

EMPOWERING SAFE COMMUNITIES

Building Positive Relationships with
Youth & Law Enforcement



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA

About Boys & Girls Clubs

For more than 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) has delivered life-changing programs to our most vulnerable youth. As one of the leading nonprofit providers of out-of-school programming in our nation, BGCA has the experience and scale needed to address the complex issues that today's youth face. Today, 4,300 Clubs serve 4 million young people annually through Club membership and community outreach. Clubs are located in cities, towns, public housing and on Native lands throughout the country, and serve military families in BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide. They provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun, friendship and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Our goal is for every Club member to graduate with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and living a healthy lifestyle.

Our programs emphasize Academic Success, Good Character & Citizenship and Healthy Lifestyles. The results of our programs demonstrate the positive impact of high-quality youth development:

- 97 percent of Club teens expect to graduate from high school
- 70 percent of Club teens volunteer in their community at least once a year
- 54 percent of Club alumni say the Club saved their lives

Meaningful, lasting change takes collaboration, big ideas and bold action. Together, we can create opportunities for youth in America based on their potential—not their ZIP code.

To partner with us on the road to Great Futures, contact partnerships@BGCA.org.

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Building Trust Between Youth and Law Enforcement Convening Attendees

Annie E. Casey Foundation	Forum for Youth Investment
Boys & Girls Clubs from Cleveland, Greater Kansas City, Greater Memphis, Greater Saint Louis, Greater Washington and Metro Baltimore	Hatcher Group
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	Knoxville Police Department
Drug Enforcement Administration	MENTOR
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation	National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
Emerson Collective	U.S. Chamber of Commerce
FBI National Academy Associates	U.S. Department of Justice
Ford Foundation	W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Strong Childhoods, Strong Leaders, Strong Communities

For more than 150 years, Boys & Girls Clubs have provided vital services to young people during the critical hours between school and home. Through high-quality youth development programming, Clubs have been supporting youth in navigating challenges and fostering positive opportunities. A core tenant of high-quality youth development is building partnerships with communities, including law enforcement. Strong relationships with youth and law enforcement are critical to empowering safe communities. Youth hold potential and promise as our future leaders and can be powerful catalysts for change on issues that are important to them.

We know this is a big, complex goal - and we can't tackle it alone. That's why in 2017, Boys & Girls Clubs of America hosted the Building Trust Between Youth and Law Enforcement Convening to begin the conversation with a cross-sector group of leaders and practitioners about how to support meaningful relationships between youth and law enforcement. Through high-level, action-focused discussion, we brainstormed ways that Clubs can serve as community anchors to help build trust and safety, elevate youth voice and position law enforcement as partners in the communities they serve.

Now, we're harnessing data, experiences and portable practices to help set an agenda for action and build bridges in communities across America. This guide summarizes key research on this issue, highlights strategic recommendations and outlines three core actions communities can take:

1. Sparking positive interactions between youth and law enforcement
2. Creating spaces for youth-led dialogue and leadership
3. Leveraging opportunities for community collaboration

Change on this issue requires systemic, intentional efforts and solutions that are rooted in a local community context. By putting research and experience into action and engaging in community-based discussion, we can build safer communities together.

We invite you to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us as we build strong childhoods, strong leaders and strong communities.

Thank you,



Jim Clark
President and CEO
Boys & Girls Clubs of America

