventions. We recognize that the funding for this program does not come from the Town, and so this is a practice recommendation for the Town and a practice and budgetary recommendation for HCRS and the state. With a deep commitment to harm reduction and truly voluntary support, this funding could be used to help create alternatives to policing.

BPD Data: Traffic Stops

The Brattleboro Police Department's Vehicle Stops and Traffic Enforcement policy (General Order 820) states:

> *"I. Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to give guidance to police officers when conducting vehicle stops and traffic enforcement in order to accomplish a legitimate police or public safety purpose. The primary purpose of such stops and enforcement is to modify driver behavior in order to increase voluntary compliance with the law and decrease vehicle collisions. A secondary purpose is to detect and investigate other suspicious or criminal behavior involving vehicles.*
>
> *"II. Policy: It is the policy of the Brattleboro Police Department to proactively detain and initiate contact with operators or occupants of vehicles for whom an officer has reasonable suspicion may be violating the law. Detentions will last only as long as required to confirm or dispel these suspicions as well as additional suspicions developed during the initial car stop and take appropriate enforcement action. It is the policy of BPD to comply with legal standards and current case law when conducting vehicle stops, investigation, and enforcement."*
>
> *"III. Definitions*
>
> *A. Vehicle stop: The restriction of movement of a vehicle and its occupants by police. This may be accomplished by utilization of lights and sirens on a police vehicle or other clear direction by a properly uniformed or identified police officer.*
>
> *B. Probable cause (PC): Facts and circumstances and reasonable inferences derived from them that would lead an objectively reasonable person to believe the questioned fact is true.*

1. Information may be obtained from any legal source, including hearsay, witnesses, information learned from other officers, personal observations, knowledge related to training and prior experience both generally and related to individuals, and other sources.

C. Reasonable suspicion: Facts and circumstances and reasonable inferences derived from them that would lead a reasonable officer to suspect the questioned fact is true. This standard is more than mere hunch, but is significantly lower than probable cause. Officers do not need to be certain or sure, but must be able to articulate facts and circumstances that led to the suspicion.

1. Information may be obtained from any legal source, including hearsay, witnesses, information learned from other officers, personal observations, knowledge related to training and prior experience both generally and related to individuals, and other sources."

The definitions in this policy, while legal, are inherently subjective and the nature of a traffic stop increases the subject application of these principles. The degree of racial bias presented in the following data (BPD and external) raises concerns about the subjective application of these concepts, and the harm caused by this pattern of behavior in the department. Racial bias plagues communities and police departments across the nation, and racial disparities in traffic stop enforcement is a widely recognized symptom of this deeper problem.[49] We cannot deny this dangerous problem that Brattleboro, and cities and towns across our nation, are facing. Silence and an unwillingness to address this well-documented program only services to perpetuate it.

These factors inform our key findings and our recommendation to decouple armed policing from traffic stop enforcement, as it is our assessment that the risk of harm to the community that these unchecked practices pose is too high.

Table 14. Traffic Stops by Race and Sex

	2019	***%***	**2020**	***%***
Total Stops	4288		2648	
White/Male	1853	43%	1169	44%
Black/Male	99	2.3%	40	1.5%
Hispanic/Male	27	<1%	19	<1%
Asian/Male	16	<1%	23	<1%
Indian/Male	1	<1%	3	<1%

[49] Pierson, E. and others. "A large-scale analysis of racial disparities in police stops across the United States." *Nature Human Behaviour; 2020.*

Unknown/Male	71	1.7%	90	3.4%
White/Female	1464	34%	919	35%
Black/Female	44	1%	23	<1%
Hispanic/Female	7	<1%	6	<1%
Asian/Female	12	<1%	7	<1%
Indian/Female	0	0	0	0
Unknown/Female	52	1.2%	50	1.9%
Total BIPOC	206-329	4.8% - 7.7%	121-261	4.6% - 10%

* Data obtained from a BPD spreadsheet; YTD data as of 10/1/20

Compare with demographic census data in the Overview of the Town of Brattleboro section.

Data: Trends in Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops

In July 2020, a study was published by Stephanie Seguino, a Professor at the University of Vermont, Nancy Brooks, an Associate Professor at Cornell University and Pat Autilio, a Data Analyst, entitled *Trends in Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops.* Traffic stop data from cities and towns across Vermont were reviewed and analyzed and published in the report. For the purposes of this review, we will focus on the data captured and analyzed for Brattleboro, Vermont between the years of 2014-2019.[50]

We reviewed the data from this study and spoke with its principal author, Stephanie Seguino, about the data and its implications in policing in Brattleboro. Professor Seguino indicated that compared to other municipalities in Vermont, Brattleboro fared about "the worst" in racial disparities, alongside Bennington. These findings seemed surprising to the Professor, considering that the Brattleboro Police Department and its leadership have a reputation as being progressive. In our discussion, Professor Seguino shared her perspective that one of the biggest barriers to change related to these data is the perception of white folks of Vermont as a liberal haven. She indicated that these data begin to show a different story than the one often touted by white liberal progressives. The data begin to indicate what many residents already know, that Brattleboro, Vermont is not in fact immune to the racial disparities and harm to BIPOC communities that are reflected across the nation. This concern, and barrier to change, of white liberal progressivism is also reflected in the literature on racism and white supremacy.

[50] Seguino, S.; Brooks, N.; Autilio, P. *Trends in Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops: Brattleboro, Vermont 2014-19*; University of Vermont, 2020.

From *White Fragility*, by Robin DiAngelo:

> *"Aversive racism is a manifestation of racism that well-intentioned people who see themselves as educated and progressive are more likely to exhibit.[51] It exists under the surface of consciousness because it conflicts with consciously held beliefs of racial equity and justice. Aversive racism is a subtle but insidious form, as aversive racists enact racism in ways that allow them to maintain a positive self-image) e.g., "I have lots of friends of color"; "I judge people by the content of their character, not the color of their skin."*
>
> *"Research in implicit bias has shown that perceptions of criminal activity are influenced by race. White people will perceive danger simply by the presence of [B]lack people; we cannot trust our perceptions when it comes to race and crime."[52]*

It feels important to center some of the data from this study in our report, as it is deeply relevant to the questions of safety, danger and harm in the current systems of community safety in Brattleboro. We do make recommendations for further review and practice change based on these data.

The following content is directly inserted from the study itself.

"*Our main findings are that during this period of time in Brattleboro:*

- *Black and Hispanic shares of drivers stopped exceed their shares of the estimated driving population. The data indicate Black drivers were overstopped by between 31% to 60%, depending on the measure of the driving population used. Hispanics were overstopped by 46% relative to their estimated share of the driving population.*
- *Black and Hispanic drivers were less likely than white drivers to be stopped for safety reasons, and were significantly more likely to experience pretextual stops than white drivers—stops more likely to be used to investigate "suspicious" behavior and therefore more prone to racial bias.*
- *Black drivers are significantly more likely to be issued a ticket than white, Asian, and Hispanic drivers, although, overall in Brattleboro the rate of ticketing is much lower than in other police jurisdictions. Over 85% of stops receive only a warning.*
- *The arrest rate of Black drivers was 4.8 times that of white drivers.*
- *Black drivers were more than 9 times as likely to be searched subsequent to a stop than white drivers. There were no discretionary searches of Hispanic drivers and Asian drivers were less likely to be searched than white drivers.*
- *Blacks were less likely to be found with contraband than white drivers despite their higher search rates, although the Black-white difference in contraband rates is not statistically significant.*

Regarding trends in racial disparities:

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[51] Excerpt from DiAngelo, R. *White Fragility,* Beacon Press, 2018. In the book, this paragraph includes a footnote from Hodson, G, Dovidio, J, and Gaertner, S. "The Aversive Form of Racism," *Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination (Race and Ethnicity in Psychology),* 1 (2004): 119-36.

[52] Excerpt from DiAngelo, R. *White Fragility,* Beacon Press, 2018. In the book, this paragraph includes a footnote from Quillian, L and Pager, D. "Black Neighbors, Higher Crime? The Role of Racial Stereotypes in Evaluations of Neighborhood Crime," *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 3 (November 2001): 717-67.

- *Over time, the racial disparities in search and contraband hit rates have increased. Trends in the share of stopped drivers who are Black and disparity in the share of stops that are investigatory have also worsened. The Black/white disparity in arrest rates reached a peak in 2016-18 before declining somewhat.*
- *From 2015 to 2019, the number of traffic stops has fallen about 8.5% in Brattleboro but stops of Black and Hispanic drivers have increased by 129% and 35%, respectively. Overall, Brattleboro has a high volume of stops relative to its population size. This is noteworthy given that Brattleboro also has a very high warning relative to ticket rate.*

In terms of data quality, we find:

- *Race of the driver was omitted in 6.0% of stops—or 1,210 stops. To put that magnitude into comparison, during the entire period there were only 568 recorded stops of Black drivers. Moreover, in more than 98% of the stops with ii no race recorded, all other fields were complete. While there has been some reduction in missing data over time, even in 2019, 3.6% of all rows of data were missing race of driver. Stop reason was missing in about 0.9% of all stops as well. Black drivers are also 2.9 times more likely than white drivers to have no data recorded for the reason they are stopped. Brattleboro Police Department could benefit from additional attention to this problem so as to improve the quality and reliability of their data."*[53]

Considerations of These Data and its Implications

It is important to note that while percentages are an effective way to demonstrate relativity and compare rates, they can be somewhat misleading. Due to Brattleboro being a small, rural community, and the relatively small proportion of Brattleboro residents and drivers who are Black, the actual numbers behind some of the percentages are small. This affects the statistical significance of the disparity data in some cases, which is acknowledged and documented in the study. Appendix A.1. of the study on page 26 shows the raw data.

> *"In the absence of explicit evidence of criminal behavior, racial profiling or racial bias in policing may stem from implicit bias—the reliance on unconsciously held racial stereotypes such as the association of skin tone with criminality, especially as regards young males of color."*[54]

Although the data indicate a clear need for deeper inquiry into bias and discrimination in traffic stop enforcement, the study itself notes that police officer bias may not be the exclusive reason for racial disparities.

> *"There may, however, be legitimate reasons for racial disparities in traffic policing. For example, motorists of some racial/ethnic groups may have worse driving behavior than other groups. Age of driver is inversely related to risky driving behavior (Ivers, et al 2009). If the driving population of some racial has a larger proportion of younger drivers compared to other racial groups, for example, racial disparities may be expected. Race may also correlate with traffic stop disparities for reasons outside the control of law enforcement. For example, U.S. minorities have higher*

[53] Seguino, S.; Brooks, N.; Autilio, P. *Trends in Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops: Brattleboro, Vermont 2014-19*; University of Vermont, 2020.

[54] In this section of the report (Considerations of Trends in Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops Data and its Implications), direct excerpts from the study are italicized and in quotations for distinction.

poverty rates than white Americans. This may result in a larger share of minorities driving with a suspended license due to the accumulation of unpaid parking or traffic citations. Racial disparities in this case are not necessarily due to bias of police officers but rather are a function of systemic racism in which people of color face worse economic outcomes than those who identify as white."

The study details the strategies, and flaws of each strategy, for assessing the percentage of the driving population. The following excerpt articulates the outcome of this study's assessment of driving population:

"White drivers in Brattleboro comprised 94.9% of all stopped drivers from 2014 through 2019, with Blacks 3.0%, Asians 1.1% and Hispanics 1.0% of all drivers stopped. Inclusion of externally generated stops does not change these percentages. Black and Hispanic shares of the driving population are lower than their share of stops, whether using the ACS or DMV accident data. For example, the estimates of Black drivers' share of the driving population range from 1.9% to 2.3%, lower than their share of stopped drivers (3.0%). "

It is explained in the study that the rates of overstopping in Brattleboro assessed in this study (31-60%, based on the different estimates of the driving population), is consistent with the national average, which indicates that Black drivers are overstopped about 50% more than white drivers. It is also explained that racial disparities in stop data is a contested metric considering the relative inaccuracy of all potential metrics, and the study recommends focus on racial disparities in post-stop outcomes.

*"Pretextual stops (whose reasons are investigatory or vehicle equipment), legal under U.S. law, involve an officer stopping a driver for a traffic violation, minor or otherwise, to allow the officer to then investigate a separate and unrelated, suspected criminal offense. Pretextual stops are also more likely to be cases where racial disparities emerge. This is because investigatory/pretextual stops, often based on hunches or suspicion, may be influenced by racial stereotypes or generalizations about people's behavior, based on their group identity. Negative stereotypes about Blacks and Hispanics in the U.S. are extensive, as evidenced by the results of the Implicit Association Test (Banaji and Greenwald 2013). That negative racial stereotypes in U.S. culture are widespread is documented by social psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt (2019). Her research using social psychology experiments is designed to detect anti-Black bias, which is frequently unconscious or implicit. "*The study indicates that the overall number of drivers stopped for pretextual reasons is relatively small. *" The percentage of these stops is higher for Black drivers (8.1% compared to 5.9% for white drivers) and this difference is statistically significant (z=2.26). That said, BPD does not conduct many such stops. That is, this type of stop is much less frequent for all racial groups than in a number of other towns and cities in Vermont."*

"Black drivers are 2.9 times more likely than white drivers to have no data recorded for the reason they are stopped."

The "hit" rate, or the percentage of times that a search results in contraband being found, is described in the report as a potential indicator of racial bias.

> *"Whether or not there is racial bias (implicit or explicit) in search racial disparities is a question that can be assessed by examining the productivity of searches, that is, the percentage of searches that result in contraband being found, often called the "hit" rate. Contraband in Vermont ranges from underage cigarette possession to stolen goods, to illegal drugs.11 Absent racial bias (as compared to racial disparities), we would expect that officers should find contraband on searched minorities at the same rate as on searched white drivers. If searches of minorities turn up contraband at lower rates than searches of white drivers, the hit rate test is consistent with the argument that officers base their searches of minority drivers on less evidence than they require as a basis for initiating searches of white drivers. Put another way, minority hit rates that are lower than white hit rates are an indication that police may be oversearching minorities (or under-searching white drivers) and that racial bias has influenced the officer's decision on whom to search."*

The study addresses the need to assess racial disparities data over time and to track not just the existence of DEI and implicit bias, but the effectiveness of the training as well.

> *"The adoption of fair and impartial policing policies and the availability of traffic stop data may incentivize agencies to review their policies and to conduct trainings on race, policing, and implicit bias. It is therefore useful to explore trends in racial disparities over time to track the effect of such training and exposure to statewide discussions on racial disparities in policing.*

While the data demonstrates an overall decrease in the number of stops per year from 2015 to 2019, the total number of stops of Black drivers more than doubled (increased by 129%) and stops of Hispanic drivers increased by 34.6%. The study recommends that the BPD explore the cause of these divergent racial trends.

> *First, we examine trends in the number of stops per year in total and by race (for raw data, see Table A.2b). From 2015 (our first year of complete data) to 2019 the total number of stops decreased by 8.5%. Unusually, most of that decrease is due to a reduction in the number of drivers whose race was recorded by police as unknown—that percentage decreased by 78%. Asians, too, experienced a decline in stops of 15%. Stops of white drivers increased slightly by 1.5%. In contrast, stops of Black drivers increased by 129.0%, more than doubling, and stops of Hispanic drivers increased by 34.6%, respectively. The very different stop trends are perplexing and it would be useful for the BPD to explore the cause of these divergent racial trends."*

The study demonstrates a widening racial disparity over time in stops, searches, and hit rates.

> *"The Black hit rate has fallen at a faster pace than the white rate. (In 2014-16, the Black hit rate exceeded the white rate). The Black-white trend and disparity in hit rates is similar when we exclude warnings or no action taken (not shown here), that is, when we focus on contraband that*

results in a ticket and/or arrest. The widening racial disparity in hit rates (albeit somewhat modest) is occurring in a context of an increase in the Black share of stopped drivers and substantial growth in the number of Black stops."

"From 2014 to 2019, Black drivers were searched at a rate that was 9 times greater than [that] of white drivers, and this disparity, too, has widened over time. We also report on a statistical analysis that controls for other factors that may influence the probability of being searched or of contraband being found during a search. Those results demonstrate that while other factors also contribute to the likelihood of either of those outcomes, racial disparities continue to exist when those factors are controlled for. ***In particular, Black drivers are substantially more likely to be searched than white drivers. They are less 23 likely to be found with contraband, although this difference is not statistically significant, given the small sample sizes."***[55]

The data also indicate that police stop drivers in Brattleboro at a rate much higher than the national average, but issue tickets in just 12.5% of stops, a relatively low percentage. The authors invite inquiry into what this phenomenon says about racial divergence in stop data, and about the BPD's philosophy on traffic policing.

"In addition to these results, some interesting aspects of BPD policing emerge from the data we analyzed. ***While traffic stops have declined by about 11% in the last five years, stops of Black and Hispanic drivers have increased substantially over time and are at a high level. Police stop drivers in Brattleboro at a rate much higher than the national average. There are more stops of Black drivers in Brattleboro than the resident Black population over 15.*** *Interestingly, BPD issues tickets in just 12.5% of all stops, a relatively low percentage. This phenomenon, coupled with the high and rising number of stops of Blacks, results in a question as to what explains the divergence in stops by race, and what, in particular, is the BPD's traffic policing strategy. Further, although Brattleboro's overall search rate is lower than that of many other agencies (0.4% in Brattleboro), their hit rate is also much lower at 44.9%, with just 20% (approximately) of searches that result in arrest-worthy contraband being found during the search."*

The authors of the report make the finding that racial profiling appears to be a factor in officer decision-making in traffic policing, and identify some strengths of the department.

"Collectively, these results suggest that the race of the driver plays a role in officer decision-making in traffic policing in Brattleboro. This concerning finding coexists with some other positive aspects of Brattleboro's policing. The BPD has used race data in traffic policing as a management tool and as a means to make officers conscious of these disparities. Seguino and Brooks (2020) outline other steps the agency has taken to address racial disparities that may be due to bias, a process that may take time to bear fruit."

The authors identify key areas in need of data collection improvement.

[55]Bold emphasis added.

> *"Though data often and usually are imperfect, that does not preclude their usefulness. Efforts to improve data quality—and especially to eliminate missing race data—are important and should continue to be pursued. This is especially so in the case of Brattleboro where race of driver was missing in 6% of all reports and the number of stops with drivers of unknown race is twice as large as the number with a recorded Black driver. Missing data is relatively easy to address, and the BPD can improve the reliability of statistical analyses by working on collecting and recording more complete data."*[56]

At the time of this review, the BPD leaders had received the report but had not reviewed it or spoken to the authors about it and were unable to speak about their perspective on the implications of this data.

Recommendations for Further Work

"This is not the beginning, nor is it the end, of this vital work." - Shea and Emily

The scope of this community safety review process was focused on listening to community experiences of safety, danger and harm in Brattleboro and reviewing the current community safety response systems, including the Brattleboro Police Department. We have delivered a comprehensive and informative report that details what brought us here, what we heard from the community in our listening work, what we learned from the systems review, and what our key findings and recommendations are.

This Process did not appear out of thin air; it is a product of emergent strategy. Many community members, organizers, and community leaders came together to create the opportunity for this piece of work to occur, and for that we are so grateful. And, the work does not stop here. This process cast a wide lens on some broad questions. "***What do safety, danger and harm currently look like in Brattleboro? What does a safer Brattleboro look like? What are the next step in approaching that horizon?"*** We heard, learned, and discovered much information in response to this question; and naturally, we uncovered many more unanswered questions and areas in need of further inquiry and analysis and organizing. Here we list our recommendations on next steps on further work in understanding, addressing, and improving our community's safety.

- Further Review: Data Analysis
    - Deeper review of the Criminal Justice System—including jail, conditions of release and bail, the court system, and prisons
    - External, critical analysis of the traffic stop data to better understand how racial bias is presenting in traffic stops.

[56] From "Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops: Brattleboro, Vermont: 2014-2019" study.

- Policy & Procedure Modernization
    - Update all policies and procedures, considering the specific recommendations made in that section of the report.
- Research and Development of Alternatives to Policing
    - Mutual Aid Networks
    - Neighborhood Restorative Justice Networks
    - Mental and Emotional Health Crisis Response
    - Parental and Family Supports
    - Housing
    - Traffic Management and Safety
- Determine Process for Systemic Accountability
    - In paid consultation with local BIPOC leadership
- Assess Specific Police Training Needs and Readiness

Some strengths of the structure of this work are that it focused on increasing accessibility for people who do not often participate in or feel supported by Town processes, protected people's information, anonymity, and emotional safety, centered marginalized people in design and implementation, and began to compensate the enormous labor that change making takes. It is our hope that the further work suggested and whatever work comes next follows and builds on these important legacies that have gifted us this wealth of wisdom, vulnerability, honesty, and vision.

Key Findings and Recommendations

What We Advocate

"Change is what people are afraid to accept and that's the biggest fear for most people. I think once people realize that change is not something harmful, once you accept change you get to move forward."
-Black community member

In this section, we articulate the key findings that we have derived from the listening information and community safety systems data and our recommendations based on these findings.

We have organized our key findings and recommendations into four categories, in specific order:

5. ***Acknowledge and Reckon with Harm Caused***

6. ***Increase Accountability***
7. ***Meet People's Basic Needs and Build Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses***
8. ***Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing***

We have also provided guidance on the timeframe of recommendations following this key:

- Immediate= **FY 2021** (within 6 months)
- Short-term= **FY 2022** (within 18 months)
- Mid-term= **FY 2023** (within 2 ½ years)
- Long-term= **FY 2025** (within 5 years)

1. Acknowledge and Reckon with Harm Caused

FINDING: Racial bias and profiling are active and current problems in the community, including in Brattleboro Police Department's response to community safety.

- While some people of color also shared some positive individual experiences with officers or this department compared to others, almost all people of color who shared their experiences in this review process identified problems with the police that related to race, including profiling and mistaken identity, wrongful arrest, harassment, violence, weaponization or manipulation of policy, being criminalized when calling for help, neglect of concerns, lack of accountability, assault, and fear of police violence and murder.

- A study, *Trends in Racial Disparities in Brattleboro: 2014–19,* done by professors at UVM and Cornell University, suggests that Black drivers in Brattleboro are overstopped 31–60% more than white drivers (depending on the measure of the driving population used). Black drivers are 4.8 times more likely to be arrested and 9 times more likely to be searched than white drivers. When searched, Black drivers are 30% less likely to have contraband on them than white drivers.[57]

- Use of Force (UOF) data for 2019 and 2020 depict that in 17% and 13% (respectively) of UOF cases the subject of force was Black. These percentages are significantly higher than the

[57]Seguino, S.; Brooks, N.; Autilio, P. *"*Trends in Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops: Brattleboro, Vermont 2014-19"*;* University of Vermont, 2020.

percentage of African Americans, and all people of color, living in Brattleboro (according to the US Census 2019 estimates). Harm and trauma are occurring in these situations.

- While the department has recently proposed increased training around this issue, their existing lack of ongoing assessment, acknowledgement, or accountability about racial disparity data and their reflections about the integration of their existing training do not demonstrate readiness or receptivity to reducing bias, which renders these resources ineffective.

- Some respondents from the BIPOC community named a desire for police training about racial bias, but a stronger theme was desire for reduced policing in their communities, more support for investing in meeting people's needs and BIPOC led efforts, and a smaller investment in policing and the prison industrial complex they function inside of.

FINDING: Police participation and other involuntary interventions in mental, emotional, and spiritual health crisis response is ineffective and often harmful for many community members.

- Respondents who have experienced police response to an actual or perceived need for help related to mental and emotional health reported negative and harmful impacts from these responses. These harms include use of coercion, force, violence for noncriminal behavior, loss of autonomy over their healing, added trauma, and fear of seeking future help from mental health organizations that collaborate with the police and have the power to psychiatrically incarcerate them. Many of these police responses led to involuntary interventions, ranging from forced contact with police during a personal health crisis to use of force, forced drugging (involuntary medication) and/or psychiatric incarceration (involuntary hospitalization).

- While being held in the Emergency Department or psychiatrically incarcerated in The Retreat, several respondents named experiencing inhumane treatment that some described as torture.

- While recognizing long waits for treatment and lack of beds as system wide problems that need solutions, these mental health institutions as a whole appear to have very little acknowledgement of the way these involuntary practices are widely received as violent and traumatizing by those experiencing them (and by the World Health Organization).

- Many mental health professionals across the community named that patients, including children, and workers are in danger due to conditions and practices in The Retreat. According to DMH data, one floor of The Retreat uses more restraint and seclusion than all other psychiatric

facilities in Vermont combined.[58] Statistics show that psychiatric incarceration (involuntary hospitalization) increases, rather than decreases, risks of negative health outcomes and suicide.[59]

- According to the BPD reported data, almost all dispatch calls for welfare checks are initiated by someone other than the person perceived to be in crisis. Many respondents who have experienced police response to welfare check calls named that the intervention was unwanted and this was also assessed in all tracers involving welfare checks or mental health intervention. Some respondents named this as a functional criminalization of mental illness or psychiatric disability.

- Respondents named fear of activities like walking, speaking, or laying down while in emotional distress would lead to police response, forced drugging, or psychiatric incarceration.

- We encountered no evidence that police participation in mental health crisis response, including the Police Social Worker Liaison program, in both listening and systems review of available data, is reducing incarceration or hospitalization. The existence of an embedded police social worker expands the reach of policing in mental health, which the police themselves have recently lamented and which neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, and self-identified mad respondents resoundingly opposed. Police participation in mental health interventions increase the use of unwanted and harmful practices instead of support, including coercion, threats, intimidation, and force in systems response to mental and emotional health crises.

- What these communities requested are lines, spaces, and supports that explicitly will not collaborate with or call the police for distress or suicidality.

FINDING: Department of Children and Families' (DCF) responses to risk to youth often cause intergenerational trauma and do not address the roots of unsafety for children.

- While a small number of respondents, all people who identified DCF involvement as youth, whether currently youth or now adults, named significant harm from DCF involvement in their lives. Youth described police use of force or violence during removal from their families. DCF

[58] DMH Research and Statistics and Quality Management Unit, Report to the Emergency Involuntary Procedures Review Committee September 11, 2020, Data Review and Analysis April - June 2020
[59] Simons, P. "Involuntary Hospitalization Increases Risk of Suicide, Study Finds." *Mad in America,* 2019.

interventions like forced treatment took autonomy away from some youth survivors' healing. This made therapy and other healing inaccessible later on.

- Foster and adoptive parents spoke about their childrens' PTSD around police resulting from their harmful removal experiences. Some parents who had experienced child removal named harmful psychiatric interventions including forced drugging and other traumatic treatment, named by those respondents as torture, due to DCF involvement.

- Respondents had concerns about the disproportionate removal of children of color and lack of accountability in the child protective system. There were particular concerns expressed regarding DCF's harm to queer and trans youth and youth of color. There were also concerns about parents of color being disbelieved by DCF or the court, especially when expressing that their children's white parent was causing significant danger or harm to their children.

- From community and organizational listening information, DCF has shown very little attunement to the racial bias, harm, or trauma widely experienced by those with DCF involvement.

- Many respondents named concerns with how DCF use of resources widen economic inequality, by removing children from families due to conditions rooted in poverty and paying families who do not experience poverty to take care of them, instead of resourcing those poor families.

- Respondents named that the threat of consequence for seeking out help lead to negative outcomes for many families, including avoidance of medicine like prenatal care or hospital birth support, emotional or mental health support, or parental support due to fear of DCF actions.

FINDING: Some community members expect more of the police than is safe for others.

- While white supremacy, policing, and police racism were strong themes in white and racially unidentified respondents' answers about problems or threats to our community's safety, white and racially unidentified people were much more strongly represented in respondents who advocated for long term or indefinite incarceration and ostracization from the community for such nonviolent offenses as night time car theft, drug use, or being poor or homeless in public.

- There was a strong correlation between police contact and dissatisfaction with the criminal legal system as a response to community struggles. Many people who experienced police contact during interventions around substance use desired to remove police from these tasks. The

people who desired harsher punishment had very low amounts of admitted contact with that system, often naming no significant police contact but a desire for police to “deal with those people” by removing them from the community and stop catch and release policing for these petty crimes.

- Many professionals in social service agencies, legal system workers, marginalized people, and many people who named no significant marginalization were in support of providing more and better support for people experiencing emotional distress, mental health crisis, poverty or drug use that are separate from the police, which will reduce police workload and reduce police contact and harm to people in struggle.

RECOMMENDATIONS for Acknowledging and Reckoning with Harm Caused

- Seriously, thoughtfully, immediately and ongoingly consider the community experiences, data, findings, and recommendations articulated in this report. (**FY 2021)**
- Publicly acknowledge and accept the experiences of racism, discrimination, intimidation, fear, terror, and harm detailed in this report, in our public forums, and in our community. (**FY 2021)**
- Publicly commit as a Town, including the Selectboard, to acknowledge and address systemic racism/white supremacy, ableism and sanism, homophobic and transphobic discrimination, and classism in an ongoing way. (**FY 2021)**
- Operationalize this commitment in budgets, time commitments, and work tasks as part of the town’s ongoing regular practices to avoid a return to “business as usual,” which is hurting people. (**FY 2021)**

2. Increase Accountability

FINDING: The current mechanisms for external review, accountability, or community control of the police department are scarce, inadequate, and ineffective.

- The Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPCC)’s charge was amended by the Selectboard on October 21, 2014 as follows "The mission of the Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPCC) is to facilitate mutually respectful communication between citizens and the Brattleboro

police department regarding complaints, compliments or information concerning police procedures."[60]

- The committee meetings focus on reviewing formal citizen complaints and compliments to the department and police response to these complaints and compliments. The scope of this committee is to provide a forum for individual complainants and the police to communicate in an effort to improve community/police relations.

- The committee is scheduled to meet monthly and meets for approximately 30-45 minutes. Eight of the 12 monthly meetings in 2020 were cancelled or unwarned/didi] not occur. The committee is composed of five volunteer (unpaid) members.

- In a review of two years of committee meeting minutes, there was no evidence of any disagreement or challenge to the police department's findings or responses to any complaint even tough there were themes of complaints related to discrimination based on race, class, and housing status.

- The CPCC process may serve to slow down and drag out the complaint process, with complaints sometimes going several months or over a year before being resolved.

- We did not encounter any evidence of systemic police accountability work, assessment of trends in complaints, or policy or practice review. We did not encounter evidence that the committee advocates for complainants, but rather advocates for all parties equally, sometimes doing their own informal investigating in the community to get a sense of the reputations of those involved, etc. We did not encounter any framework, methodology, policy, or agreed upon process that inform this work.

- All accountability processes (including all investigations) are handled internally by the department itself.

- Black and non-Black people of color respondents disproportionately named that attempts at accountability for department actions felt fruitless, and left those community members feeling unsafe around police and unable to safely utilize police for support when unsafe or in need.

[60] From the Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPCC) tab of Brattleboro.org website

- Outside of this community safety review process, there is no mechanism for ongoing external review of community experiences of safety, harm and policing, police department data including use of force and traffic stop data, or bias and discrimination in police practices.

- The department's Use of Force policy focuses on articulating permission for use of "objectively reasonable force to control a situation, restore and maintain order, effect an arrest or detention, overcome resistance or defend themselves or others from physical harm or to accomplish a legal purpose." Excessive force is defined in the policy as "force that is not objectively reasonable from the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same circumstances. Excessive force will not be tolerated." The policy articulates the procedure for de-escalation, use of force, and reporting, documenting, and investigating use of force. There is no external mechanism for review, investigation, or accountability of use of force.

- Accountability work cannot begin without first acknowledging the harms that are caused.

- Nationally, efforts to create community control of police are fraught with erosion of actual power of the bodies created to do so, due to union contracts and other challenges—the formation of the CPCC may serve as an example of copious community labor toward community control and accountability turning into "toothless reform" that provided no real accountability.

FINDING: There is little or no accountability around the impact of diversity and inclusion and implicit bias training on the communities that experience the most policing.

- Based on the documents provided by the BPD, in 2020 officers attended 48 training opportunities totalling 300.75 offered hours. Almost all officers received some diversity, equity, inclusion, and bias training, for a total of 9 hours. In 2019 BPD officers attended 102 training opportunities, totaling 1,627.74 hours (881 of these hours were a Basic Police Course through Vermont Police Academy that 3 officers attended; the other 101 training opportunities totalled 746.74 hours). There were no training opportunities in 2019 specific to implicit bias, diversity, equity, or inclusion.

- Subtracting the 881 hours for the Basic Police Course, the BPD experienced a 60% reduction in hours of training offered in 2020 compared to 2019, and managed to provide some Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training as well as some Implicit Bias training in 2020. This amounts to unused training resources.

- There is little to no current accountability to many local communities disproportionately impacted by policing, including people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, mad people, and psychiatric survivors around the training the police receive about those communities or the measurable impacts of that training.

- Despite efforts to invest in training for identifying mental health, diversity, equity and inclusion, trans inclusion, and implicit bias, there is evidence from our listening and tracer reviews that training has sometimes led to harmful stereotyping and has been used to justify over-policing and use of force against the very communities this training is intended to serve.

- While increased sensitivity training proposed by top police leadership is perhaps well-intentioned and/or perhaps a response to calls for antiracist police reform that increases police budgets, an acknowledgement of systemic racism and the realities of policing on communities of color, a deeper understanding of how unconscious bias functions, and a conscious personal commitment to dismantling bias every day are necessary ingredients to the integration and implementation of concepts and skills learned in diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) training.

- Based on our listening information, increased training is unlikely to be an effective use of resources for the Brattleboro Police Department without further assessment of readiness, acknowledgement of harm, and personalized training plans that are accountable to the communities they intend to serve. These things take time.

RECOMMENDATIONS for Increasing Accountability

- Improve data integrity in collection and analysis in the following areas:
    - Address gap in reporting race data in traffic stops and all data collection **(FY 2021)**
    - Address gap in graphic mapping data—obtain functionality to map police contacts and develop a plan to capture and review these data to better analyze and be accountable to geographic data to reduce over-policing of identified neighborhoods **(FY 2022)**

- Disband the CPCC and hold a process centering and compensating people of color leadership to determine the best mechanisms for systemic accountability. **(FY 2022)**

- Suspend the use of paid administrative leave for police under investigation for acts of harm and for police who are charged with a violent crime through change in policy. **(FY 2021)**

- Withhold pensions and do not rehire police who are involved in excessive force violations. **(FY 2021)**

- Freeze all increases to the training budget and focus on effective and efficient utilization of current training budget **(FY 2021)**

- In preparing a training plan, include an assessment of each supervisor and officer training needs and level of receptivity and readiness, and paid consultation with local content experts from impacted communities to develop accountable and effective training plans with demonstrable and measurable outcomes. **(FY 2022 and ongoing)**

    - Avoid trainings that have been specifically identified by impacted communities as particularly harmful. These include Mental Health First Aid, NAMI training, umatter, and others. Connect with (and pay well) local content experts from impacted communities (BIPOC, psychiatric survivors, people living with homelessness and poverty, people who use drugs) to inform training choice and implementation. If these groups will not work with police, determine why. Begin the long arc of reparation of those relationships, which begins with acknowledging harm, ending that harm, and taking responsibility, and NOT meet and greets and increased casual police contact with those communities, which those communities often experience as harmful. **(FY 2021 and ongoing)**

3. Meet People's Basic Needs and Build Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses

FINDING: There is a severe lack of truly voluntary support related to mental health, substance use and addiction, and parenting and child protection.

- Use of Force tracers indicate that force such as intimidation, threats, hand control, head displacement, and other uses of force are used in situations in which community members are attempting to seek support or care for themselves or loved ones, who are then forced into treatment against their will.

- Many respondents who have experienced police and other systems responses to mental and emotional health needs have expressed that they do not feel safe accessing any systemic mental

health support at all. This unsafety was rooted in having experienced police and involuntary interventions. Use of coercion, threat, intimidation and/or force, including forced treatment such as forced drugging (involuntary medication) and psychiatric incarceration (involuntary hospitalization) functionally criminalize emotional crisis and punishes distress.

- Based on listening information, we have assessed a lack of awareness and attunement in the most carceral safety system responses to the escalating and traumatizing nature of carceral response (which includes police response and other carceral safety responses, such as DCF, mental health crisis response, and inpatient hospitalization). There is some recognition in the police department that the formal uniform and presence of a deadly weapon has the potential to escalate situations. However, in the documentation supporting incidents in which force is used, there is a lack of acknowledgement of this factor in detailing of accounts. There are some mental health organizations locally that are making tangible steps to move away from carceral models where possible, while others do not yet appear to be doing so.

- The welfare check and use of force tracer reviews, as well as listening sessions with community members and community safety professionals that respond to these situations, indicate that some of police participation in situations related to mental health, substance use, homelessness, and poverty, as well as some conflict between community members, occurs simply because "there is no one else to call." Along with the fire department and Rescue, Inc., the police department is the current mechanism of 24/7 emergency response[61]. This void of resources is the impetus for many police contacts, even though police are unequipped or improperly equipped to address or provide for voluntary support, mutual aid, and basic needs including housing, food, and belonging and connection. There is acknowledgement by the department of this truth.

- People are waiting up to days at a time in the Emergency Department for a crisis bed to open up elsewhere. Forced drugging, restraint, and escalatory treatment toward people experiencing a mental health crisis or extreme state in the ED were named as traumatizing by respondents.

- People who were harmed by police and/or crisis response to mental, emotional, or spiritual crisis named that immediate and free access to truly voluntary supports at each level of intervention would create greater support and access for those in distress.

[61] The Women's Freedom Center also operates a 24 hour crisis hotline responding to domestic and sexual violence

- Advocates within the mental health system and other social services, as well as people who have experienced significant hospitalization and intervention, suggested creating noncoercive alternatives that are entirely decoupled from policing at every level of contact within the mental health system, from crisis lines to alternative crisis spaces to peer run respite beds.

- These supports would increase access for those who cannot safely access support currently. Providers named that many of these supports would lower the volume of need placed on the police, an overburdened emergency department and inpatient system, reduce harm, and increase accessibility.

- Many respondents employed inside these institutions and many people negatively impacted by their treatment named a need for greater transparency, accountability, and regulation of these institutions and their practices, particularly at The Retreat.

- Some organizations in the community have already begun work to consider the role of and reliance on policing and build up other forms of support.

FINDING: Consistently across all areas of listening, poverty, homelessness, lack of belonging, and lack of ability to meet basic needs were named as some of the largest threats to our community's well-being and safety. Voluntary support, mutual aid, projects led by marginalized people, and basic needs like safe housing, good food, and places for belonging and connection are widely recognized as some of the biggest current safety needs in our community.

- Issues related to mental health, parenting and child protection, and substance use and addiction that lead to police contact often involve many complex unmet needs and intergenerational trauma. Addressing unmet needs (rather than focusing solely on moments of conflict or crisis) is a critical part of community safety that reduces our reliance on police, prisons, and other punitive ways to address each other and our struggles.

- Brattleboro's visions for a safer community includes all people having access to safe affordable or free housing, good food, affordable or free medicine, voluntary support for addiction and emotional distress and mental health, places of belonging, mutual aid, art and community building, healthy recreation, and the land. Respondents wanted the community to increase their skills in supporting one another and de-escalating conflict, and for all people to be free of bigotry, oppression, and violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS for Meeting People's Basic Needs and Building Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses

- Prioritize spending on safe housing for all, food shelves, free meals, community gardens, land trusts that allow marginalized people to take ownership of food production for their communities, and spaces for belonging and connection in neighborhoods for all community members, centering those most in need. **(FY 2022 and ongoing)**

- Invest resources in new and existing programs that respondents identified as the most helpful to their safety, such as mutual aid support networks, BIPOC run programs, local organizations that provide voluntary support, and places for belonging and connection that are decoupled from policing. **(FY 2022 and ongoing)**

- Review and consider models for totally voluntary and noncoercive supports run by the communities they are designed to support, in the form of neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, mad, and psychiatric survivor led mobile ready response, a crisis/freak out space, and unlocked, homelike crisis beds. Work collaboratively toward implementation of alternative mental health supports. **(start in FY 2022 and ongoing)** **(Implement alternatives by *FY 2025)***

- Invest in community sponsored mutual aid and skill sharing. **(FY 2022 and ongoing)**

- Invest in restorative justice practices at all levels, especially at the neighborhood level. **(FY 2022 and ongoing)** ***(Implement neighborhood RJ Initiatives by FY 2023).***

- Review and consider models for neighborhood and community training around de-escalation, holding space, and directly supporting those in distress, NOT training that advocates for calling in authorities or assessors or that bring people into more contact with police or mental health crisis response. Invest in neighborhood and community groups developing these skills. **(FY 2022 and ongoing)**

**We would like to take a moment here to acknowledge that BIPOC communities and queer and trans communities have been creating and utilizing alternative practices and systems for safety and justice for generations. This concept of "building alternatives to policing" is not new, and it is not ours. While many white folks are beginning to reckon with the historical and present-day harms perpetuated by policing and police, as well as other police-like safety responses, marginalized communities have known this for a long time, and have been creating and self-directing their own alternatives since before policing was*

created and have largely remained unfunded and unsupported. The kinds of models and structures that we are recommending are rooted in the wisdom and fortitude of these communities, and we are grateful for the learning and leadership of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, psychiatric survivor, and poor and unhoused people available to us, in our own community, and it is past time we resource and grow these programs and models in collaborative and non-exploitative ways.

4. Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing

FINDING: Those respondents most impacted by policing want reduced police presence with their communities, not "community policing," which puts the onus of trust-building on the wrong party.

- "Those most impacted by policing" is not synonymous with "those who commit crimes." It was acknowledged by the police department itself and almost all social support workers we spoke with that folks living in poverty and homelessness are the communities that the police have the most daily contact with. BIPOC people who shared their experiences spoke to frequent police interactions for noncriminal activity that involved racial bias and/or profiling. People experiencing mental health crises are continuously harmed by stigmatized myths and labeled as "unpredictable" or "violent," including in training utilized by the police, despite data and clear evidence that they are more likely to be victims of violence (including violence from providers) than perpetrators.[62]

- "Those most impacted by policing" refers to communities that have been marginalized, feared, controlled, and disproportionately targeted for noncriminal behavior or minor infractions of the law.

- The majority of respondents most impacted by policing and police-like safety responses reported that they feel unsafe and unable to safely contact the police and/or the other current mechanisms for safety response that collaborate with police (HCRS crisis team, DCF, BMH ER) for help or support. This renders the current system of safety response inaccessible to many community members, which includes those most impacted. These systems are also ineffective for those who want the police to do more than is safe for others, who often want more than is possible for anyone to do (such as remove visible poverty from public life or banish community members experiencing addiction).

[62]Ghiasi, N; Azhar, Y; and Singh, J. Psychiatric Illness and Criminality. StatPearls, Jan 2020.

- Traffic stop data suggest concerns about racial disparities in overstopping of Brattleboro drivers in general, and overstopping of Black and Hispanic drivers compared to white drivers. The data also suggest that Black drivers are searched at a rate nine times that of white drivers, with a low "hit" rate, indicating that the vast majority of searches do not uncover contraband and are ineffective. The study suggests racial bias as a likely factor in the disparities. Furthermore, listening to the experiences of Black and non-Black people of color demonstrates that the impact of this ineffective and inefficient use of police resources is not benign; these unproductive searches come with negative and harmful impact, from cultivating fear and trauma responses to consequences in one's personal, professional, and community life, sometimes with intergenerational impact.

- Despite efforts to invest in training for identifying mental health needs, diversity, equity and inclusion, and implicit bias, it is not demonstrated in this review that this investment in sensitivity training has had a significant positive impact on the communities of people they are intending to serve. Conversely, there is evidence that training has been used to justify use of force against the communities they are intended to serve.

- While increased sensitivity training proposed by top police leadership is well-intentioned, a deeper understanding of how unconscious bias works and a conscious personal commitment to dismantling bias are necessary ingredients to the integration and implementation of concepts and skills learned in training. More training, if training is in any way similar to past training, seems to be a wasteful and even harmful use of resources, and different work on addressing bias and inequity and harm seems warranted.

- Community policing increases the scope of policing by increasing the reach of policing further into predominantly poor and minority neighborhoods. It attempts to build trust with these communities without addressing the harms that policing has historically done or continues to do. Many white respondents named that their neighborhoods were under-policed, well resourced, and safe. Some Black people, non-Black people of color, and queer and trans respondents named that police public relations events make the spaces they happen in feel less safe and further erode a sense that police understand what their presence means for these communities.

- Many professionals working in mental health and social service organizations, including some in leadership, advocated for ending the police social worker program and redirecting funding toward supports that reduce contact between distressed or marginalized people and law enforcement and provide truly voluntary support.

- The community perception that the presence of a social worker embedded in the police department would mean that a mental health professional was the person responding to "mental health situations" or that it would reduce the presence of armed officers in welfare checks simply is not occuring.

- Professionals also named concerns with Project Cares' mission, collection of data, conflicts of interest with the police, and harm. Community and organizational listening information suggests that collaboration with the police has decreased the accessibility of addiction services for some members of the community who use substances.

RECOMMENDATIONS for Reducing Police Presence and the Role of Policing

- Continue Brattleboro PD's commitment to refuse militarized equipment. **(FY 2021 and ongoing)**

- Continue Brattleboro PD's commitment to Fair and Impartial Policing, and strengthen that commitment by adopting No Mas Polimigras Fair and Impartial Policing Policy, which limits police collaboration with ICE. Recommended changes to policy are listed below. See Appendix E for more information. **(FY 2021 and ongoing)**

    - **No Discrimination in Detentions Discretion** (VIII,f)
        - "…personal characteristics and/or immigration status shall not be used as criteria for citation, arrest, or continued custody."
        - *This ensures that determinations are not based on perceived identity or immigration status.*
    - **Close the Border Crossing Pretext** (IX)
        - "… members shall not make warrantless arrests or detain individuals on suspicion of 'unlawful entry' unless the suspect is apprehended in the process of entering the U.S. without inspection."
        - *This ensures that officers cannot use "unlawful entry" as a way of investigating immigration status unless the suspect is actually apprehended entering the U.S. unlawfully.*
    - **Protect Victims and Witnesses** (X,d)
        - "… members shall not share information about crime victims/witnesses with federal immigration authorities, unless it is with the individual's consent."

        - *This ensures protection for victims and witnesses.*
    - **Protect Confidentiality** (XI,a)
        - "No information about an individual shall be shared with federal immigration authorities unless necessary to an ongoing investigation of a felony, for which there is probably cause, and the investigation is unrelated to the enforcement of federal civil immigration law."
        - *This restricts information sharing to serious criminal investigations.*
    - **Due Process for Detainees** (XI,d)
        - "Unless ICE or CBP agents have a judicially-issued criminal warrant, or members have a legitimate law enforcement purpose exclusive of the enforcement of civil immigration laws, members shall not grant ICE or CBP agents access to individuals in [Agency] custody."
        - *This protects due process and equal protection under the law.*
    - **Relation to Federal Immigration Law**
        - Remove all references to 8 U.S. Code § 1373 and 1644 throughout the policy, which block laws that restrict police cooperation with immigration authorities. Add to the "PURPOSE" section: "Nothing in this policy is intended to violate federal law."

- Deeply review Project Care impact and outcomes. Move Project Care funding to COSU or out of the PD, and have a transparent, accountable process around its function and any associated hiring. **(FY 2022)**

- Increase accountability around harm, ineffectiveness and inefficiency of use of police resources for traffic stops. **(FY 2021 and ongoing)**

    - Deeply analyze racial disparities in traffic stop data **(FY 2022)**

- Consider steps to decouple traffic safety management from the police. This will reduce officer workload. ***(Development of a non-police, unarmed traffic safety management division by FY 2025)***

- Eliminate police social work liaison program. **(FY 2022)**

    - Use funding to invest in noncoercive supports as alternatives to police and police-like interventions in mental and emotional health, housing, and access to family support as detailed above. **(FY 2022)**

- Work to decouple police from welfare checks. **(start in FY 2021)**

    - Work toward the alternatives listed above that do not use force, coercion, or (psychiatric) incarceration to support individual and community mental health and wellness. This will reduce officer workload.

- Reduce and work towards eliminating public relations/community policing initiatives such as public speaking engagements, which disproportionately alienate marginalized people and do not create safety. This will reduce officer workload. **(start in FY 2021)**

    - Remove community engagement quota for officers. The best way to improve community relations is to focus on acknowledging, reducing, and eliminating harm.

- Disarm police for nonresponsive tasks like community speaking, meetings, and community events. **(start in FY 2021)**

    - Adopt Brattleboro Common Sense's S.A.F.E. policing policy and review impact/outcomes. See Appendix E. ***(by FY 2025)***

- Decouple responses to animal problems from the police **(FY 2022)**

- Commit to no more budget increases for policing (beyond a cost of living increase). **(FY 2022 and ongoing)**

- Reduce overtime budget and usage and work towards reducing the size of the police force over time, as alternative approaches to community safety are created, funded, and implemented. ***(by FY 2025)***

Table 13. Recommendations Timeline

Area	Recommendation
Immediate= FY 2021 (within 6 months) *and ongoing	
Acknowledge and Reckon with Harm Caused	***Seriously, thoughtfully, immediately and ongoingly consider*** the community experiences, data, findings, and recommendations articulated in this report.

	Publicly acknowledge and accept the experiences of racism, discrimination, intimidation, fear, terror, and harm detailed in this report, in our public forums, and in our community. ***Publicly commit as a Town, including the Selectboard, to acknowledge and address*** systemic racism/white supremacy, ableism and sanism, homophobic and transphobic discrimination, and classism in an ongoing way. ***Operationalize this commitment*** in budgets, time commitments, and work tasks as part of the town's ongoing regular practices to avoid a return to "business as usual," which is hurting people.
Increase Accountability	***Address gap*** in reporting race data in traffic stops and all data collection. ***Suspend the use of paid administrative leave*** for police under investigation for acts of harm and for police who are charged with a violent crime through change in policy. ***Withhold pensions*** and do not rehire police who are involved in excessive force violations. ***Freeze all increases*** to the training budget and focus on effective and efficient utilization of current training budget.
Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing	***Continue*** Brattleboro PD's commitment to refuse militarized equipment.

	Continue Brattleboro PD's commitment to Fair and Impartial Policing, and strengthen that commitment by adopting No Mas Polimigras Fair and Impartial Policing Policy, which limits police collaboration with ICE. ***Increase accountability*** around harm, ineffectiveness and inefficiency of use of police resources for traffic stops. ***Work to decouple*** police from welfare checks. Work toward the alternatives listed above that do not use force, coercion, or (psychiatric) incarceration to support individual and community mental health and wellness. This will reduce officer workload. ***Reduce and work towards eliminating*** public relations/community policing initiatives such as public speaking engagements, which disproportionately alienate marginalized people and do not create safety. This will reduce officer workload. ***Disarm police*** for nonresponsive tasks like community speaking, meetings, and community events.
Short-term= FY 2022 (within 18 months) *and ongoing	
Increase Accountability	***Address gap in graphic mapping data***—obtain functionality to map police contacts and develop a plan to capture and review these data to better analyze and be accountable to geographic data to reduce over-policing of identified neighborhoods. ***Disband the CPCC*** and hold a process centering and compensating people of color leadership to determine the best mechanisms for systemic accountability. ***In preparing a training plan, include an assessment*** of each supervisor and officer training needs and level of receptivity and readiness, and paid consultation with local content experts from impacted communities to develop accountable and effective training plans with demonstrable and

	measurable outcomes. Avoid trainings that have been specifically identified by impacted communities as particularly harmful. (And ongoing)
Meet People's Basic Needs and Building Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses	***Prioritize spending*** on safe housing for all, food shelves, free meals, community gardens, land trusts that allow marginalized people to take ownership of food production for their communities, and spaces for belonging and connection in neighborhoods for all community members, centering those most in need. ***Invest resources in new and existing programs*** that respondents identified as the most helpful to their safety, such as mutual aid support networks, BIPOC run programs, local organizations that provide voluntary support, and places for belonging and connection that are decoupled from policing. ***Review and consider models*** for totally voluntary and noncoercive supports run by the communities they are designed to support, in the form of neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, mad, and psychiatric survivor led mobile ready response, a crisis/freak out space, and unlocked, homelike crisis beds. Work collaboratively toward implementation of alternative mental health supports. ***Invest*** in community sponsored mutual aid and skill sharing. ***Invest*** in restorative justice practices at all levels, especially at the neighborhood level. ***Review and consider models*** for neighborhood and community training around de-escalation, holding space, and directly supporting those in distress, NOT training that advocates for calling in authorities or assessors or that bring people into more contact with police or mental health crisis response. Invest in neighborhood and community groups developing these skills.

Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing	***Deeply review*** Project Care impact and outcomes. Move Project Care funding to COSU or out of the PD, and have a transparent, accountable process around its function and any associated hiring. ***Eliminate*** police social work liaison program. Use funding to invest in noncoercive supports as alternatives to police and police-like interventions in mental and emotional health, housing, and access to family support as detailed in report. ***Deeply analyze*** racial disparities in traffic stop data ***Decouple*** responses to animal problems from the police. ***Commit*** to no more budget increases for policing (beyond a cost of living increase).
Mid-term= FY 2023 (within 2 ½ years) *and ongoing	
Meeting People's Basic Needs and Building Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses	***Implement*** neighborhood restorative justice Initiatives
Long-term= FY 2025 (within 5 years) *and ongoing	
Meeting People's Basic Needs and Building Up Alternatives to Policing and Police-Like Safety Responses	***Implement alternatives*** for totally voluntary and noncoercive supports run by the communities they are designed to support, in the form of neurodivergent, psychiatrically labeled, psychiatrically disabled, mad, and psychiatric survivor led mobile ready response, a crisis/freak out space, and unlocked, homelike crisis beds.

Reduce Police Presence and the Role of Policing	***Consider steps*** to decouple traffic safety management from the police. This will reduce officer workload. Development of a non-police, unarmed traffic safety management division. ***Adopt*** Brattleboro Common Sense's S.A.F.E. policing policy and review impact/outcomes. ***Reduce*** overtime budget and usage and work towards reducing the size of the police force over time, as alternative approaches to community safety are created, funded, and implemented.

Appendices

Appendix A: Community Safety Review Committee

CSRC Agreements
co created by the committee
In the process of doing work within the Community Safety Review Committee, we will aim to:

1. Be curious.
2. Acknowledge that we come from different places and different life experiences.
3. Center antiracism as foundational in this process.
4. Center anti-oppression, including work to avoid and end racism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia, ableism, sanism, and all forms of oppression. (Sanist oppression can look like pathologizing language, outing people's psychiatric labels, or engaging with people discriminatorily due to their psychiatric labeling or disability).
5. Be kind whenever possible, and use respectful language always.
6. Use both/and thinking instead of either/or thinking whenever possible.
7. Use "Whoa/Ouch/Oops" to pause, acknowledge hurt, and take responsibility.
8. Acknowledge or apologize when we hurt each other, even if we didn't intend harm.
9. Hold space for probable good intentions, while acknowledging that intention and impact both do matter.
10. Welcome feedback and accountability from one another enthusiastically, and give it generously.
11. Acknowledge the contradictions.
12. Hold a larger vision of big intergenerational world changing work, and honor realistically the short time frame and limited scope of this one effort inside of that long arc.
13. Be generous and reverent of people's lived experiences, especially stigmatized experiences like incarceration, arrest, poverty, homelessness, abuse, and addiction.
14. Check our biases, individually and together.

15. Work to attune to safety, value the quality of our human experiences together, and aim to make things safer (while acknowledging that safety looks different for each person and is never guaranteed).
16. Make change in our community through both the process and the production of outcomes.
17. Hold responsibility of confidentiality with reverence and respect informed consent in how information shared is used.

Members of the Community Safety Review Team/Committee:

Darlene Derby

Lana Dever

Kaz Dewolfe

Annaliese Griffin

Drift Mavyn

Robert Oeser

Kelsey Rice

Maya Shulman-Ment

Laura Stamas

Appendix B: Documents and Data Reviewed from the Brattleboro Police Department

Documents Reviewed (2019 and 2020)

- Policy and Procedure Manual, all policies reviewed, with emphasis placed on:
    - General Order 103: Fair and Impartial Policing Policy
    - General Order 225: Ethics Policy
    - General Order 601: Use of Force
    - General Order 2001 and Appendices: Internal Investigations and Citizen Complaints
- Internal Investigation Documents
- All complaint and response documents
- All Citizen Police Communications Committee (CPCC) meeting minutes
- Job Descriptions and Pay Scales
- NEPBA-TOB Contract (union)
- All documents associated with 24 cases selected using a combination of random and judgemental sampling- areas of interest identified, then cases selected at random from these areas of interest
    - Suspicious activity offense code
    - Welfare check offense code

    - Domestic violence circumstance code
    - Use of force incidents
    - UOF incidents with a "suicidal" call type
    - UOF incidents in which the subject is identified as Black
    - UOF incidents that did not result in any charge
- Lists of trainings attended by Brattleboro Police Officers
- Justice Alternatives procedure (Brattleboro Community Justice Center)
- MOU with BPD, Brattleboro Food Coop, Community Justice Center, and Windham County State's Attorney's Office
- VIBRS Codes (Vermont Incident Based Reporting System)

Data Reviewed (2019 and 2020)

- Arrest Summary Report by Demographic
- Motor Vehicle Summary Report by Demographic
- Welfare Check Incidents
- Complaint-internal log
- Overtime usage
- Response to Bias Motivation Incidents
- Dispatch call numbers
- Police contacts by offense type
- Arrest data by Offense
- UOF Incidents

External (non-BPD) Documents and Data Reviewed

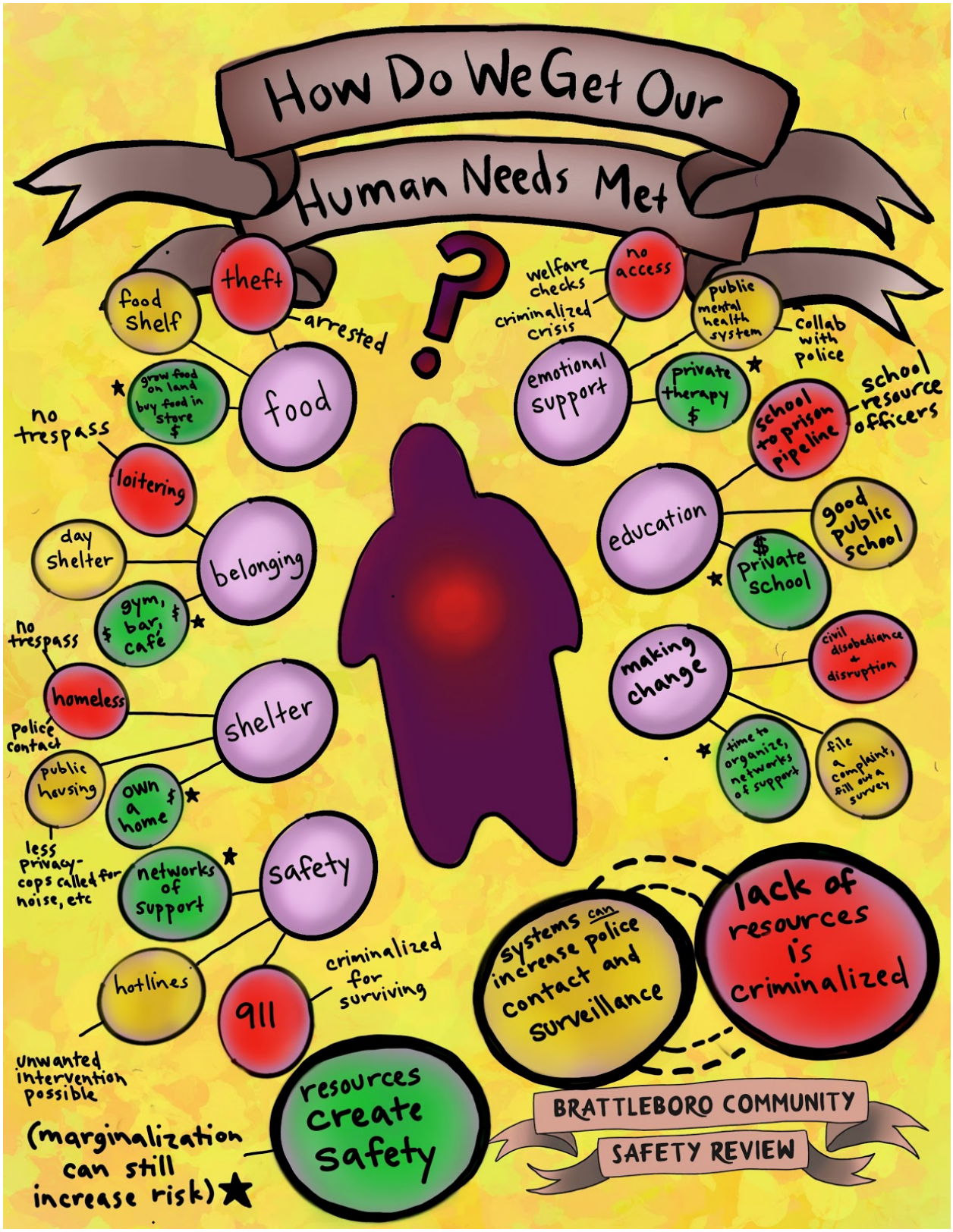
- Racial Disparities in Traffic Stop Study: Brattleboro, Vermont 2014-2019
- HCRS Police Social Worker Contact Note and data
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Arrests by police department by race and age for Brattleboro and similar sized nearby municipalities (Bennington, Rutland, Athol MA, Hanover NH).

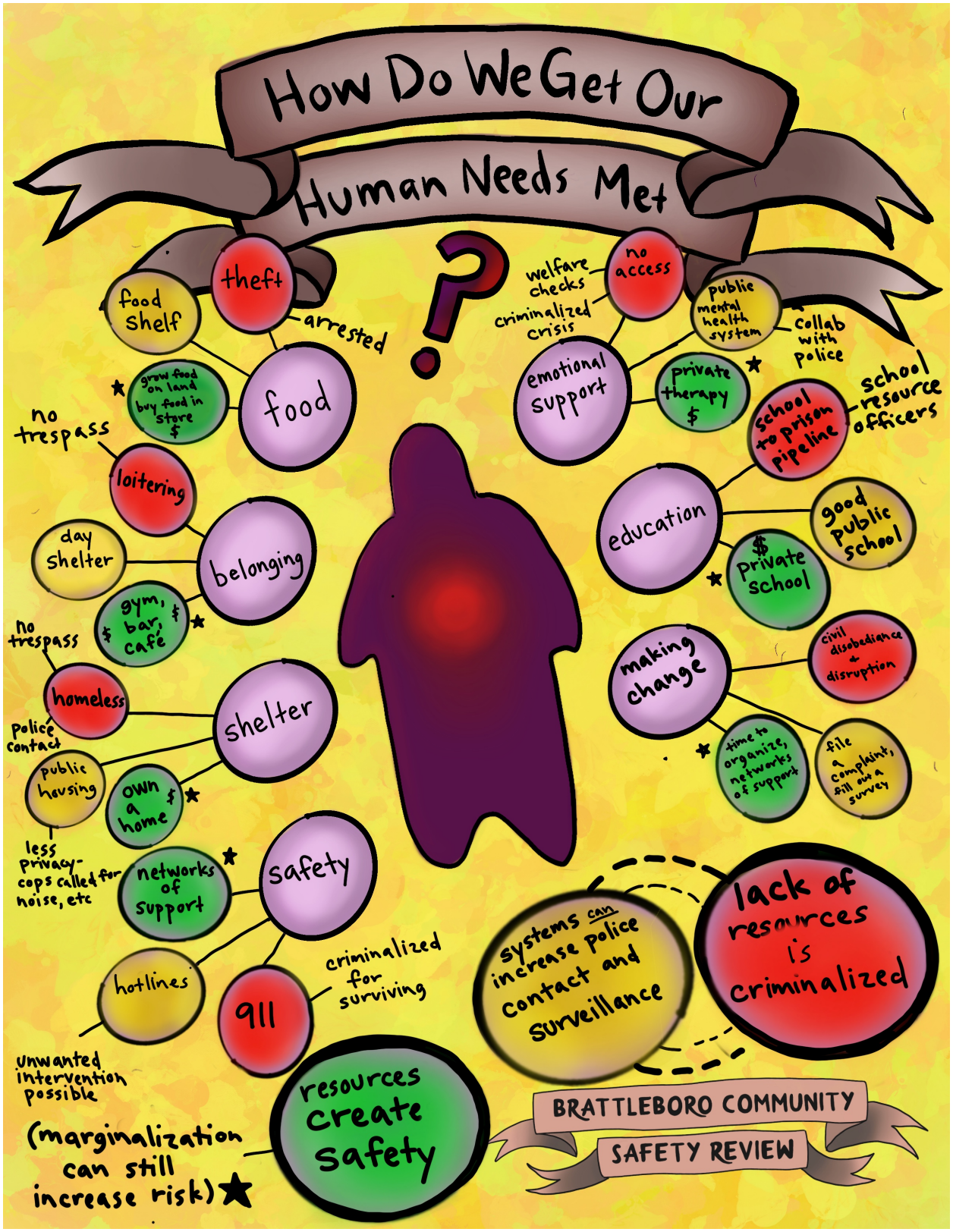
Appendix C: Collaborative Organizations

In addition to the many, many organizations we spoke with directly as organizational respondents, some organizations supported community listening by facilitating or co-facilitating listening opportunities by and for marginalized or impacted communities. These organizations were:

The SUSU Healing Collective
The Root Social Justice Center
    Youth4Change (a program of The Root Social Justice Center)
    Families United (a program of The Root Social Justice Center)
    BIPOC Caucus (of the Root Social Justice Center)
Out In The Open
HCRS Peer Support and Advocacy Program
Groundworks Collaborative

Appendix D: Current Safety Systems Eco-Map: How Do We Get Our Human Needs Met?





Appendix E: Parallel Projects

See Attachments for:

Migrant Justice:

1. 2020 Fair and Impartial Policing Policy (FIPP) Background Handout
2. Letter to the Brattleboro Selectboard about Fair and Impartial Policing Policy (FIPP)

Brattleboro Common Sense:

3. Brattleboro Common Sense's S.A.F.E. Policing Proposal
4. S.A.F.E. Policing Concept Map

Appendix F: Solutions Document for Mental Health Alternatives

Link to the Solutions Document

Appendix G: Community Listening: Creative Submissions

3 Original art pieces by Phoebe Sparrow Wagner, the artist.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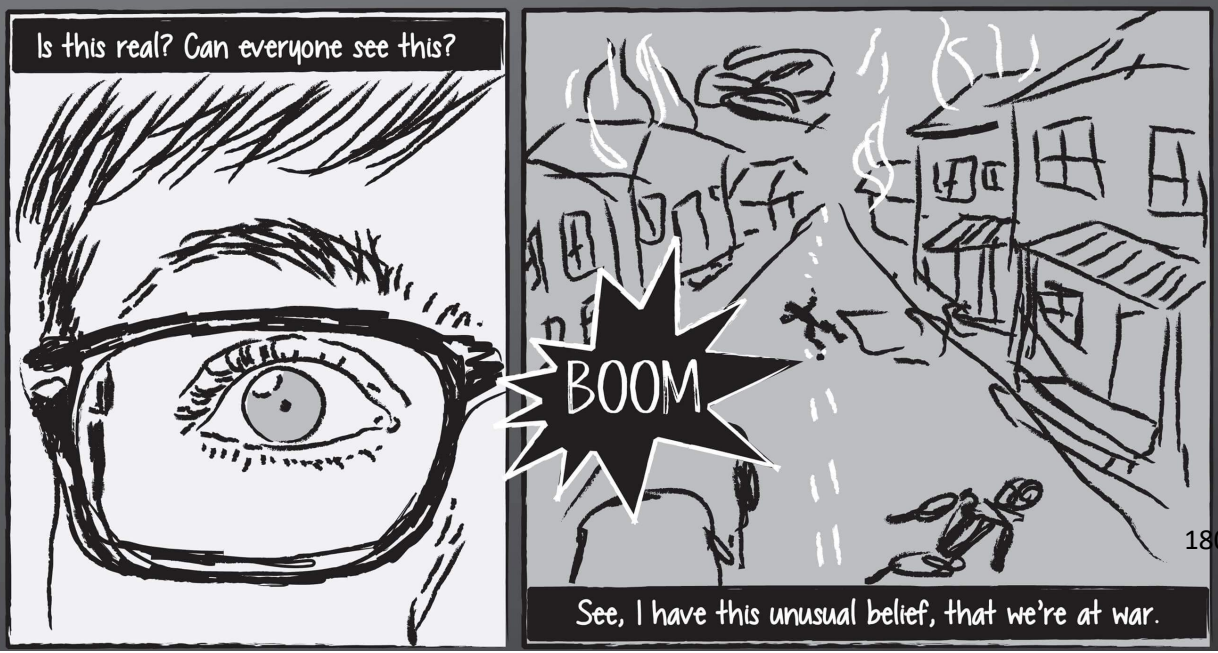
MAD IN PUBLIC

8/15/2018 ISSUE #2

BY KAZ DEWOLFE

At least these streets were usually familiar. I wasn't expecting bloodshed and horror, to be honest.



Appendix H: Community Listening: Public Forum Public Comment Transcripts

Transcript of Comments from The Community Safety Review Committe's Forum on Community Safety
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzRoELC8Xfs

19:41
Kaz DeWolfe (they/he): "I just wanted to speak a little bit about my experiences as a psychiatrically labeled/psychiatrically disabled person who has been in crisis multiple times, and I've been hospitalized here in Brattleboro...twice--I think that's true, twice. When in crisis, I've made use of support lines, suicide hotline, and when those folks determined that I needed emergency intervention, the people who showed up at my door were police. This has happened four or five times and not once has there been a support worker/crisis worker/social worker of any sort arrives, each time it's been police who are really not at all trained or equipped to be supportive to me and any other people when we're in crisis, and I worked for Vermont Psychiatric Survivors for three years and in the research we use in our advocacy we found a study by the [Ritterman] Foundation that 50 percent of police shootings in a time period sampled, which was through newspaper articles because there there wasn't actually like a data collection--this is not just in Brattleboro, this is nationally--50 percent of police shootings were of disabled people, with people with psychiatric labels being the bulk of those, majority of those, and there have, here in Vermont, been police shootings of people in crisis. I don't have any like direct physical experience of physical violence other than being detained against my will and taken to an ER, held there for days like this year at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, held here for days against my will, and being at the Brattleboro Retreat against my will also, being...I guess that I have stories there that would like require content warnings for sexual assault, I guess? Is that something I can talk briefly about here? This is woven into the system in order to--like, there's the LGBT unit here which is, you know, something that a lot of us really need is some intensive support in a crisis, and it really is terrible that the only space to do that for us is a locked unit that requires being strip searched upon entry. I am transgender, and the first time that I was searched at the Retreat--there's supposed to be two people in the room to prevent sexual assault from happening, there was only one person in the room, and I felt really scared. I knew that--I worked in advocacy, and I knew the policy, and I knew that that wasn't happening and it was a standard strip search, but having to remove your clothes without consent is still violence and it's systemic and it's throughout the whole system--as it's practiced here in Brattleboro it's violence against disabled people. So, that's what I wanted to talk about tonight, thanks."

25:12
Rebecca L: [via Christine-interpretor] "Yes, can you hear me? Okay, hi there everyone, I'm Rebecca, I am the director for the Vermont Advocacy Services, and I work all over the state of Vermont. I do live in Vernon, which is very close to Brattleboro. So, as a deaf person, we have a lot of struggles in Brattleboro. Especially now with COVID, things are pretty isolated, our sources are limited now. My husband is a

person of color and he lives in fear, we all live in fear about what's going on in Brattleboro now, especially wearing the masks, it's hard for communication access for us, and we are struggling and we're struggling how to figure out how the community can make it accessible for deaf people and people in general. Deaf people, plus deaf people with other issues, we do live in fear because we are not able to communicate with everybody or with anybody especially with the masks these days, and if we are to encounter police, you know, we are fearful of that because of what's going on in our country now. And so I just came here to watch and to see what people had to say, and you talk about disability and deaf people, we are of that community, and so I want to know how we can make it better because for me it's a daily struggle, you know, stepping into the community. I did grow up here, I'm from the Brattleboro area, and still I feel really uneasy, you know, because of what's going on with the police and because of, you know, connections being gone and what's going on with that. So I did want to just share that, and I appreciate your time."

27:42
Gary Stroud: "Oh, okay, I didn't know I had to unmute myself, I'm sorry! Hi, how you doing guys? I guess my biggest thing, I've had issues like, you know, I always like to ask my daughter how her day at school was, and sometimes it's hard for her to converse or communicate the issues that are going on even in the schools with racism. Kids, which we know can be cruel at times, even when I grew up back in the 70s--not revealing my true age--going to Catholic school, dealing with that, and when you have a child that's multi-racial and you're dealing with issues that are going on out there in the in the world, having resources and people that they can go to in the school, not just home. She has it hard enough--she's on the honor roll, but being hard enough going to school, dealing with that--it took a while for her to open up and tell me issues that were said to her and being done to her with other kids on the bus. I wasn't too thrilled, and I just followed the proper channels with that. My feelings on that at the time were just, you know, disgust, deplorable, just, you know, "Wow, we still going through this after what we've been going through?" My feelings were just, you know, out there, you know, my thoughts were just erratic, you know, thinking, "We've come so far, we thought we're at the point where we need to be," but I guess we're not. That's something the kids should not have to experience. There's enough pressure and stress going on with them. No child should have to carry that at an age in school and then growing up, because the first thing they're going to think is that this is what life is all about: hatred, name-calling, and these things that they're not, you know, something that we adults need to not, you know, neglect, we need to address immediately. And I believe we need more Root Justice systems and things like that in the schools dealing with this day-to-day. I mean, you can't control what a child is going to say because whatever they're taught or learned they're going to pick up, they're just gonna do, but when it affects your child it kills their spirit, you know, and the first thought they're gonna think is that, you know, we have enough going on but these adults should be able to be able to go to our child and say, "Hey, look, the world's not like that." I'm not going to pretend it's Disneyland; I'm not going to say sugar-coat it, but this is what it is and this is what we need to do, but easier said than done. She's got two years left and then college but it's like, I guess it's a struggle for her. I went to school by myself and it's not like you can call up your parent while you're sitting in a class where another child is racially discriminating against you, and you go to a teacher, and you're still not getting results, so I'm just going to take it to that next level. It's not just--we as adults experience that and even with police or but just in general, in businesses and in places

like that, so even in the hospitals or wherever you're working at, just something that needs to be tackled immediately and addressed because it's just not acceptable to me, personally. I won't condole it, nor fantasize it doesn't exist, but this is just something that's just out there and that's [a step?] of her being handicapped as well with ADHD. So there's a lot of limitations with her and she's doing her best, but to kill her spirit, and you have administrations that are not stepping up, doing their part? Well, that's very troubling. It's great to have policies in place, but they're not enforced, and not addressed and taught and say, "Hey, look, this is something that we need to do. Something's wrong with this system. We need to go back to the well and find a solution to correct this. So, I just figured I'd get it out because it was really bothering me this weekend and I said, "I'm gonna wait till the citizens' police review comes on and talk about this, because that way I can get whatever thoughts or feedback from other people to see how they felt. Yeah, I mean, this is all over--even me looking for work when I came up here was the same thing and, you know, it's all over, but I don't think you have enough time for my story, probably have to do a documentary one day [laughter] one-on-one. But this is something that I'd really like to express and get out there, that's why I came on, and I'm just gonna talk about it, and thank you for your time and for the real talk."

32:27

Lana: "So, I'm next simply because the queue is a little short at this moment, but Gary, if you would like to talk further, I would love to give my time to you…[silence]...or if you decide you would like more time I think that there will be more time. I know you said you could write a book, but I think we have time for like a novella? [laughter] Or or perhaps like a vignette at this point. So, about my personal story, unless Gary chimes in and says he'd like to speak, I moved here from Washington, DC which is a very racially segregated community, and it's well known for being the "murder capital of the world" when I was a kid and then for being the place of a lot of gun violence. However, when I lived in DC, I believed that black people--obviously mistakenly--were 50 percent of the population, and so I felt myself to be among the majority and in that I felt a sense of equality and power. It wasn't until I moved to Vermont, which I thought was a very progressive, you know, wonderful small town--and in so many ways it is--that I experienced racism in a way that I had never encountered it before. And the thing about Vermont is when you've got a white state, it is white supremacy by default. So, Vermont has the need to act against white supremacy and be actively anti-racist or else white supremacy is the de facto norm. There's no getting around it. Because black people make up such a small minority and people of color and any of the other things you want to talk about that put people at risk for policing. And there is this culture of non-belonging. I've been asked my entire life where I'm from, and "where I'm from" is a coded way of saying, "You don't belong. How do I categorize you," and that is rampant in this town and in this community. I have received more...microaggressions--matter of fact, before I moved here I didn't even know what a microaggression was. I knew outright aggression--I know, like, a confederate flag, and that lets me know where a person is right off the bat. I like that, I want my racism in my face. When I have my racism in small little doses that appear to be like, "Oh, your skin's so beautiful. Oh, your hair is so interesting. Where are you from? No *really*, where are you from?" So, all of those things build up and tell you that you don't belong. The other thing that I found: in DC the police don't just pull you over randomly all the time. They have bigger things to do. They have better things to do, right? They're harassing people in certain neighborhoods; they are harassing whatever marginalized community

they've decided to harass, you know, but when you're driving in your car you don't feel like you're just gonna get pulled over for any reason. However, in Brattleboro, and in this community, I have been pulled over so many times. So many times. And for the simplest of things, and I've also noticed that--I have a white husband--when he drives, he has no fear. He doesn't think to himself that the cop behind him might pull him over. My heart is like palpitating. I'm watching my driving. I'm making sure I'm driving in a, you know, a straight line and all of my motions are to counterbalance what I'm afraid is going to happen if that police pulls me over. No more than likely, I'm just going to get a warning, or they're just going to say nothing and they're going to drive away, but it's a *culture* of fear. It's a *culture* of non-belonging. And that keeps black people in this community and people of color in this community from feeling as if they belong here, and that is what I think this committee is working to change. So we need *all* of your help to figure out how to heal Brattleboro, and how to make Brattleboro the place that it believes itself to be, but that it is not actually--not yet. So, that's it."

37:08
Z they/them: "Hello. I feel like the hardest thing revolving policing that I've experienced in Brattleboro--mostly in school--is denying that there is a problem with police and that it's all fine and dandy and that the system works and it's all great. And also having my police trauma denied, as if you can't be traumatized by police, or like get nervous or scared or terrified from them, because they're just they're "here to protect us" and I feel like a lot of my peers just didn't understand that, and my relationship that I've had with police and the relationship my family has had with police. But like, when I was in school I feel like the biggest thing was the school resource officers, and they are in full uniform, full, like, decked-out belt, like they have all the stuff on them. And we usually had two school resource officers at the high school, every day, and there was one time where there was three. And I never actually knew what they were there for. I still don't know what they're there for. They don't do any, like, community discussions. They don't really connect with any of the students, really. They're not there for any particular reason, and I feel like the biggest reason is intimidation, and, like, every day they're usually outside, like when I would walk into school they'd be standing there, waving or having people come into the building, and that's, like, the first thing you see, is just, like, two to three police officers just, like, as you're walking into school. And it just feels like I'm walking into a prison and, like, they don't even say anything. It's not like they're really friendly or like I know them very well. It's just they were just very intimidating. And I was a part of the restorative justice program at BUHS, so I would facilitate meetings and whenever students would get into like altercations and stuff, I'd help the meetings and whatever and there was this one time one of the school resource officers came in during a restorative justice meeting and sort of sat there and basically was very intimidating and started talking in the meeting and was like, "I was looking at the laws on my phone and if you were to do this, I'm not going to do it now because I'm a good cop and whatever, but if you were to do this again, or whatever, everything you did in this situation, I could arrest you right now. So don't do it again." Which just completely defeats the purpose of restorative justice. It's supposed to be a safe circle and cops are not supposed to be involved, and just with Driver's Ed, too, they have a officer come in and basically kind of every class I was intimidated to answer questions because he would kind of force you to, and get in your face about it and be like, "If you were to answer with that answer, I could issue you a ticket right now." And there was a time where I had

to be left alone in the room with him and do a Driver's Ed simulation, and he was hovering over my shoulder the whole time, watching me drive on this fake simulator thing, just like pointing out all these mistakes I was making and how I could have gotten a ticket if I did those things. And I was just alone with him in the room and it was very, very uncomfortable. I had extreme anxiety the whole time. And I was like, “I want to leave. I don't want to be here anymore. I don't know why I’m in here alone with you,” but it was very terrible. So, I just I think the biggest thing right now is SROs and youth for change is kind of working on how to get SROs--we're starting to think about starting a campaign with getting SROs out of school because we did a conference where, and we learned that a lot of schools have gotten rid of them and a lot of schools are starting campaigns to get rid of them, so we're trying to work on getting them out of BUHS right now.”

42:01
Sheila: “Thanks Emily. I’m Sheila, she/her, I’m in Brattleboro, and I could also have a documentary so I'll try to be concise, and I took a little bit of notes so I can try my best to not run over the five minutes.I just wanted to paint a picture for people of my experience. Some of you know me better than others here. For those of you who don't know me, I grew up in Brattleboro--not only grew up, but I’m born and raised here and I’ve lived here all my life. With my family, with my own family and now, I’m a grandparent, and so I just want to put it in perspective that I’ve had a long history in Brattleboro and a long history with the Brattleboro police, specifically in many different capacities. How I remember as a child growing up, first having interactions with police, was around evictions in my home. Then, I grew up on Canal Street, I lived there for the first eight years of my life, and then we actually lived on Clark Street, and for those of you who currently know those neighborhoods, they weren't very different than they are today, and they were much so stigmatized as they are today: being the most diverse communities, being the most lived-in and well-used communities, and had very much the same stigma and concerns that currently go on in those neighborhoods. When I was on Clark Street, I actually thought the police lived on my block because the cruiser just stayed there constantly. I thought that was an actual thing. And when I was a young child living on Clark Street, I think my brother was 12 years old, it was a Sunday and we were doing Bible study in our home and my brother's three years older than myself and he got ripped out of our home by the police because of mistaken identity at the age of 12. And said that he committed some type of crime, which clearly was not him. And that was very traumatizing for me, and I will never forget that as I was, I believe, nine years old at the time and didn't understand what was going on or what my brother did. Come to find out that he didn't do anything, that it was mistaken identity and the police thought that they could just come into our home because there were so few black boys in the community at the time that it must have been him. That went on to other issues within the community, and then that led into school where my brother and I were racially harassed and bullied all of our duration of our whole school life. But it stemmed into my brother being really pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline and being literally put in a straight jacket and removed from the school and arrested when we were teenagers. As I grew up, that was just some of my experiences as a child. And then as I grew up, I was constantly stopped by driving, while walking at my home. A few years ago was being profusely racially harassed by a neighbor who was intimidating me and and invading in my personal space and harassing me, and when a community member finally called the police on my behalf because it was so bad, they said, “Why didn't you call sooner?” And then they followed it up with saying,

“We can't do anything for you.” So, it led this impression of, like, okay, when I really need your help you can't help me, but then you shame me into thinking that I have a false solution in calling you, and that somehow, by me calling you is going to be the resolve of my concern or issue that I have, but in actuality, 90 percent of the time it's caused more harm and not affected change in my situation at all. I continue to have those experiences with partners I might have had, and, in my life, I’ve dated a lot of black cis men, and they have not been from Vermont, and every single one from, the entry into Vermont, has met the Brattleboro police. Every single one. And in ways where, walking down the street in Gallery Walk, “you look like the description.” Driving in to the first time in Vermont, talking about, “Where's the mother lode? What's your alias? I know that you have drugs, you've just been on 91.” Those are the types of experiences that I’ve had growing up, I’ve had recently, and continue to have had in my life. Concerns that I really have is around all of those things, but it's around the complaint process, and my huge concerns are around accountability for the police and their immunity. I have filed numerous complaints towards the Brattleboro police on a variety of issues, both on behalf of myself as well as members of this community. I was one of the people who was original people on the CPCC which had no teeth and no power to do anything and still does not. I have been engaged in lots of work around policing and currently sit, appointed to by the attorney general, the Racial Disparities in Criminal and Juvenile Justice System panel, currently. So, I am not only what I call a victim of police, but I’m also somebody who's trying to be part of the solution and has continuously been a part of that even during my trauma and my experiences of myself and my family, my friends, and my community that I love. And so the complaint processes that I’ve endured is: if the complaint even goes through, what has happened is that then I get back, go in the back room, usually with the chief or somebody superior, in the jail, behind locked closed doors, in a room, by myself, on film, with an officer--who was always a male, at that time--and then said to say whatever I need to say, complaint against either them--actually them as the person--or one of their colleagues. And that is how they take complaints. So that's my been my experiences of how I’ve had to give complaints to the police. Everything about that is intimidating. Everything about that is inequitable. Everything about that is wrong. Absolutely wrong. And then not to be followed up with, to not be able to check over what was said or written about your complaint, to not be able to defer or to question what the other person, the officer, whomever, said--all these things, just there's no checks and balances there's zero accountability. And so, I want to end by just saying that some of the things that I’ve also experienced by police is: I’ve experienced unwanted touch; I’ve experienced harassment, on a variety of different levels; I’ve experienced lies and perjury-- and I will say that firmly--in perjury in the court of law, not just on the outside in the streets; I have experienced racism--blatant, adversive, and micro; I’ve been targeted as a person of color in this community and so has my family, numerous times; I’ve been assaulted; I’ve been bullied; I’ve been intimidated, much of what Z has said, those intimidating factors of, “If you do this or if you just say this or I can do this for you,” playing Law, playing God, playing somebody that they are not; I’ve been misled, and I’ve been completely dismissed. And so those are just some of the things that I can offer, maybe potentially in the five minute time, but I’m here because, I am also here because there's many youth who are on this call and for Youth4Change, and I am one of the people who works with the Root, and we have many people who are most impacted to this situation, and I am fortunate enough to be able to hold space for a lot of people who have come to me as an advocate to hold space for them with police relations. And so it's not just my story that I speak for, and

I'll only speak for myself, but I just want you to know that there are dozens and dozens of other people that are not able to be here today that have a voice in this as well. So thank you for the time."

50:29
Gary Stroud: "Oh, well, I just wanted to sell on it, yeah, definitely a lot of, mines is more of a documentary so, I might not have been living up here in Brattleboro that long. I'm originally from Yonkers, New York, I got up here after 9/11 2008. My experience with racism stems back, it's like to the 70s, like I said I'm an old timer so this is nothing new. It's nothing I haven't seen or experiences and the thing about that, if you look it up on Google about Yonkers, Yonkers was the last, last city to be desegregated. The last city. What they had to go through. So a lot of that, when I see it up here, it just shakes me to my foundation to see that it's, you know, further up, considering all the things that is said about Vermont and all this and everything but, no matter where you go, anywhere in this state or anywhere in this country or in the world, you're still gonna have that...particular racism or profiling. And it's not just with the police, it's on the job, it's in the schools, it's in the hospitals--everywhere you go. So no matter what happens, this is something that we need to deal with on so many different levels, and an action has to be taken about it and not just writing, sayings or logos and this and that, we need to act on that, and that's what the activists were like back in the 70s, acting on like what you you guys are doing now, moving on this, making it happen. I used to speak to Bob Olson, we used to reminisce about New York and I talked about how different, when he's familiar with it, too, about how the police were in the 70s. Some were approachable, some weren't approachable. We had the police athletic league. I suggested that a while back, where you can integrate to get to know the officers. There were some that were pretty much giving cold shoulders and stuff. I was profiled when I came up to Keene and I got to the point, I went to the precinct, I said, "You know what, why not just sit here in the precinct, that way you guys don't have to keep looking for me," and he said, "What do you mean?" "Well, every time I go around I get the same thing and I know the score, I've been through it in the 70s, "You look like this person," that such. "Oh, okay so we know how that works." So it got to the point they stopped. So, sometimes you have to go to them and bring it to them and say, "Listen, what is going on, why is this happening, this type of intimidation." And, as you probably know, I'm the only African-American male on any of these committees, or doing any of this stuff, and stepping up even on here tonight. So I have no fear factor. I've been there, nothing else they can do. I ain't seen or done or whatever, what they can do. So I just speak, up speak my mind say, "Look, I've been there, done that, I've seen it." And, like I said, if any of you guys need help, I have no problem to talk with you, but something like this I think is a whole different forum about personal experiences being racially profiled. Maybe we should have something like a document to maybe put something together from different people's aspect, being disabled, sexist, religions, whatever. Maybe for like an hour that person could just talk about their personal experience from the time they grew up, up until the time they came here. Like I said, this is deep rooted. This is something that needs to be unrooted in the seed of love, passion, compassion, and harmony and peace needs to be planted, because this younger generation, as you can see, stepped up with the votes--they they've had enough, they see what's going, on they're not blind or oblivious to this. And we adults need to encourage that spirit, you know, and I'm quite sure with a lot of the other activists I speak to, a lot of them they know about it, they dealt with it, but I usually ask them, "How was it like when you were growing up?" Not just here in Brattleboro, but in New York and different places in different states like

with Lana, and with Sheila, and all of you. I'm sure you all experienced some type of racism on different levels or jobs or whatever, but for me, it's just something that, you know, it's just not acceptable. And I learned this from my grandmother, my mother, she said, "There's nothing you can't do, you put your mind to it, don't anybody stop you from doing what you need to do." I went to Catholic school first to eighth grade, four years all boy's school, two years college, so it doesn't take a rocket science college degree to see when a person is not treating another person with respect, and not saying that they have to in return, [police] acknowledge that you're human, and that you exist as well as they do. We all share the same feelings, we're like symbiant beings, we all feel the same pain as that other person. If you don't have any passion with your compassion, then you don't have anything. You're empty. You got to get out there and just, you know, walk the walk. That's what it comes down to, you know. And, like I said, I'd love to at some point get together with some of you guys, if we open up this [speaker] to sit down in the circle, have a couple--even with the police officers, too, I mean--they're gonna have to at some point, we're gonna have to say, "Hey look, you know, you're here too, just like us, you're humans just like us, bottom line, you know. Because once Mr. President gets into office, changes are coming down the pipeline, and we got to be a part of it or a victim of it. I choose to be a part of it and a solution and not a victim anymore. Thank you."

56:25
Kelsey: "Well, I'll just fill this space for a little bit while hopefully other people raise their hands. I am writing out my story in full to share in written form, publicly with the committee and the Selectboard, and I'm preparing to share sort of a slice of that in a five minute bit Saturday night, but for now while we're waiting for some other--anybody at all that wants to speak, I'll just share that I am a survivor of intimate partner violence. Born and raised in Brattleboro. A lot of family history, a lot of social equity and connections. And I grew up, you know, from the privileged perspective of a white girl in Brattleboro from a very liberal family that, although my family has absolutely no experience with law enforcement, either being in trouble or needing to call for help, I operated under the impression that, in in the darkest of times, in an emergency when horrible could not be worse, the police would be there and they would protect and, in a respectful, safe way, with professionalism, without judgment, because that is their job. So that that was the construct that I had as a privileged girl here in Brattleboro, from a very liberal family, and I would say, you know, sort of the story of being a survivor is, we all have our individual circumstances. We all have our own backgrounds of how we ended up in the relationship and what it took for us to get out. But in many ways, the stories are all the same. And so, for me, you know, sort of recognizing that I was in it and needed to get out of it, you know, it wasn't--when I was ready, it was really more about being ready to do that. That scenario wasn't hard for me to sort out. What's been hard for me to sort out, and why I have such a fire for speaking and sharing my story is what I experienced on the way out. And that's not just from law enforcement--it's from this liberal, Birkenstock-wearing, co-op-shopping, Bernie-loving, you know, green smoothie-drinking community that I hail from. In most circumstances, most--not all--I would say it's unintentional stigma and discrimination that I experienced. But the harm that that causes is just as painful and just as detrimental specifically for folks, primarily women, seeking safety from domestic and sexual violence because we're already pushing through just vast amounts of shame and self-doubt, and pushing through it anyway for our survival and quite often to protect our children. And to be met as we're trying to re-enter the community, which is what we are

doing--I mean absolutely no facet of our lives go untouched. We are rebuilding absolutely everything you can possibly comprehend. It may look different depending on the woman, right--may have more resources to keep it more of a private hell than others, but the story is the same and to be met by our community, our employers, our neighbors, quite often family members, friends, and law enforcement with more shame is just appalling to me, regardless of my awareness that it's quite often unintentional. We still need to work on that. We need to be willing to have these uncomfortable conversations. We need people to be willing to put their egos aside and say, "I want to understand. This is so foreign to me." But yes, I've signed up for this job and I'm going to do better, I want to do better. I'm not accepting blame for others' intentional harm that they've caused, but I understand that by operating in the same way that we always have and not being willing to evolve, I'm perpetuating this issue, and to me I don't think we're asking too much of law enforcement to be willing to evolve, right? Like I've been pretty vocal that I'm not ready to say, "We need to abolish the police." I still think we really need them, and I see the police in Brattleboro, they're still--I mean, I know there are female cops out there but I have yet to engage with one. We have this agency of men signed up and ready to potentially be healthy leaders in what healthy masculinity looks like to survivors. So, I have a lot more to say, but I'm hoping other hands will pop up and I'll stop talking. We got one! All right, more to come."

1:01:44
Wichie Artu (he/they): "I think mine's going to be more of a vomit and just treading carefully because I don't know how much I'm willing to to put out there about my own experience, and it makes me very, very anxious to talk about it. But a lot of my police experience, I think with me, it's a little complicated. I've--from a young age, I was just always told, you know, people who do drugs or sell drugs are bad and the police are there to catch them for you. Or, you know, there's more police in urban places because that's where more drugs are, right. And really just sort of buying into this idea for a long time. And the moment that that changed, I think it sort of started opening up my eyes, is when I was assaulted by a police officer. I'm not going to get into the details because I don't really want to say what happened publicly, but, and just going through years of courts trying to prove that I was assaulted, and then the the police officer not going to jail, just being just being laid off or fired or whatever and then being stalked by that same police person, and basically just being forced to leave what I was calling home. And then coming to Brattleboro, and even since then just hearing people a lot of people's stories speak to this--either you've been assaulted or you've been discriminated against or you've been lied to or you've been stopped without an excuse. All of this just repeats itself over and over and over. And I've seen it a lot since then, so when I went to the, what sort of started all of this for me in Brattleboro specifically, is when the chief held that forum and I went and I spoke and I noted that I had that experience and, you know, talked about, you know, racism and the drug war and you know the roots and really try to lay it all out of why we're here and why we're talking about this. And instead of being acknowledged for what happened to me, or you know, being like, "Thank you" or any of that, the chief just then sort of like turned around and said, "You know, nobody hates a bad cop more than a good cop." And it's like, how can you hate the person who did this to me more than I do? And it's not even hate--it's like, how do you--it's just like, very clearly not listening. And as the forum went on, and people even asked him questions, he just like stared off into blank space and then had to be called out for not answering a question, and then he was like, "Oh I'm sorry, what was the question?" and just like blatantly not

listening. And in all of this, I just keep thinking about the amount of power that police have. The ability to kill someone and get away with it. The ability to hide under the rug anything that, any complaint--to hide under, you know, behind screens of things that are confidential and cannot be, you know, given publicly about things that happen with police officers. So it's just astounding to me that the police department does not acknowledge that this is happening. That the town of Brattleboro, really in Vermont, consistently being told that, “This doesn't happen here.” Being told that, “Stop trying to bring the stories from not here to here.” Because, you know you can tell from this forum, it happens to everyone. And being in Vermont is not an exception. Yeah, that was it. Check. Thank you.”

1:06:15
Lana: “The last thing you said really, really struck me, thinking about, you know, Vermont and how Vermonters like to say that it doesn't happen here, and yet Vermonters don't question themselves as to why Vermont is so white. It is not a mistake that Vermont is white. When black people left the South, from Jim Crow laws, and migrated up north, Vermont would have been a wonderful place to call home and to lay down roots, and in fact, a lot of black people tried, or at least some families tried, and if that had worked, if they had been allowed to stay, if they hadn't faced oppressive racism, if there wasn't a brook in north--up further in Vermont called Negro Brook that's named after the black family, you know, in a derogatory way that lived there, then maybe we would have more families that settled here, we'd have a more thriving, more diverse, more vibrant Vermont. But we don't. And it is by design, and it and it is a fact at this exact moment. So thank you so much for bringing that up, and for speaking, and for sharing, and I really hope that we can connect with you additionally after this.”

1:07:20
Wichie Artu (he/they): “Sure. If it's okay, I just wanted to add some things that I remembered. I think also, one thing that stuck out to me in that forum is that when, you know, when the chief of police was asked to put his gun down for the safety of the people, his response was, “The gun is a tool of my trade” or something up to along those lines. And yes, police officers are trained in violence. They're trained to stop violence with violence. So then when the question is asked, “What are they trained to?” to respond, you can insert their tool of trade as a gun which is used to kill or maim, and therefore their trade is to use violence in response, and in response to what? And you lay out all the responsibilities that we've given to police officers. So it's--and especially when we talk about what masculinity has been in our society, like that is so emblematic, it's such an epitome of what we--of what police officers have come to be. And I think, I think a very momentous change that I would want to see: the ability for cops to one, not be trained in violent responses and two, the ability to put down your gun. Can you put down your gun for the sake of your community? Both metaphorically and literally. Thank you.”

1:09:00
Lana: “Thank you very much. And I’m just gonna add one more thing. I’m sorry because, if there's no one else that wants to speak, I do have a different, relevant point. In addition to the guns being a tool of their trade and who are they using those weapons against? I mean, it's a really good idea to think about the history of policing in this country in the genesis of the creation of the police force, which was to catch runaway fugitive slaves and to police the Native population. So if you have something, there's a really

great quote, I believe it's Audre Lorde, the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. And that is something that we really have to put into our thought process when we think about policing in this country. How do we change something that began under slavery? That began to police black and brown bodies? So of course that is what it's doing to this very day, because that is what it was designed to do. If [your] only tool is a hammer, then everything is a nail."

1:10:09
Crista Yagjian: "I will. I'm sorry I'm not--I'm in the midst of parenting and here, so I apologize if I'm not as cohesive in my thoughts, but I feel like I really wanted to reach out and share some of my concerns as a parent, and I apologize if I get teary talking about this, but I'm a parent of a child with a developmental disability who also has a lot of emotional mental health challenges. We've already had one instance where, you know, I had to leave a situation in town and I forgot to put my lights on in my car and got pulled over by a police officer, and I just think about some of the embarrassment and shame that I feel and worry, like, if, you know, when you as a parent if you need help and you don't have somebody to help out in a crisis, there's not really a place to turn to and so, I feel so worried. My son is getting older, he's getting bigger. And the culture in our schools is that we still use seclusion rooms and we put kids who are like him--he was suspended from school, I mean, he's got down syndrome, he was suspended from school when he was 10 years old for being unsafe because he was not understood. I, you know for me, I just also just want to advocate just for people who have disabilities, the the fear I have I mean, just two weeks, ago I was in town and he wasn't able to move and was not being safe, and I thought, "I have nobody to call" and I just, I don't think that any parent or person should feel, in our community, feel like they're not really sure where to go for help where they're not gonna, you know, that it's gonna escalate, like I'm worried that...that would escalate his situation or make him feel [safe] I mean, if a police officer showed up with a gun, he could run into the street, you know what I mean, like it's a huge fear of mine. So for me, I'm speaking as a parent of a child with a disability who I worry about--him being hurt. I worry about, I fear for how he's judged. I feel, I fear for how his behavior will be perceived when he's not understood. So thank you, that's all I wanted to share."

1:13:53
Gillian Love: "Thank you. I didn't grow up in Brattleboro, but I did grow up nearby and I worked in Brattleboro and I would come there as a child as well. From the very beginning of my time in Vermont, I was taught that I was different and that I didn't really belong. As a toddler, I was the only person of color in my preschool class. I was raised by a white couple who liked to be really active in the community and abused me emotionally and physically behind closed doors. Not only was my identity, culture, language, and even connections to my biological family stolen from me, but they used the police to instill fear into me and keep me under their complete control. My own adopted mother called the police on me for some of the most mundane and ridiculous scenarios. And I'm not going to share them all right now. However, when I chose to escape the abuse and leave my childhood home at 18 years of age, they did call the police on me then, when I was attempting to leave with more than the one trash bag of clothes that they were allotting me. But honestly, during those years, the police were the least of my concern. Really it was more the various forms of racism from the community members that I experienced and was constantly told didn't exist from the endless sea of white people who obviously knew better than me

about racism. No matter how they tried to convince me that their racial slurs and targeting were compliments, I never trusted them, and with good reason. Those same people are the ones I've watched grow more emboldened in the recent years. [sigh] They're also the ones who were once my peers. They were the children of school teachers and other prominent community member, and now they are becoming those who hold positions of power and influence themselves, all while doubling down on their ignorance, hate, hatred, and bigotry. But their white friends still feel safe. I only started to feel safe in Vermont when I came into community of BIPOC through the Root, but it shouldn't take being in BIPOC-only spaces for BIPOC to feel safe in Vermont. I'm a Latina and last year I brought a Latina friend of mine into Brattleboro for the first time ever, and we were followed by a store associate downtown so blatantly being profiled. What a shameful way to introduce someone to Brattleboro. As a Latina I've known, I've come to know that while I will be profiled, I will be targeted, I will be assaulted as I have been before, I will always have white people telling me that my experiences aren't real because they aren't real to them. We have to do better for every single member who has spoken up today, for those who haven't been here to speak up, for those who have been harmed throughout their lives, for those who fear bringing children into this world and into this community. We have to do better so that this doesn't continue to be the legacy of Brattleboro. Thank you."

1:19:41
Anna Mullany: "Thank you, Shea. Hi everyone, and I just wanna thank everyone that has spoken. I think I'm just echoing what people have said, but it's really brave. I have been in Brattleboro for a long time, and I just thought that this information would be pertinent to the discussion is that: I had an experience a couple years ago on the street that I live on in which a neighbor had let me know that the police had been around and they had been kind of hanging around this house that had been abandoned. And so I went and apparently I heard that they had kicked people out that were sleeping behind this abandoned house. And so I walked around the house, and the police were no longer there, but this is on my street, and so I walked around, and what I saw were two tents and the rods of the tents had been taken by the police, and the police business card was thrown on the ground, and it said, "If you want your rods back, you can contact us." And so, I took photos of it, and I wrote a letter to Chief Fitzgerald, and I contacted Josh Davis, as many of you may know him as executive director of Groundworks, and I was incredibly angry, because here you have police officers taking one of the only things that these people maybe own for a shelter. And they may or may--who knows?--been sleeping behind that house, the only place--a safe place to sleep, not bothering anyone on the street. And I came to find out, I did hear a response from police, er, Fitzgerald--but I came to find out that this was a common practice of police that also included slashing tents of people who sleep in tents and don't have anywhere else to sleep. Another thing I just want to add to that, because it is tied, is that I'm part of Indigo Radio on WVEW and, I think it was last summer or the summer before, I interviewed a number of people that live on the streets and, time after time, they told me of the harassment of police. Even police looking for them at night to kick them out of spaces to sleep. So I just wanted to share that as knowledge of what I've seen in the town. That is just not okay. Thank you all."

1:23:24

Z they/them: “Yeah, I just kind of wanted to echo off of, like, the houselessness factor. I go on a lot of night walks, and I’ve seen police kind of, like, they put their searchlights facing towards the graveyard and will go like two miles per hour just like looking for homeless people, probably sleeping, and I’ve seen them just abuse their power a lot, like, sitting in front of houses, like in my neighborhood, too, and just, like, speeding intensely. They are always speeding. I’ve seen them go like 50 in a 25 and, like, they're just always rushing around the neighborhood, but I also just wanted to share another story. I recently got a car over the summer and I was in the car with my two friends who were also brown, and we were getting off Exit One heading towards Guilford and my clutch blew, and there happened to be a cop parked on the other side, probably checking for speeding and whatever, and luckily this officer was fairly helpful, was understanding, helped us get out of the road, pushed my car up on the grass median, helped us get in contact with Triple A and was understanding and great, didn't check any of my information, wasn't asking for anything, was just like really helpful and productive. And so we--and then he was like, “Okay, here's my card, I'll come back and check on you guys later.” And so we were just sitting in the car waiting for Triple A, and I was thrilled that that was a positive experience, and then I got really scared when the state trooper came up and noticed us and was on the other side of the road. We were just sitting on the grass median like, right off the exit, and he stops and he's just like “roll down your window,” like signaling to me and I was like, “Oh God, oh my God” and so I rolled down my window and he's like,
“What's going on here?” and just like immediately kind of starts to like interrogate me about the situation and I’m like, “Oh, like we're just waiting for Triple A, like an officer already came like we're all set, like thanks.” And he's just like, “What Triple A, what Triple A agency, who's coming from Triple A, what's going on with the Triple A, who is it?” and I’m like, “I literally don't know.” Like I never had to call Triple A before, I’ve never had a car before, it's my mom's Triple A, I don't know. And he was like, “Okay. That seems really weird like, what officer did you talk to like which officer was it, like what officer did you talk to,” and I was like, “Thank God or something that he gave me his card” because I would have--I don't know what he would have done if I was like, “I don't remember.” He most likely would have gotten out of the car and like continued to interrogate me and ask me questions, but I’m glad I got his card and I was like, “This officer came,” and he was like, “Okay like okay, just stay in the car and like don't do anything and like just wait for Triple A,” and I’m like, “Thank you that's what I was already doing that's what we all were already doing that was really unnecessary interaction, you could have kept driving after I told you we were all set and that an officer already came and we're waiting for Triple A, thank you goodbye.” So yeah, I just wanted to share that story.

1:27:48
Sheila (she/her): “Thanks. I just--so, to some--I often when I talk about concerns like to talk about solutions as well, and talk about affirming, and so I don't have very many things to affirm in this category, but I will say that I can pull something out. And what I will say is like part of the conversation is what we would like to see, what makes community safe, and I can only think of two incidences off the top of my head in my whole life with police that I felt was good or okay, and that was when I got my car in Brattleboro and an officer--I locked myself out of my car while at the car wash. And they came and jimmy the car and unlocked me for free, and I thought that, “What a great use of resources. What a great use of helping community. What a great use of not having me stuck in this bay with all this line behind me

who wants to wash a car and just come and do something so simple and easy." Like, it just felt so good and we laughed about it and I thought that was great. Another incident that I had much more recently, which happened about maybe about six months, nine months ago, unfortunately somebody in my neighborhood was ODing and I happened to find them. And fortunately, we carry Narcan on us and a neighbor and I were able to get Narcan, and I was able to administer Narcan on this person, but what was so great was when the police did arrive, because ambulance, police, everybody that I--what I did like was that, even though it was very sort of loud and abrasive, I did feel as though that person still had some agency. I did feel as though they were clearly in the process of being trained of how to interact with what many people call the "opiate epidemic" or people who have substance abuse disorders, and I really appreciated and could see the ambulance working with the police, [inaudible] this person in my arms who is just coming to from ODing. And so, I will say that the things I want to see is more of that. I want to see more of community helping community, more of us saving each other's lives, more of us helping each other out, more of that mutual aid, more more of humanness, more of being humans and not hiding behind immunity, not hiding behind a badge, not hiding behind a gun, not hiding behind "I live in the next town over." But I really would like to see us actually being human beings and caring for each other and our lives, and those are the only two instances, but I think they're pretty valid that I can account for in my experiences with the police."

1:31:20
Rebecca L: [via translator Janet Dickinson] "I want to share a story with all of you. So, I have four girls, and I mentioned my husband before. We've both believed strongly in open communication, and if you recall what happened to George Floyd and then all the protests, etc. Now, my kids are 11, 8, 6, and 4, and I explained to them directly what had happened, and my second girl, who's eight, said to her dad, "I don't want you to die!" which made us stop in our tracks. Because you did mention before, Vermont is such a white state, and we're always in search for resources about biracial children and mixed-race kids, etc, children of color, you know--where are safe places for them? Where they could share their experiences or have a group of peers who they feel the same and not always feel targeted or like they're the only one. We don't want them to be in fear of police or feel singled out, and they've seen what my husband's gone through and fear that he's experienced. So, this has been very impactful for us. I don't want my girls to be afraid [through] their lives and in Brattleboro. I want something to be there for children of color, for mixed-race children, etc. Thank you."

1:33:56
Gary Stroud: "Okay, well I'll keep it quick, simple, and brief about--I guess what we were talking about with Chief Fitzgerald. I guess we all need to remind ourselves, remember that a lot of the police officers have ex-military backgrounds, so I think it stems from that, also being a military person, that a lot of them don't relinquish their firearms right away because this is something that was taught in the military when they were there. So that being incorporated what they're being trained with the police force is another thing that they are working with and addressing, I guess that safety issue, because when you're fighting in a war you just don't put your rifle down because the enemy's right there. So that's pretty much, I guess the mentality, that, you know, while the enemies out there, and a lot of them come into play with that, you know, so I don't know if it's a flashback, I don't know what you want to call it. But also

I have to agree with Sheila, there were some positive incidences that happened in Brattleboro, like the one that was on Putney Road with that gentleman--they pretty much de-escalated him when he was having an episode in the summer. I've come across a few of the officers that were approachable, you could talk with them. There are some new ones that, you know, walk down the street and sometimes, you know, they have this, seems like this authority--they hold on to [mimes holding suspenders] that's probably the biggest thing that gets me, when they're walking down with that, I mean just relax, you know, pretty much just be loose, you know, people are more approachable when you are more acceptable and susceptible to be approached to and talked with, and not walking down with this or holding on to your like you're in the wild, wild west. I think, maybe that type of lesson or something could be taught in the police force and maybe walking with people of color down the street, or whatever, letting them, you know, just walk with them and say, "Hey, let's have a c--you know, when this thing lifts." [Just didn't feel that] comfort zone. And a lot of my guests are in that. I always say "Hi" to them, but there's never really a dialogue a conversation, it's more like, "Hey, how you doing, great, okay," that's it. But I seem to have more conversation with the meter person or the fire department versus most of the police force. I know a lot of them, I've spoken with them, I've dealt with them, and, you know, I guess breaking down that vail, you know, I mean, you have it all over. There are some that you can talk with that are approachable, there's others that, you know, they carry whatever stigma or whatever they brought over with it. So, a lot of them talked about in the past about having some type of psychological evaluation or whatever, who knows what trauma they've been through. So they're humans like us, but just trying to yourselves as an individual approaching these police officers to speak with them. I think if we can approach them as well, too, and with, you know, the leaf of peace or the flower of peace and say, "Listen, I'm here to talk with you and just see how your day is and how you're doing," I think we're able to break down that wall, and I think the comfort zone would be more established with them, but until then, you know, it deals with training and a lot of other things, but I think once a lot of these people in ages even people like us walking with them are talking on Flat Street, the comfort will be there because then they get to know you in a different light. Because it seems like even when you call, like back in the days, I know if you guys are from New York, you call a police officer in the hood, guess what? Even an ambulance, good luck. You know, even up here I ordered some food: "Where do you live?" "Canal Street" "Oh no, we don't deliver there" "Oh, okay." So there's that demographic stereotype too, so there's a lot going across the board, so we do have a lot of work, and I believe things will happen in time, but hopefully in this generation, but definitely the next. Thank you guys."

1:39:59
Kelsey: "I really just wanted to piggyback on some things that other folks were saying, and I will go into more detail later on down the road, but I have had some really positive experiences with law enforcement, and I'll talk about that more later, but what I did want to bring up is that sometimes there is an issue of our perception of what would make sense in within the system and protocol, and it's like our critique of how it's happening or not happening, but we don't have the full picture of the system that they have to operate within. And so, I have an example. A few weeks ago, my three-year-old got a hold of my cell phone while I was doing the dishes and called that emergency button on my cell phone that you can get to without putting in your password, you know that emergency button, and so I quickly noticed that dispatch was like trying to talk to my three-year-old, and he was looking shocked like, "Wow

the phone's talking at me." So I grabbed it and said, you know, "Oh we're so fine here, I'm so sorry, this is a toddler 911 call," and you know answered the questions, "Sorry to bother you, we're okay." And they said "Okay, have a good night." And about 45 minutes later, two state troopers showed up. This is Sunday evening in COVID. I'm in my bathrobe, not looking my best, definitely not wanting officers to come into my house, and so I was a little bit like, "I told you I was fine." I mean, I was thinking that. And they went through the whole scenario, and I was still you know--I answered all the questions again, here's the toddler, it was him, you know. He's super excited that there are two uniformed guys at our door, and then, after they left, answered all the questions, they were satisfied everything was okay, I realized like, for a moment I had the fleeting thought like, "That was a waste of their time. I told them I was fine," and then I ran out there and catch them and thank them because I realized I have a relief from abuse order, and I know they don't see that in their system, because I've looked into that, but if if my child called 9-1-1 or if I called 9-1-1 and then dispatch answered and we say we're fine--I really need the police to show up, anyway. And it's really easy to make the assumption that well that was a waste of send two troopers out, it's a big spectacle on my one-way street, like, what's going on at that house. I've had a lot of police come to my house and it's never something I feel happy about my neighbors seeing. But really, I ran out and just wanted to thank them and say, "I'm so glad that you do this. I'm sorry that I wasted your time, and I apologize you had to come out here during COVID, but I'm glad that that is part of your response." Do I have some critiques about their body language and facial expression and, like, tone of voice when they were talking to me? Yeah, but I--believe me--I need them to come, even if I say we're fine over the phone. So, I hope I'm being clear on that."

1:43:06
Lana: "Kelsey, I wanted to thank you for sharing that, and I also want to mention I want to imagine just for a moment that your son wasn't a three-year-old white boy and that you weren't who you are and that your son was a 12-year-old Tamir Rice or a Trayvon Martin or a man who had mental illnesses and happened to be, you know, a young black boy or a black man who had called the police and that--that approach would have looked very different. Not only that, but the person receiving the police, sort of gruff treatment, would have responded differently, you know. And those situations escalate, and it's so great that it worked out well for you, but the problem is is that it doesn't for everyone, you know. That response isn't the same across the board, even if the phone call elicits them coming across the board, you know, and that's what we really need to work out. And it's not individual police officers--there's so many great individual police officers, you know. We all have cousins, uncles, fathers, but it's the system of policing, you know. But I'm happy that worked out, and your son's adorable."

1:44:42
Tara O'B - she/her: "Sorry about that, I was muted. I'm Tara O'Brien, resident of Brattleboro and also an employee at the Root. Thank you, Lana, for bringing it back to the convers--the topic of that- this a systemic problem, you know. We can improve our police department, you know, and, and have good cops, but ultimately it is a system that really is a huge barrier and influence and impact on people of color in this community. People may have wonderful interactions with the police, maybe friends with people on the police force, however, people of color still have to have that conversation about the dangers that they--with their children about the dangers that they potentially face with police. May not

be police here in this town, it is with police because that's a reality. So I really think it's important to bring it back to the system and remember that, like Rebecca had said, the impact of the, the visuals that we see on the media, that impact is *huge* on our children, huge, you know. So even if people are not experiencing directly, that has an influence subconsciously of what police mean. I love what my sister Sheila says about, you know, creative solutions. I hope this committee looks at what, you know, alternatives to when police are dispatched to calls, especially if it is a household of persons of color, because it has such an impact. I have a personal story I'll share on Saturday. I have to ask my daughter if I have permission to share because it involves her, but again I really appreciate Lana bringing it back to the system, and any recommendations that this committee will bring about--bring to looking at you, know how, can we look at the systems in total and on who's dispatched, what alternatives we have to that. Thank you."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD_am6F5kYQ

Forum #2

27:56

Laura: "My story with police goes back to when I was pretty young. I was 19 and I had just fallen in love with a woman for the first time and I got a call from a friend that another one of our friends was not feeling safe. So we went sort of late at night to go rescue this friend. See her car broke down, she was in some random auto mechanic place and so we went and got gas at some point. This is not in Brattleboro, VT. When we got gas I definitely feel like, I don't totally remember exactly, but it was like young love and I'm pretty sure that I held her hand in some way and did something affectionate. And there were two police officers who were at the gas station who then proceeded to follow us and pulled us over for crossing the white line when we got off at the gas station. Which I definitely feel like was profiling. Like two 19 year old, queer women and I just I had a really awful experience. I felt totally unsafe, I was separated from my girlfriend. She was interrogated by one officer, I was interrogated by the other. There was unwanted touch it was, I had basically let them search my car and ended up being arrested for having like extremely small bit of cannabis at 19. I remember that I was taken in a cop car, handcuffed, the whole thing, brought to jail, and my girlfriend wouldn't let me go alone. She was way too freaked out by the way that these police officers have interacted with us and did not feel safe letting me do that. So she demanded to be arrested for absolutely no reason, which they did, and they put us into two separate cop cars, and drove us to the jail. So in all of that, you know, when I see police officers I'm still terrified. I was 19 years old and I still get a fear response. And I feel so grateful that I am white, and I drive a Prius with kids, and I'm never pulled over in this town. So I feel like when I hear people's stories and I listen to this, what safety means is not having high schoolers going into a building where they're going to have a trauma response when they see officers at the door. It's like I feel like I don't know entirely how this has impacted me now if I was in trouble, but I definitely know, recent to those years, there's no way I would've called the police if I felt unsafe. And I think that I'm trying to figure out like

what are solutions that would've helped me in that situation. What are solutions if I still had the like terror response that I had. I think that's pretty much it. I have really appreciated everyone in this committee sharing different things about their experiences. I also just feel like we've created a very cool safe space here so thank you."

32:15

33:18

Malaika: "I'm Malaika, I use she/her pronouns. I live in Dummerston and work in Brattleboro. I haven't had a chance to pop onto any of the listening sessions yet, so I don't have anything prepared, or like anything open mic-y, but I'm happy to share I guess about my vision, and also some of my experiences that have led me to have some ideas about what might be possible in Brattleboro. Particularly around how we can support each other when in emotional, or psychic, or social distress. I'm actually holding, I have on my desk next to me, this book called, 'On Our Own,' by Judy Chamberlain, which was written in the 1970s. I was just flipping through it, and looking at all these notes that I have, and things that are underlined, and I'm so struck by how much of the critique of psychiatry that Judy and other psychiatric survivor-activists articulated literally 50 plus years ago are so spot on today. How incredibly little has changed, and how the solutions that our movement envisioned then are still the solutions that we need largely. And one of the problems I think that exist in Brattleboro and beyond that needs a solution is that there are incredibly few resources for people to go to when experiencing emotional distress, and needing to talk to someone, or be with someone besides resources that are carceral. That are you can't have a voluntary interaction with because there's always the possibility that if you decide, 'actually, you know what, I don't really know that I want to be in this conversation. I don't know that I actually want this kind of support,' there's always the possibility that those systems… The mental health systems that we have, is not necessarily primarily about showing up to support people to get through a difficult time, but is largely about determining what mechanism of control a person might need, or if they don't need them. So there's no interaction with mental health services without also some degree of assessment or screening. For me, and I think for many other people who've experienced how harmful those interventions can be, that just make fundamentally those services unsafe and inaccessible. But even if I did feel safe accessing crisis or something like that, and I have in the past, the support has literally been about, 'Well, are you suicidal or homicidal? If not then good luck, if so, come to the emergency room.' And so there's, unless you happen to be a person with a fair amount of social privilege to have sufficient support networks in your friends, your family, whatever, that's the option. Good luck or come to the emergency department, come to the hospital, go through a screening. Or perhaps the police show up. So something I've been talking a lot about lately, and I guess for a long time, is the need for there to be sort of true alternatives at each level of possible intervention or levels of intervention of the mental health system. The first level being crisis response. Crisis response right now is either you bring yourself into the emergency department, or into the clinic setting to be screened, or the police and perhaps a social worker comes to you. The alternative that I think is so needed there is that there is a team that can respond to people mobily in the community, that is connected to dispatch instead of police or crisis, that's run by people who have themselves been through extreme states or a lot of emotional distress.

And that there's a place for people to go instead of the emergency department. There's drop in space that's like a space for people to freak out or be in crisis. That there's not the threat of forced drugging or restraint which people may not be aware is something that happens very frequently in emergency departments. I've witnessed it multiple times. It could be happening at this very moment at VMH in fact. And then there's also people need to sort of stay somewhere else besides their home for a while. That there's a place to go that's not literally a prison which is what the Retreat is. Where people are locked in and witnessing and being threatened with the violence of seclusion, and restraint, and involuntary drugging there as well. Which I shared with, I sent along to Emily and Shea a while ago some data about seclusion and restraint at the Retreat and to encourage others to access that, maybe I can put a link in the chat or something, but it's extremely high numbers. So I think the alternative there is having respite, pure respites where people can go and be in a home-like environment and get support. These things are so incredibly simple, and they're actually not even that hard to make happen, but they don't exist. The consequence of that is that people experience violence and enter systems where they die 25 years sooner on average, and after which they are 20 or more times more likely to kill themselves, or they don't get any support at all unless they're privileged enough to have those resources themselves. Thanks so much for letting me share."

41:00

41:50

Maya: "Hi, my name is Maya. I'm a member of the committee. I just want to quickly share that in the course of my work as a social worker in this community, both at the Brattleboro Retreat and currently at HCRS, that I've seen and experienced a lot of what Malaika just described, and I could not agree more strongly that we need some sort of respite alternative for people to access when they're in crisis. It is absolutely sickening and very difficult to try to keep people safe within the system that we have right now. There are just so few options and the alternatives go from very low levels of support to extreme and very carceral levels of support. So I've been thinking about that quite often in the course of my work recently and I appreciate, Malaika, your sharing that."

43:00

43:18

Hannah: "Hi, I'm Hannah. I guess initially I can't really agree more on the importance of having a specific department set up for mental health crisis and not just universally sending police with a gun to people where that is literally the last thing they need is someone to come and make them feel like their environment is even more hostile than what it was before they arrived. That's not the effect that we want the person that's there to help them to have. I guess initially I want to thank all of your for setting this up and providing this really safe, and open, and inclusive environment for everyone to share their experiences. Shea asked earlier if anyone had a vision and we do. I'm a researcher with Brattleboro Common Sense which is a nonprofit out of Brattleboro. And we've been working on the Safe Policing

Project which is a proposal that aims to largely remove firearms from most officers that are performing their regular duties. So officers that would be policing the neighborhood, like walking down the sidewalk, wouldn't be wearing a firearm regularly. Or a traffic stop, they wouldn't be wearing a firearm. Situations that just, or schools, I'm not going to mention them by name, but the person that spoke on Monday talked about how they feel so uncomfortable and unsafe around the officers at the school who are there to provide them with safety. And one of the things that they mentioned that made them feel most uncomfortable was the firearm, was the gun on their hip, that for a lot of people in the community that doesn't feel threatening because for a lot of people in the community the police officers feel like they're there to protect them and make them feel safe. But then for a lot of other people in the community they don't feel that way around officers. Officers do not make them feel safe. They make them feel unsafe. They make them feel threatened. They make them feel afraid. They make them feel anxious. Stressed. And firearms only exacerbate that, they only make that problem worse. We see that with the Firearm Stimulus Effect which, even if we don't realize it, it creates some sort of an emotional response. It could just be your heartrate rises or your, you start to sweat, your face becomes red, because you're a little bit tense or whatever, any sort of past experience or trauma might make you feel uncomfortable around the officer, and then the officer reads that, and then you read their hostility or slight aggression based on what you portrayed earlier, and then it just spirals, and then it becomes this really hostile and negative experience. What we found with all the research that we did was that a lot of this comes down to the firearm being visible on their hip. Which is I guess what we would like to see gone. And I think that I'm not a member of the community that feels more uncomfortable around police. I'm lucky to not feel that way. But I do feel that people in our community should feel like they're a part of our community. I don't feel that a community should feel like a police state for some people and like a community for others. That's not a community when half the people that live there don't feel that they belong there. If you want to find out more we have a website. It's a little wooden but it's under construction. Brattleborocommonsense.org. Thank you.

48:00

48:25

Emily: "I would like to share a little bit unless anyone else wants to share. I thought about whether or not to share and have come to the decision that I would like to. Mostly because my life experience, given my privilege ,which includes my white skin, and also the privilege of having a family growing up that had a large, extended family. I grew up in a family where in my childhood there were periods of fairly significant neglect due to substance use. And my parents happened to also be part of families that had a lot of siblings. And so there was a lot of built in support where we would go and live with an aunt, usually when one of my parents had to go to rehab, or there was days where our needs weren't getting met. And as I got older, and understood that not every family had those safety nets, and then as I entered the system as a professional, it became really clear to me that there's actually a notable lack of police and DCF response in my family experience. And I began to understand more about why that was, including my privileges, and I grew up in a neighborhood and my community that wasn't policed. There were neighborhoods that were policed. And it was definitely something I was living with as a secret in

my school life and in my social life, so that people didn't find out, and therefore so that the police and DCF weren't called. That was a very intentional, something we really didn't want happening in our family. And we were successful in that, and I'm very grateful that we didn't have DCF involvement in my life, and I know that we could have. But I would also like to share I have worked in Brattleboro, lived and worked in Brattleboro, for about 11 years as a mental health professional and currently a psychotherapist, but I worked for a long time supporting folks in mental health programs. And I also thought about whether or not to share this, but I've decided to share it, because I think as Malaika was sharing, I wanted to share this publicly, that I'm not sure that folks really, I think maybe a lot of us don't quite realize how prevalent the use of involuntary restrictions and medication is, in not even just in The Retreat, but in our local ER. So in my career here in Brattleboro there have been many, many times that I have physically supported someone in the ER. Been present with somebody, because one of the things that happens when somebody has been identified, as where there's been an involuntary hospitalization order put on somebody, is that until there is an open bed at a psychiatric hospital unit they are very often kept in the ER for days. So I would visit with folks every day while they were there. And there was one particular situation, that of course this isn't my experience, although my creative expression tonight might be tears, because this is a very hard. It felt really unsafe to me as well. And I recognize that didn't happen to me and I want to note that as well. But there was a person who I was supporting who had been in a type of restraint at the ER that resembled a straight jacket type restraint. Where the person's arms were restrained like this so they had no mobility in their arms for three days. And they were on the third day and I had been there every day with them. And the person had, when I was sitting there with them, the person asked the sheriff who was sitting outside and the nurse who was caring for the person for help to use the bathroom. Up until this point they were only allowed to use a bedpan. This person who was experiencing emotional crisis, mental health and emotional crisis and this was the third day where they had only been allowed to use a bedpan. And they asked to use the bathroom. And both of those professionals supporting the person not only denied that request, but very rudely denied that request, and I attempted to advocate for the person. And I asked the person, the person then asked me to help and I agreed to help. The nurse tried to stop me many times. I refused and I supported the person in using the bathroom. And then we were, and it was very emotional. We were both very emotional and it was extremely traumatic for this person. And we were able to negotiate some time for the person to be without the shackles after that experience which was successful. But I do want to share that we aren't listening to people in those moments when we are putting them in shackles, and only letting them use bed pans for three days, and when we are not allowing them to advocate for themselves, and another professional person has to be there in order to advocate for them. For their safety and for their humanity. So thank you for listening.

54:38

55:59

Anna: "So I'm just gonna speak about the visioning. Is that ok? So I am in public health, and I teach UMass students down at Umass, and I'm a student myself. I also have a background in working with people who have been in crisis specifically around intimate partner violence. So I'm coming at it right

here from thinking about public health and a lot of the stuff that I do with my students. First, I want to say that policing is a public health concern, and that police brutality is a public health issue. In fact, the American Public Health Association came out with a good statement this summer around how police violence is a public health issue. I think the part around visioning is when I think about health I often talk to my students about how do we get health for all, and that public health is very much about population health, and our collective wellbeing. I think that one of the pieces that we fight, all of us, is that we are so entrenched in this deep individualism, and it effects the collective wellbeing of all of us. I think the response to Covid is of course a prime example of this and what is happening in the United States. That there's of course the huge, massive mismanagement of it, but there's also this individualism that I think manifests in lots of ways. I guess one thing around visioning for me is how do we continue to etch that individualism out of ourselves for our collective wellbeing of each other? And Brattleboro is such a great community to keep pushing at that. I walked down the street the other day and it's the beauty of a small town is seeing people you know and seeing how they are. I'm also a part of Brattleboro Solidarity, and some of us had led a couple years ago these conversations around panhandling and poverty in this town, and one of the things I always said, and I think Malaika said this, is it's so simple sometimes. It's just saying, 'Hey how's it going.' I think that I've learned this a lot, actually I have to credit the training I've had around intimate partner violence, is that sometimes all someone needs is to ask them, 'How are you doing?" And just saying hello. And I always say this when people ask me about my work in violence is that it's something that's so stigmatized, and not our business, and whatever, and I always say, 'We need to make it our business. It is our business. We need to be in each other's business.' And I don't mean that in like, 'I'm all ___ and what's happening, whatever.' It's like no, it's about just taking care of each other, and saying, "Hey," and "How are you doing?" And that that can go so far. I think it really can from people who are having a mental health crisis to just someone who's having a bad day. And it can help with mitigating a police interaction, I think. But I also think it takes courage, and I think that we need that, and we need to help each other with that."

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1:01:08

Malaika: "I really appreciated you sharing what you shared Emily, and that sharing, I think, specific situations is really helpful for people to get a picture of what is actually happening so that you can, it's hard to, sort of communicate about, because this violence that happens to people in the psychiatric system is so removed from the public view. I think one of the reasons why so few people are sort of at all concerned or politicized about it. And also wherever we experience this violence we're not allowed to have our phones so we can't even video what is happening to us. And there aren't bystanders as there are with police who can sort of document it. And those of us who are there, we're bound by HIPPA, so it's hard to tell the stories in a way that respects people's privacy. So I often run into that dilemma of like, I want to tell you the details of what happened, because this illuminates a lot, and it's hard to do so. But one situation that I want to share briefly, that feels ok to do so, it's not identifying. I think it's important because I think when people think of these situations where people are in restraints or in seclusion which is just a different lingo for when talking about solitary confinement. So often it's not because there

has been actual harm that happened or there's actual danger posed. So often it's a punishment of noncompliance. One example where I saw that play out so clearly was I was in the emergency department supporting one person, and there was someone else in the next room over who was also there on psychiatric hold, was not there voluntarily. And the nurses were asking this person to take off their clothes and change into a johnny. This is a pretty heavy story as they usually are. The person didn't want to, of course they were like, 'No, I'm staying in my clothes.' And then the repeated ask and the explanation that we need to know that you don't have anything dangerous on you. Which is not about a specific concern related to that person, it's just routine that, if you're a psych patient, very frequently most places you'll be asked to change out of your normal clothes, and in many cases actually be subjected to a full body search. I've experienced that at the Brattleboro Retreat as a child. I had to stand in front of multiple adults naked as they marked down on a chart any marks on my body, turn around. I've never been in prison but what I'd seen on tv of someone going to prison. So this person had been asked to take off their clothes and put on a johnny for the safety of the nurses, and the person didn't want to, and just very very quickly, they didn't do anything at all except not be willing to take off their clothes. You know, all of a sudden there was a swarm of people all around them, restraining them, and giving them an injection. The person was screaming and obviously felt extremely tortured. And the person I was supporting then became very upset. And I tried to intervene to help this person, and then they were being restrained by the staff, and then all of a sudden there was a needle right behind this person as they were trying to get away. And I felt very helpless but I was just like, 'Can you just give them a minute?' and so they did, and the person didn't get the injection. But that story is so traumatizing just to witness, and it's so heavy, but I think it's a really important situation to share because the narrative of mentally ill people as dangerous is so strong. And so when you see someone or hear about someone being subjected to that kind of intervention you might be inclined or conditioned to trust that there's good cause for that and that that's actually protecting people. I've been in the system for a while and I've not yet seen that. I haven't seen that scenario yet where that's actually protecting the public. I've only seen ever in my, you know, I started getting treatment at 14 and I continued right from there up to now, at some point transitioned from being a patient to working in the system, and in that whole time I just haven't seen it. I haven't seen the danger posed by these supposedly dangerous people who I've see being hurt constantly. I think that's important context as well. Thanks for letting me share that and I guess I would just add that I would love for there to be funding for other kinds of support that's not through the system because I work at HCRS, and I manage peer support services, and have some really important and valuable conversations with other providers who work there who are in clinical roles, and crisis roles, psychiatrists, and people are pretty willing to engage in conversations about these things, and see a lot of the problems, but there's not a lot of potential to do anything radically different in the system given the way that it's structured. So I think it makes a lot of sense for me, for towns, and state governments to separately fund some other resources. So I hope perhaps that will be something that might someday be possible in Brattleboro.

1:08:11

1:08:28

Kelsey: “I did want to quickly share, it’s relevant to what people are talking about right now, and I need to be really careful about how I speak of it. I feel like it’s important to share. I can’t ask the person’s permission to share because the person’s no longer with us but it’s something that the community was very much touched by. So I’m gonna be really careful about how I speak of it. In a previous role I was in as a service provider I had a client that I was supporting, and that person was really really struggling for several weeks, and that person had had many experiences in the Retreat. This person was really clear that it was not safe, and needed support, but the idea of going to the Retreat was worse in this person’s mind. So we did some work together around figuring out, we both, this person’s experience, and my experience working and supporting both people as clients, and at certain points family members, knowing that maybe if we found out there was a bed open somewhere else at the exact moment walking into the ER, potentially I could advocate for that person to get that bed. And with doing that work, and finding out that yes, there was a bed open somewhere else, this person was willing to go through the screening process that this person was so terrified of doing because did not want to end up at the retreat. And for a lot of reasons that were their own. I’m not judging whether or not they were valid but that person’s reasons. So sat for many hours in that little, tiny room without eve a bed, and I was there all day, voluntarily at this point. And then the end of my day I extended as long as I could. I had to leave and I made sure that our, my organization agency’s on call person was connected to the ER. Made sure that the people behind the desk had our on call number. Did everything I could do and promised that person that I or another person from our agency would be checking in. This person went through the screening while I was still there, and I made sure it was confirmed that the bed was open at the other facility, and that it was looking like we just had to wait for transport to arrive. So that was confirmed before I left. Just waiting for transport to arrive. Bed is open. I spoke again on the phone to the other center, ‘Yes, we have a bed open. As long as that person gets here relatively soon the bed will be open.’ All we have to do is wait for transport to arrive. So the next morning I called that other center. You know, with the release already signed, assuming my client was going to be there, and they didn’t know who I was talking about. So I called the ER. That person was still there and over the course of the night had gone from voluntary to involuntary because decided, was terrified. Was there alone and no supports. This person didn’t have family supports that they felt comfortable being present. So I went back to the ER and now there’s an officer, or I can’t recall, but there was a security guard or police officer, whatever the routine is, there was an officer outside of the room. But this person was absolutely at this point just, had given up totally checked out. While I was there transport came, the ambulance came. This person was brought to the Retreat, And I asked, ‘why?’ There’s no bed open at the other facility. So now this person went from voluntary, bed’s open where this person felt safe, to going to the place that, just absolutely took weeks to get to where we were. So he went to the Retreat. The next day I went to the Retreat to visit this client. This person was in the secluded unit and I didn’t get any answers as to exactly why. He ended up, had gone from voluntary to involuntary, now was in the secluded unit. That was on a Friday. And over the weekend that person was discharged and directly from being discharged that person ended their life. So that was a very significant experience for me. There’s a lot more to that story, and that individual’s background, but what really stood out to me is that this person recognized, ‘I’m not safe. I need help. I need to go somewhere. But based on my experiences I would rather deal with this hell alone, on the streets or in my home, than go to the retreat,’ and promised he could go somewhere else and it didn’t happen. So I think there’s the breakdown in the systems and what you’re all talking

about other alternatives are so very important. And to listen to people. I don't believe at any point that person was dangerous to others. And again, my agency is on call 24 hours a day and no one was ever notified. No one was notified when that person was deemed, when it went from voluntary to involuntary. Our agency wasn't called. Nobody was called when suddenly the bed at the other center is no longer available and we're gonna have to go in another direction. Even though I had been there advocating, sharing this information, being so clear with everyone possible. And we were not notified any step along the way. So I'm not blaming anyone individual but what you're all talking about absolutely is so needed. Thank you."

1:15:14
1:15:58

Bob: "I'm walking in Brattleboro a couple years ago. It's I think April, ___. I'm walking past a building and there's someone laying on the steps of the building. So I went up and said, 'Excuse me, do you need medical attention?" and the woman said, "Don't call the police.' I said, 'Ok, what's going on?' So started explaining about how she'd been released from the Retreat and that she had these papers or something about going to some sort of a follow up place. Mentioned a name of a facility in New Hampshire. So we talked a little bit but I said, 'Well, I don't know what else I can do.' I called the police social worker, and the police social worker said that she had talked to the woman for about an hour and a half, and the only thing that she could offer her was readmission to the Retreat. Now I should say that the discharge from the Retreat occurred almost simultaneous with the closing of the emergency shelter that happens around that time of the year. And a little bit more of the detail of that which I learned later is that that person had already been arrested. Probably more than once, because the arrest that was on record was an arrest for violation of conditions, and the violation of condition was not to drink alcohol. So just taking that minor story and parsing this out a bit, see that a court, which is a state judiciary, that's a state function, imposing a condition on someone who apparently has a problem with alcohol not to drink alcohol as a condition. If that were a civil contract I think a lawyer might say that that's a contract impossible of performance. And then to arrest someone for violating a condition that's impossible of performance so you get can police, state judiciary, state's attorney, all involved in what's fundamentally not a police matter, and not have an alternative ____. Someone talked earlier about having a place, and there's a place in Vermont called Alyssum, but has very limited beds. There was a move a few years ago about having a detox bed in this town but there was no funding for staffing because the staffing would have to be volunteers. How much money did we spend to discharge someone to the Retreat to no housing with a condition that's impossible of performance that has to be enforced through police work? Is there a better way to spend that money?"

1:20:42

1:21:35

Bob: “This condition was imposed by a Windham district court judge. Was linked to an arrest, probably for disorderly conduct, and then the arrest was for a violation of that condition, which was then imposed. It was done through the criminal process.”

1:21:55

1:23:13

Tara: “Tara O’Brien, I’m resident of Brattleboro, my pronouns are she/her/hers, and I also work at the Root Social Justice Center. Thank you for creating yet another space, a creative one for people to speak and feel comfortable in. I also want to thank those who spoke before me tonight with your brave words for us to listen and learn from. I’m one of the ones who spoke, I wanted to thank Shea for showing up at a few of the Root programmings so people could speak with privacy in those settings. I spoke in privacy, I shared my story there, because I didn’t have consent of the then minor who was part of that story. And I also at that time spoke about the fact that the onus of responsibility is repeatedly on us sharing our stories of victimization. Victimization by institutions, by structural racism, structural oppression. When is it enough? And I speak from experience when I say that. I am looking through old newspaper clippings from 2004 when residents disclosed profiling incidents that the ALANA organization, which I was a part of in 2004, conducted a survey of the majority of our minority households. And overwhelmingly then people were asking for a review board, a police-civilian review board with teeth, and that didn’t happen. I was part of the civil rights, or Vermont Committee to the US Civil Rights Commission and we had seminal work on racial profiling in Vermont at that time. What came out of that is these words now that cannot be used according to our president, who on September 22 of this year came out with executive order 13950 on combatting race and sex stereotyping, which trainers using federal funds cannot use the words systemic racism, unconscious bias, critical race theory, white privilege, positionality. These are all key words that really we need to use in trainings with folks working within institutions to have an understanding of their positions in their interactions with people who are in vulnerable interactions with people with power. So that’s a challenge that those of us working on to combat oppression in all forms are up against if that executive order isn’t turned around come January. Just to contextualize this. Just over 1,000 folks voted for this president who made this executive order. So he didn’t happen in a vacuum. There’s a reason why that order was implemented. Not to address these issues at their core. When we talk about the systemic oppression, the reason these systems exist, we have to get to the core of it. We talk about systemic problems within these institutions. So when we talk about visioning again we need to talk about education. So if we’re gonna be putting money from, if you’re gonna be making any suggestions in visioning, please towards education. Not only those working in the institutions but our community members. Again on visioning, I spoke about this a little bit with Shea in one of our groups the other night. I love for money to go towards neighborhood associations, community groups. You know, neighborhood associations that create a sense of belonging so that people aren’t calling institutions or 911 at any sense of perceived danger. So that neighbors know neighbors. I have an experience, I lived in japan in for 10 years as an adult, and those neighborhood associations were active. Each household had a turn being part of the organization that ran the meetings. Every household in the neighborhood took a turn being on that committee. Those were so well integrated into local politics so

that people had a sense of belonging in their towns. I'd like to envision just active neighborhood associations. I'd love to envision active community resource. You know, in Japan we have police boxes in neighborhoods where there's a police officer right in a neighborhood. I'd like to envision a resource box, or like a little, mini office, where the folks who service those who are at need. Right now, I know, there are efforts right now going with Groundworks that are in the streets, on the grounds, just making connections so that there's just a sense of community. Those are some things I'd like to see when we're talking about envision. Education is a huge part of it. If we're gonna change these systems it's not just from within but everyone who interacts with those systems. Thank you. I'm tired. I've been involved with this since 2004, took a break. You know, how long is this gonna take?"

1:29:40

Shea speaks for a while.

1:45:52

Kelsey: "As I've already said I'm gonna sort of write my story out in full and share it with the committee in written form. So I've been thinking about sort of what little slice I wanted to share tonight and there are a couple things. Some of it is related to some of what Shea just said. So as a survivor of intimate partner violence my ex-partner is currently incarcerated. Those thoughts definitely go through my mind of, you know, he already experienced a lot of trauma in his life, and that's certainly not an excuse and doesn't justify the harm that he's caused to me and many many other people. But he's certainly experiencing more harm by being incarcerated. It certainly isn't, you know, I actually had to advocate pretty hard for him to be held accountable but it's not out of retribution. It's not a, 'Yay I won! He needs to suffer and pay,' by any means because it's not a win. He certainly isn't gonna come out rehabilitated. And when he is released that's gonna be, I'm gonna have a safety plan in place for that because there's no way to know what the outcome is. I mean, he's having to have more sort of intensive programming because he will be incarcerated. It's more likely that he'll do it because he'll have to vs when he, if he was out he'll be less likely to engage. But I do want to say that when you think about domestic violence and incarceration it's so complicated because there are certainly BIPOC communities for a long time, people speaking of that this doesn't work for us, right? Like, for so many families you're ripping apart economic stability, all kinds of resources, and finding its generational impact, and it's not what primarily women are wanting and needing, and it's not solving the problem, and I recognize that. But it is so complex and we do need to listen to survivors of what we need. And in my situation there was no alternative. You know, believe me, in my particular situation this person is so willing to acknowledge that they need help and even engage in treatment. Just enough to be believable. But in reality I'm really confident in saying absolutely no willingness or desire to change, none. And there is no option, it does not exist, for family or natural supports to be called when this person is escalating. That is not a solution. That is not safe and it doesn't exist. It is not an option to call a neighbor to come over and deescalate. It actually makes it more unsafe. And I've tried some of these things. I've tried a lot of these things. And this person again, depending on how desperate, will engage to the extent that it's believable for a period of time until this person can no longer maintain it. So taking away, you know, yeah, certainly engaging

with police, calling the police, it is an awful process. It is a last resort. From my experience the impact, the shame, the ripple effect on my professional, social reputation. My children in their school experience shame. Already what I had to rebuild, and continue to rebuild, was magnified to such a degree because of police involvement. Because of mistakes made, simply because of the desperate need for a paradigm shift around victims of domestic violence. I mean there's so many layers to it. However, I could tell you, I still to this day, as much as I do value and I do want to look for alternatives, I need to be able to call 911, and I need that officer to have the ability to use force. I'm not saying I have an idea of what that force should look like. But it is life threatening terror and there is no talking that person down. I need him to be taken away in handcuffs in a cruiser. That's what needs to happen. And I just, in order for that person to… restorative justice? I firmly believe in it and I think we need to grow, and build, and foster that as much as possible, in as many ways as possible. And we think about certain individuals that have, for so many reasons, gone so far into that direction. You know, maybe if we're recognizing these patterns in people when they're still in their teen years there could be strong interventions. But once you get too far into it its terrifying to me, and I do not believe that it would have any effect. And there is no restoring the damage that he's caused, and I have no faith that he will not continue to go on and hurt others. And holding him accountable as much as possible I've found is the only mechanism I have to keep him away. In fact, no charge, no court order, no relief from abuse order stopped him. What stopped him is when I started reporting him for non-emergency violations. So when I was ready to report him for text messages, video messages, phone calls, drive-bys, when I started reporting those pieces, even though, believe me, I had to fight really hard for the police to follow through, and that's a big part of my story, that's what finally got him to stop. That and moving. So, again, it's not out of retribution, it's not that I think it's going to change him. But the more that is on his record, sadly, he'll be held accountable. There will be firmer actions for the future victims. Again, it's the only way that I have found that I can strongly send the message, no matter how small of an attempt I will report you. So I so value all of this work, and I continue to want to learn and understand other solutions, and I want other solutions to be available for women that this isn't the answer. And I would like to believe what we really need is a huge societal shift around gender roles and so many pieces right? Like we need to be pouring so much funding into preventing this problem, absolutely. In the meantime I need to maintain my ability to call for help. So I wanted to speak on that, so complex. The other thing I really wanted to speak about, again, I can't go through all the twists and turns in my story, in this format, but I will in writing. Is the two officers, we've had, I wanna say 6 just in 2020, of officers in Vermont with domestic and sexual violence charges. But we've had 2 that were Brattleboro Police Department officers just in 2020. And both were currently in the apartment when I was dealing with my situation. Neither of them were involved in my situation. But what I want to speak to around that is not, I certainly don't want to portray that sort of narrative that because they're police officers they're abusers, and all police officers must have that propensity. That's certainly not why I'm bringing this up. What I really want to bring up is thinking about press releases and our community paradigm around what supports survivors. Because, for so many reasons, I will say our system of press releases, which after speaking to the chief and doing research, they're not required to do the sort press releases that they do. It's sort of what the town has desired and that's why they do it. But they're required to state, to let the public know what sort of arrests are happening. How they're happening. But they don't have to put in the newspaper and on Facebook this address, this perpetrator, this thing happened. So it is something we can change, number one. Number two, so, press releases,

even if you keep the victim's name out of it, it's a small community. It does absolutely nothing. So the impact on survivors, and also perpetrators of that, it's just a process of shaming, right? And it really just compounds the problem. It certainly doesn't help survivors. It definitely doesn't keep perpetrators from going on and reoffending. If anything you're just compounding more shame. So it's not, and I'm not sure, you're not protecting the community from anything. So I don't understand that process and I really want to articulate how harmful it is to the extent that my two children were shamed at school by staff members. I don't think that didn't intend to cause harm, but is like, 'I read about this on Facebook." The impact of social media, and how easy it is for us to latch onto information and speculate. And usually what we read in the newspaper can't possibly really capture what's gone on, and for us it's our personal nightmare, right? So there's that. But what I really want to bring up is, again, with those two police officers there were very detailed articles and tellings about the reports made against those officers. Such specific detail of what those women reported. I can tell you I felt like I was going to throw up when I read the most recent one. Again, not because it was a police officer, but the fact that, yeah, certainly right not especially the public wants transparency any time a police officer does anything wrong. I absolutely understand that. But to not have any understanding of what that did to those women. Does not matter that they didn't include their names. The amount of detail as if the public has a right to read those things. I mean, I've lived it. I don't know those women's names. I wouldn't know if I was standing next to them in the grocery store. But as I've said to Chief Fitzgerald I stand with them because I have lived it. Unbelievably violating. And basically what the community does by putting that information out there they're picking up the torch for the abuser. It is gut wrenching to have to continue to every day go out into the world, continue to grocery shop, bring your children to school, go to work, pray you can get through the day where people don't ask you questions. Usually they don't because it's too uncomfortable, but you know they're all thinking about it, right? It's unbelievably violating. And for me what makes me angry is that our police department, they are supposedly trained, right? They supposedly understand the complexity of domestic violence. We do need them to be the initial response quite often. So to be willing and able to recognize, and put out public statements, and demonstrations about Black Lives Matter and what's going on with George Floyd, I fully respect and value. But to not make any sort of public acknowledgment of the impact that those releases had on the survivors in the community. I mean, how can we possibly feel comfortable and safe calling for help and not knowing? By not putting out a public statement, not specifically about those instances, but just about their stance on domestic violence, that silence communicates what their stand is. The stand is it's a personal problem. We will respond because it's our job. But it's a personal problem and we're not gonna pass judgement on it. To me that's just unacceptable. It's possible to not speak about those specific situations as they are legal, and I understand they can't, but to also speak about their commitment to supporting survivors. So I don't know, there's no way for me to get my words to those women, but I would like to apologize to them publicly, and I hope so much we can do better for survivors in this community. Thank you."

1:59:36

2:03:13

Gillian: “I’m gonna be honest right now. My heart is in my stomach, and I don’t know how to say any of this without, I don’t even know, like I’m really, really struggling right now. I’m gonna speak on just how I’m feeling after some of what was just said, and I’m hoping that I don’t inflict further harm in sharing this, but I’m feeling harmed right now. And it has to do with being, I don’t know, it’s a really complex space to be in because I understand the needs that were expressed just a moment ago. And I very much do believe that survivors need more support. And I understand that the message was not meant to be a dismissal of the restorative justice efforts or the need for that as well. But being in this space, as a person of color, who has had the police used against me, who has been assaulted by the police, who could never consider them my protector, it’s hard to be in spaces. Again, like Tara had said earlier, I am tired. I’m only 30 years old, and the amount of spaces that I’ve been in, and especially in Vermont, the amount of predominantly white spaces that I’ve been in where we’re looking for ways to try and create more community support to address public safety concerns, and then to still have to sit in there and listen to someone talk about the police in a way where it’s so clear that their experiences with them are just the polar opposite of what myself and my community experience. It’s hard, it’s hard to hear that. And I 100%, I just want to say, I know none of that was meant to be harmful, I know that this is a person with good intentions, who needed to express what they needed to express, and there are very legitimate concerns in there, and legitimate reasons for being able to consider them this type of support. And I just, I still feel very strongly that need to express that it felt harmful to have to sit in this space again and listen to that. It just did. I had some things like before, because I did speak at the public forum, and I knew that this one was an open mic, which I was excited to potentially hear some more of the creative pieces that were coming from members in the community, and I myself like to write. It’s definitely been a major form of self-expression, and I think has helped in a lot of healing ways, and helped me connect with others. And I looked through my poems, and I had thought before about writing something, and I just hadn’t written anything in time. And I looked through my poems and I didn’t find anything that was quite hitting the mark for me. And I just thought I would listen more and then I started to write something before the break because it was about vision. And I started to piece something together, and then just a moment ago I was like, ‘Nope, I don’t want to share that anymore in this space.’ This space doesn’t feel, like that feels performative. That feels like I’m trying to give some beautiful light thing where none of this is light. And I know we’re trying to reach that space but it’s like we’re not there. And it is it’s so tiring to be in spaces, and share these vulnerable aspects of our life stories, and our experiences. And know that sometimes, no matter how much action is taken, we’re still just not gonna be anywhere closer to that point to where our traumas are healed, or that those who come after us aren’t still enduring the same traumas. And I don’t want to be hopeless right now, I really don’t. So I apologize if that’s the message and the tone that this is sending. I just, I’m hurt, and I’m hurt from continuously being hurt. And in the spaces with the people who I know mean well and want to make these changes. But there’s still this disconnect and there’s still this lack of understanding. And then I feel like I’m also being that person who’s lacking that understanding because I’m not this other person, with those experiences, with those needs, and I don’t want to be that either. So I think just, overall, I really, I do hope everyone listened to each other. I do hope that something comes from this. Even, honestly, if it’s just more connection amongst ourselves. So that when we’re seeing each other, and around each other, and in these shared spaces again we can have that level of understanding, and respect ,and honor each other with all of our differences. And sometimes that’s hard, and sometimes it hurts, but I still think

that through that there can come more connection and love. And I don't know, I had a whole separate thing now. So one of the poems that I was thinking of potentially sharing, but I don't think I'm going to. I was gonna talk some about how the types of harms, like, I think we've heard some common things come up. Power imbalances, police structures, support for those in the community, the type of support that is around mental health. The Retreat has been named many times. BIPOC have shared that it's like one of the only places they feel supported is The Root. We've talked about racial profiling, and domestic assault, and all of those need to be addressed. And then at the same time I think that there's some other, kind of more nuanced aspects of community safety, that aren't necessarily always talked about in these spaces. And one thing that one of these poems kicked up for me, and it does have to do with being BIPOC, is it's a poem that I titled, I have a couple in the series, this one's just called Middle School Spanish. And in it I share how painful, and how middle school Spanish was not a space for me, because it was being taught to me by a Korean woman to all of my white peers. As I am a transnational, Latina adoptee, who lost my language after I was adopted, because my adoptive parents, because the system, the US system, doesn't care to have the wealthier, white, adoptive parents honor the culture and heritage that their transracial adoptee children are coming from or have. And I looked up, because I didn't attend middle school in Brattleboro, or High School, and I didn't actually look at the middle school, but I did look up the High School. And this is just based on physical, this is my judgment, my assumption, so I do not actually know, I do not know the identities of these teachers. But from my assumption, I am looking at white faces who are teaching these languages. And I wonder if there are other students, other latinx students in these classes, who are feeling that same level of harm in having to learn part of their identity and their culture from a white person, who has the freedom to claim it, when it was robbed from them. And like, that's something. That is something that is harm, that people in this community are feeling, that isn't always talked about. Not having others who you can connect with, and identify with, and having to learn about yourself through others who don't have that same relationship to it. I know I have spoken for some time. I did not finish this so it's still a work in progress, I guess. But actually, I kind of have changed my mind some about sharing the vision if there is still space and time for me to do that. But I know that I have spoken for some time. And thank you for allowing me to come in and express this. That was pretty raw, and vulnerable, and in the moment, and I really, really, really do want to clarify. I'm not trying to cause more harm myself, and I apologize if I did, and I do want to honor the truth, and experiences, and needs of everyone else in this room. I really do."

2:13:24

2:13:38

Kelsey: "Gillian, I just wanted to say that I absolutely am so grateful that you spoke up too. And I do know that when I share my perspective and my story as a survivor that it is conflicting for a lot of what we're talking about, and I want to honor that, absolutely. It certainly does not cause me more harm and I am sorry that it had that impact on you. While I still feel it's important to share my experience I certainly really respect and honor that you share yours too."

2:14:13

Gillian: “Thank you so much. Genuinely, thank you. And I agree that you absolutely, it is important for you to be able to share your experiences. So this is just what I kind of wrote after the break, and in between, and we’ll see if anything more comes of it or not. I have many unfinished pieces. It kind of started as a question because I think it was envisioning the town, and the safety of the town, and what that could look like. And so it’s a lot of questions in here, really, but here it goes. What if Brattleboro was a town where not a single person in need of mental health support was terrified of returning to The Retreat or traumatized by their time inside. What if Brattleboro was a town where, instead of being put away many times against their will, people were provided the type of community support that allowed them to stay in their homes, safe in their own beds. What if in Brattleboro beds were provided to all who don’t have them without judgment on their appearances or past. Instead just loving, helping hands, and fresh, hot meals. What if in Brattleboro those beds became homes free of charge. And the homes that are rented aren’t forcing people into poverty. What if instead of fearing evictions we celebrated spaces, and community relief for all, whether we are in a pandemic or not, because even under normal circumstances too many of us still suffer. What if the people of color in Brattleboro didn’t ever have to fear being profiled, targeted, harassed, assaulted, or even murdered by police, because instead of a system built from literal slave catchers, we had community responders made up of all of us. What if BIPOC in Brattleboro could share their stories of harm without having to experience white denialism, pity, or inaction. What if Brattleboro was a town where the BIPOC were equal in all places of power, and had just as much say as white people, if not more, in making decisions, and implementing policies that impact us all. What if differently abled people didn’t have to speak up when they weren’t granted equal access to buildings, places, and spaces, because they never had those experiences, and instead were always considered so they’d be included and safe, and they too had those positions of power. What if families weren’t torn apart through a system that is punitive, and instead every parent and child in need of support received it compassionately, in a form that honored the good in them, and helped bring that out until together the family thrived. What if the people of Brattleboro recognized that harm is more than the extreme, brut violence we see depicted across the nation and in ways that so many deny exist here. What if the town of Brattleboro accepted, honored, and celebrated people of all identities whether they understood them or not. What if no child or adult had to fear sharing their gender identity, or the rejection of the gender binary, because they know that they would still be loved and welcomed for who they are. What if no child or adult had to live in shame and guilt for being attracted to anyone other than the opposite sex because they knew that their family, and loved ones, and even the strangers in Brattleboro will accept and love them just the same. What if the children of color in Brattleboro got to learn about the culture, their heritage, their language, their food from people who share in their identities instead of white people who had the privilege of claiming ownership of a culture that was robbed or denied of those youth. What if Brattleboro was a town that made everyone feel at home because we all are heard, loved, honored, and cherished. What if. That’s it. Thank you.

2:18:45

2:19:58

Tara: “Thank you Gillian for speaking up and speaking your truth to power in this perceived by a member of the committee, holding that opinion. So thank you so much Gillian. I respect your brave soul and showing up in this space consistently. And I love you Gillian. It didn’t sit well with me either. And I just want to speak to that a little bit but speak to it about how it speaks to what structure we’re talking about. The structure is a structure that dehumanizes so many of us including the cops working in the system. You have to separate yourself from you own humanity to do a job. And that’s what I perceive that many police officers might have to do to complete their duties. To separate themselves from their communities. I happen to do some work with Resmaa Menakem, “My Grandmother’s Hands.” Who looks at the identities of both white folks, of BIPOC folks, and of what he’s saying blue people, being people who work in the police system. And it really is, I really appreciate Emily and Shea for focusing on somatic experiencing, because we really need to get into our bodies to understand our experiences as humans. And I think that if all people were to get deep into our bodies we would realize that how that the police instruction was first established, and is continued to run, is by separating ourselves from our humanity. And so one thing, and I’ll just, one of the key learnings in this book I’ll read, ‘Rememberings. For the past several decades policing in America has routinely meant targeting, accosting, searching, convicting, incarcerating, shooting, and killing large numbers of Black bodies. This dynamic will not fundamentally change until you and other police officers consistently recognize Black bodies, lives, and communities as human bodies, lives, and communities. Community policing is not a philosophy or an idea. It’s a set of ongoing actions that involve making your body a part of the community and then whole heartedly serving, protecting, and assisting the people in that community.’ You know it really is speaking about really getting into the body experience. Being a part and felt that sense of belonging. It also means the police feeling a sense of belonging in the community. Whatever form it is, whatever we imagine, we can’t stop that process of imagining because we all want a better world for our generations, our next 7 generations, as the indigenous folks says. We have to be thinking about that when we are planning on making recommendations. In the meantime, I am sorry that you experienced that Kelsey, and those wives of those police officers. They are public servants. That is important information, maybe not as much as the details, but that is important information for the public to have. Those survivors are victims of that system too. You know, why do police officers or people wearing uniforms resort to alcoholism and domestic violence? What are the causes of that? Is it dehumanizing yourself in order to perform your job? That’s a question I think we need to ask ourselves. And so it’s getting back to the humanity. So again, from visioning, thank you so much Gillian for that poem because it gets to the sense of belonging. You know that was the essence that I heard, a sense of belonging. So how do we get a sense of belonging for all in our community, creatively, with the suggestions that this board is gonna put forth, so everyone is feeling a sense of safety. Even those who now are in those positions of policing, and also maybe formerly, you know, in whatever structure is created in the future. We need to dream. Thank you.”

2:25:19

2:25:48

Kelsey: “So I’m gonna go ahead and speak because my name was, you’re directly speaking to me, and I’ll admit to right now I’m feeling a lot in my body. My heart is pounding. And I’m feeling a lot of anger. I really don’t appreciate perpetuating some really false narratives. Such as domestic violence is related to, you know, someone being an alcoholic. There are plenty of alcoholics that are not abusers. I think, you know, really try to be careful and aware of the fact that my experience is of white privilege and certainly don’t ever want to speak of what it is to be a member of the BIPOC community. But I am a survivor of violence in my home, and I have a very difficult, you know. I spoke Tuesday night about the experience of my 3 year old accidentally calling emergency services. And, you know, folks had some responses to that. I understand in the scenario that it wasn’t an emergency and if we were a black family how my boys may have felt by that police presence is drastically different than my son being excited by these uniformed men. I totally recognize that difference in experience. Huge disparity, totally recognize it. However, if we were a black family, and my child did call 911 because I was being beaten in the other room or having a gun held to my head, and I picked up the phone to protect my child, and said we’re fine here everything’s fine ,because that’s what I had to do to keep us hopefully from dying, I’m pretty sure that my black son would be happy to see the police show up anyway. So this is my point, I recognize the disparity, and what a huge issue it is, but there are a lot of complicating factors. And I know, I saw there were letters to the editor over the summer suggesting that police officers experience PTSD and therefore things happen such as abusing their intimate partners. This is a narrative we really need to change. There are plenty of veterans, plenty of police officers, do not go home and beat their partners. Plenty of substance users and alcoholics that do not beat their partners. Yes, it can exacerbate the issue certainly, but this is a massive systemic issue just like racism, and I feel a lot in my body when I hear members that are so fantastic, and passionate, and active in your movement, and its beautiful, and phenomenal, but please be careful in not perpetuating narratives that are false in other areas. And when I tell my story I recognize that it can be triggering because I have been treated differently. However, I was dismissed and left in a seriously dangerous situation for nearly two months because the police would not follow through. Would not do the arrest. I was lied to. I was dismissed several times and I had to continue I had to live in fear. So I do not, by any means, think that this is a system that’s working. And I’ve absolutely experienced discrimination for being a woman and being a survivor. But still I recognize that my experience as a survivor. I have never had to face homelessness, my children have never been hungry, right? I’ve had built in natural supports throughout the process that so many do not. So I recognize my privilege but I want to name that I get extremely triggered when people speak about domestic violence that perpetuates some narratives that are very false. So thank you.”

2:29:55

Emily speaks for a while.

2:39:38

Tara: “I just wanted to say I did not correlate both alcoholism to domestic violence. I recognize that, speaking about, and I don’t know your, Kelsey, I don’t know your situation personally. I’m speaking about what I know of the trauma that, as Emily explained, that is experienced from people in uniformed

positions or law enforcement, which is evidenced by the fact that The Retreat had to have a special program for that. You know, it's such a loss for our community that we don't have that any longer. So you know, I appreciate, Emily, you bringing it to the fact that everyone, it's so interconnected. That all the pieces of the structure have to be addressed. And that's what's different, that's why I'm hopeful. I said earlier, and I was texting Gillian, you know, 'Was it wrong of me to say I'm exhausted?' 2004, it's 16 years ago I stepped away from this work because its exhausting for us. But what is different from this is that you're looking at it globally. This committee is looking at it globally. You're not just looking at the police force. You're looking at all those issues, a myriad of issues that contribute to the problems of why we're calling police. And unless we address all of those issues we won't see change. I'm hopeful for that change. I need to be hopeful for that change for those 7 generations. So I'm grateful, and I think that, was it Chelsea? I wasn't looking at my camera when, you know, sitting with that discomfort. That's how the work is done. If we can do that then others can do that. We've made the commitment already. You know, I appreciate what you said. I appreciate you speaking up. We all need to. We all need to speak from that. So thank you.

2:37:47

Shea and Emily speak until the end.

Appendix I: Community Listening: Additional Quotes from Most Impacted People

Experiences with Police

Black Respondents:

"They didn't want to admit that they had it wrong the whole time… If that don't show a break down In the system I don't know what does. They wanted me to plead guilty and got mad when I didn't and this just how they do Black men and im sure this has happened to many Black men. My experience is the worst of the worst. [And] whose they? The police department. [I attempted to get justice] but they want to keep it all quiet. These systems don't do Black men any justice. The systems are not fixed, they are not good for us, they need to change for us. My experience with the system wasn't good… The same system that created slavery is the same system and we supposed to ask them to help us? All those systems thats in place destroyed everything in my life and they continuing to do it."

"[after experiencing a racial hate crime and seeking support] No response, is a response in a way. There was nothing done. Outside the political grassroots people who are trying to change things, it seems that the greater powers at be could care less."

"The system doesn't work, it tends to be a waste of time and energy to fight certain issues in the court of law."

"I think its very important that we understand that if we bring this to the select board and ask them to fix these problems? its not gunna work. We have to support grassroots programs that [are] run

by Black people. I assisted someone with [seeking accountability for police racism], helped him know he has someone behind him, so he knows he has people here to make sure he's ok. We do the leg work, [we do many acts of direct support and mutual aid for people impacted by policing and poverty], we want to make sure they… can get on their own two feet. These systems need to be put in place in such a way that [Black people] feel like they are taken care of. I fear just giving info to the select board, its not gunna go no where. Since we have a connection to the [the community], my opinion is that we start our own programs."

"Even when I call them I feel like im the threat, I feel like im still a threat to their physical being. Their body language says alot about how they feel about you. They are checking you out, looking at your vehicle you can see it in their face of well what's going on with him, how did he get this vehicle, why doesn't he have a record. These are all the things I can look in their eyes and just see it. I can tell they aren't here for us, They are here to get us but they aren't here to protect us. Your here to take me away and surprised that its not going that way. And feeling like I have to prove innocence every time they show up and thats not something you should have to feel every time they show up, and even when you call them. It throws you off. They asks questions that are irrelevant to the reason I called them in the first place for help."

"Who would I seek help from? A racist community "safety" system designed to oppress Black and brown people? There are no clear and easy places to go to seek help."

"[If seeking help from the police] I felt like I would be running to the same system of oppression that [harmed me] originally."

"I would just be oppressed further more by this system manipulating the law."

"I had to repeatedly tell them I called the cops and it was on someone else for them to even listen."

"The police here don't understand what it's like to be a Black person and to have to live with the effects of racism all day everyday. They don't know how to support you or respond to you. They have [a] threatening stance and act like you did something wrong even when you didn't."

"So we learned that they don't do anything to help you when you are in need. Unless you are white… I usually try to be as nice as possible every time I see a police officer because im scared. I always try to wave and try to be as friendly as I can, I just don't want to seem like a threat. I try to diminish their idea of me being a threat as much as possible in any situation."

[After failing to get accountability or justice after experiencing police violence] *"All of us have been treated like shit since we moved here."*

" [They are the] militarized industrialized complex presentation against [the] public and people who look like me."

"I'm a Black man, so I can walk outside and get stopped right now, so nothing has change for us with the police."

"They treat you like your guilty even when you haven't done anything."

"[In a safe Brattleboro] I could walk down the street and not have to look over my shoulder or worry about a police harassing me for no reason. When the police here see a Black person or white people who dress Black they target and harass them."

Non-Black specified people of color respondents:

"They were rough and clearly had a distaste for me in most cases rather then retain professionalism."

"[If my family] recommended the police I would move forward with that, but I like to avoid police in brattleboro because they don't really feel helpful and they are quick to take sides. I have been in unsafe positions with the police and they say they are just doing our jobs but have made me feel unsafe."

"They just wrote me off as a hoodlum didn't hear or want to understand my side of the situation ... so I felt powerless."

"I've never encountered a police issue here in Brattleboro personally… Other places that I've lived absolutely I have experienced racial profiling and intimidation from law enforcement."

"I avoid reaching out to the police because they seem more interested in trying to incriminate you for something rather than help you and your situation."

"With a job that important, they should be held to the highest regard, and also making sure with that responsibility comes support for them and their families. Not a bunch of tech and things that they don't actually need to do their job. Rather it seems those 100's of thousands of dollars are wasted on trying to control people, and obtain more money through court cases, traffic stops, and jail time. It's obviously about money, so why give them more and more money to do harmful things, rather than making sure they have the money they "Need" to actually help. Shouldn't be about a policed state or nation looking to control and harm people, rather help."

"I can't really trust anyone working with the police,"

" [In a totally safe Brattleboro I would be] able to enjoy public outings without fear of police contact."

LGBTQ+ Respondents:

"The times I've called the police- my personal safety felt threatened, and there was no other resource to contact. It's a "crisis of conscience." To get help, I have to engage with an entity that may use that against me. There are no options- the entity I have to engage with is not accountable to anyone."

"The police here in Brattleboro definitely make me feel uneasy as you can google countless charges of sexism, harassment, and 'questionable' shootings against individuals [by] the department. It is telling that there are no women or non binary [people] at all on the force today."

[What consequences did you fear in calling for help?] "Death, death, isn't that enough?"

"I didn't want to call the police, because I don't feel safe around them."

"I was raped by a man [at a time and place]. I never sought police assistance because I did not feel there is adequate support for people in that situation. I have seen rape support groups for women, but none for male/nb people. I have still done nothing."

Experiences with the Mental Health System

Neurodivergent, Psychiatrically Labeled, Psychiatrically Disabled, and Mad Respondents:

"But the community treats people in distress as though they ARE the problem, rather than HAVING real world life problems and desperate need, such as escaping abuse or experiencing the vulnerabilities of homelessness."

"I called the police repeatedly asking for help and didn't get any because my partner was prominent in the community. The system is so broken. People don't want to listen because you have a mental health issue. I go to the ER because I can't breathe and because of what's in your chart they say "You'll be okay." They want to observe and see if I'm faking first because of my psych diagnosis."

"Violence is contextual- someone who is "violent" or resisting in the ER or hospital very well may not be in a voluntary space or respite or at home. Sometimes the violence starts with the system but gets blamed on the individual."

[What were your concerns about calling for help?] "Incarceration, pathologization, shame, abuse, violation of privacy. I was policed and controlled rather than supported, and regarded as a dangerous person rather than someone who might potentially be in danger."

"[I was] incarcerated at the Brattleboro Retreat as a child and as an adult. This included being strip searched, threatened with being put in a restraint cast, not having any privacy for days on end (due to one-on-one precautions- no privacy in shower, bathroom, sleeping, etc.), witnessing violence, ridicule/shame from staff (on a few occasions, not always), and "psychoeducation" that radically (and negatively) changed my relationship with myself and my experiences."

"It's all driven by big pharma and money. The Retreat CEO makes too much money- the whole system is so money driven. Some individual workers are trying to do the right thing. The travelling workers are sometimes from other countries and don't have to work holidays, and this causes stress between staff."

"I have received support through the retreat many times. My experience has overall been okay. I was put on the LGBT unit, but there were "allies" there who wouldnt use my pronouns."

"[During a mental health crisis] cops restrained me, and i was institutionalized against my will, kept in a dark hallway at [an out of state medical] hospital for upwards of 12 hours, when finally a bed opened up for me at a local psych ward."

"Why can the hospital call the police on patients who are resisting violence being done to them, but patients can't call the police when they are being mistreated or abused? When is it a patient's right to call the police from The Retreat? We know who they would believe."

"How can public spaces be more inclusive? If we did change the culture a little to show up in the ways we actually are- emotional- that would help. It's so hard, when people like Selectboard members are being dismissive and rolling their eyes. One thing that's been good about mental health spaces is that you can actually show up how you are- you don't have to hide yourself."

Visions for a Safer Brattleboro

Black Respondents:

"I don't really know what they are doing as far as community safety and what they even consider community safety. Because there is a real big line between problems a white person has and problems a black person has. And then you have white people in power who are making decisions and have no experience with racism and how it affects every aspect of your life. They have problems believing that these things happen and that they interrupt your life [ ] and then it messes up your psyche. We need to start having conversations of how to have people who can understand black issues and help make changes for us, we should not have to do this work, this is free labor but we are expected to complain and make all these changes for free while we don't have financial freedom or anything. We just need a lot of reform. the economic gap is causing big problems."

"My vision for a safer Brattleboro would be more black community. There would be a lot less drug activity but not because all people who are drug dealers are bad and we put them in jail; they might only be doing it because the need the money or they accidentally got addicted to something when they were messing around, or whatever reason, but because we would help them to get out and make a safer living. We would give everyone enough food, water, money, housing to get back on their feet and then we would help them along the way so that they don't have to be constantly stressed that they can either pay rent or buy food. We would have more systems in place for people who were caught committing a crime that would actually benefit the person who committed the crime and the person the crime was committed against so that we could get people the help they need instead of putting them in cells for the rest of their lives. I think that a safer Brattleboro would be a place where everyone feels they can be themselves without having to worry about negative impacts based on Bias, discrimination, stereotypes, and whatever else people worry about. We would have lots of police training that teaches them to make sure they are working through their internalized bias instead of letting it come out in ways they don't want it to and instead of calling them all "bastards" and working against them, we would be working with them and helping them get where they need to be to be a program that really does protect all the people and is as non-violent as possible."

"Having a support for minorities like a support officer to share the issues you have in the town and be able to make complaints about racial harassment, profiling, etc. to be able to work through things. I have had many jobs here where I am doing the best that I can and face racial slurs, harassment, and am getting fired for what feels like none other reason than that I am a person of color. I feel misunderstood to the point it feels ridiculous."

"I would imagine it to be a safe, caring community that wants to see their children thriving. Kids being able to play outside alone especially downtown. Having more places available for kids to go [ ] downtown. Having more access to things that children can enjoy in the area. It doesn't seem kid friendly here theres nothing for kids to do. Having better outlets for positivity in our town, cleaning up the drug scene. I've heard places in Switzerland have places to go for people to use drugs and I've heard that to work because they are going to do it anyway and I'd rather them do it in one place than all over the place."

"Normal interactions with police officers that don't have weapons on them or weapons pointed at me."

"I hope in the future we can really have these streets safe so that regular pedestrians don't get pulled over just because they look 'suspicious' even when they aren't doing anything suspicious."

"Police learning how to approach Black people in general would make brattleboro safer for me. It would be helpful if there was more activities for young kids to do like basketball, programs at the skatepark, things that little kids can do and have fun."

"[A safe Brattleboro] would look like a place where decision making power was held by leadership teams and communities who have demonstrated their ability to care for themselves and also for their communities in a way that centers the voices, needs, and experiences of those most vulnerable and impacted by town structures and that don't make decisions on behalf of the people but make decisions based on what the people are deciding. It would look like people's basic needs being met, everyone having the foundation of what they actually need to thrive and then programs, classes, events, activities, spaces downtown for people to engage in a healthy way."

"Right now it is clear that our downtown is designed for wealthy white people and tourists. The boys and girls club is literally the only place for kids to be and is stored away in a random ally. There are no things for kids, especially low income kids to do here. This contributes to them getting arrested, drugs, and getting in trouble, they don't have access to interesting or fun things to engage in here. That is so important, and also for adults."

"In a totally safe brattleboro there would also be cool hangout and maker spaces downtown places for people to create, make, and vision together. Resources would be dispersed to BIPOC, immigrants, and communities that often are shunned from access and we would be able to create amazing things and contribute to the vibrance of downtown. There would be more spaces for community engagement, places for us to take care of eachother, to help each other, to keep each other healthy. We would have safe things in place for when people need support. Things that actually help people experience safety and no I don't mean getting locked up in a sterile lock down program being fed the worlds shittiest food which is actually just a bunch of chemicals that makes our government rich while some white CEO dude gets rich off of people being mentally ill. Business for the well being would be set up to become obsolete. like our whole mission is for you to be so healthy and thriving that the need for our organization becomes obsolete because it helps you to gain access and your needs are being met in such a way that you don't need to depend on people getting rich off you to do it. There would be free housing that is safe, free food that is real, organic, and delicious, fun places for people to connect and engage, and businesses and orgs wouldn't be dominated and run by white people."

"We need media, we need different cultures coming through, we need things that reflect us, more equity around the board for everyone. Economic equity. I don't care who cares about my skin color, I just want to have access to be able to run my business, have my needs met, be on the same equal playing field. We have Black people running around doing all the background work and we need to uplift our people and pay them."

"Making sure my children have a safe future, a better future then what this generation is going through right now. We are fighting for a cause and we want our children to have a fighting chance and a future. They have a long way to go, our people have been fighting for a long time."

"Having more people of color community where you can't talk and reflect on things that are happening to you or going on because a lot of white people are so ignorant to the fact that you even

experience racism or unjust situations that wouldn't happen if I was white. People are quick to judge you on your color of skin here. [ ] Its important for white people to hear our sides so they can annihilate their part in racism and arrogance since they often don't know that they are doing."

"Walking outside and not feeling scared to be who I am or be alone, not feeling like I need a safety buddy to walk with me everywhere. feeling confident in my community that I won't be harmed or harassed. Since nine years old I have been verbally and sexually harassed just walking through downtown, people have called me the N word. I grew up with a lot of animosity towards me and my skin color. People would flip me off and call me the N word every day being outside alone and I felt so unsafe being alone here or playing outside alone here. I could never go outside by myself here because you never know if people will say that to you. More being comfortable being alone outside, doing what I want to do without that worry in the back of my head if something is going to happen to me and do I need to pull out my phone and that's my only means of safety."

"I don't want nobody forgetting about these black men living in Vermont. You gotta put them a part of this. They need to be uplifted because its going to make us stronger, its a base that no body is touching yet. You will find that there are alot of stories thru that, alot of pain thru that. SO we are leaving those guys behind and we are following other people that are not for our best interest. We have to uplift these men in these small towns in Vermont in these places and not everyone is perfect, I am feeling some male fragility because these men and Black women are left out of the equation. We need all the support we can. We need to get these black men out of these caves and stop ridiculing them for how they look, what they wear and take care of them and protect."

LGBTQ+ Respondents:

"A place I can submit anonymously when employers make fatphobic/transphobic/homophobic statements/threats. An intermediary, more worker's rights, housing designated for residents NOT travellers/tourists, economic stratification resolved, more harm reduction, safe injection sites."

"[In a safe community,] I wouldn't see or hold space for so many people who have been harmed by racism, domestic violence, and discrimination. It would be physically safe for everyone to exercise their right to protest, panhandle, and walk the streets at night. Everyone would actually be welcome at the co-op. The people of our town would support and listen to everyone, not just cops and business owners. People would feel safe calling the police. Everyone would have access to therapy, housing, education, healthcare, and food, regardless of background."

"...More public spaces in this community would be great -- where we don't have to consume products to feel valued and where people won't get the cops called on them for making [wealthy] people and tourists feel uncomfortable. Even though I personally have a lot of privilege in my day-to-day life, I want my friends and neighbors and broader community to be able to access safe and dignified housing, healthcare, education, substance use treatment, and so so many other things."

“All people can confidently seek help and exist in public life knowing that their bodies will be safe and that their needs will be compassionately addressed.”

“An emergency team of trauma informed non-cops who could be called to de escalate situations, or support me in doing so.”

“In a totally safe version, the people living on the streets would have a roof over their heads and fewer people would feel the pull of opioid addiction.”

“Security from physical and emotional harm. (It does NOT include needing to be shielded from people asking for money, etc.)”

“Respect, the absence of oppressive beliefs and actions, a climate free of fear for everyone, all basic needs met with kindness, with dignity, a desire to understand people's come-from places, homes, jobs, access, childcare, not "othering," no one living in fear.”

“Platforms that are easier for people to reach out for help. People's basic needs getting met without struggle. When folks seek to harm others, its because someone's needs aren't getting met. People are in desperation. I'd be able to walk around at night and feel safe. We need to frame community safety for people who have trauma. More harm reduction. Less "shake hands with a police officer" day at downtown businesses, where if I don’t join the meet and greet I then get profiled. In a safe Brattleboro, I could check into The Retreat and not get abused or assaulted. In a safe community, everyone going about their business would be thinking about how they move through the space and impact each other.”

“We need more community members to be trained in de escalation and actually supporting people, so there can be people in neighborhoods ready to step up and help each other.”

Appendix J: Emotional Support Resources

The following resource was compiled in the form of a publicly available Google Doc and distributed with the surveys we put out into the community as a way to support participants in resourcing themselves when sharing potentially triggering or activating informations. This was part of our commitment to be as non extractive and trauma informed as possible. It may resource those reading sections of this report that are activating, as well.

“Feelings and Support

We acknowledge that our personal experiences (with either danger or the systems that respond to it) vary greatly, and can sometimes be intense, painful, or traumatic. We acknowledge that sharing your experience may bring up feelings.

Please reflect for at least a moment before beginning about what might help you stay grounded or feel safe enough to share your experiences about danger, safety, and community response with us. You have no obligation to engage, and for some people it may not be worth it to share. That is fine. This process is completely voluntary. Each question within this survey is totally voluntary. Please answer, within your comfort and ability, what makes sense to answer based on your experience. Please feel welcomed to skip questions and leave anything unanswered that you don't want to answer or doesn't apply.

We acknowledge that good support is not universally accessible, but want to offer these community support resources:

Support Resources:

Pathways Vermont Support Line
CALL OR TEXT US! Our line is open 24/7.
Give us a call or text us at (833) VT-TALKS / (833) 888-2557!

The Women's Freedom Center
Domestic violence/sexual violence crisis hotline in Windham and Southern Windsor Counties, VT.
FREE & CONFIDENTIAL 24 HR HOTLINE
802-254-6954 (Windham Co.)
802-885-2050 (Southern Windsor Co.)

Trans Lifeline
Our Hotline:
877-565-8860

BATJC's Pod Mapping Worksheet
https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/

We offer belief, respect, and listening to anyone who wants to share their experiences of safety, danger, harm, and policing and community safety response systems in Brattleboro."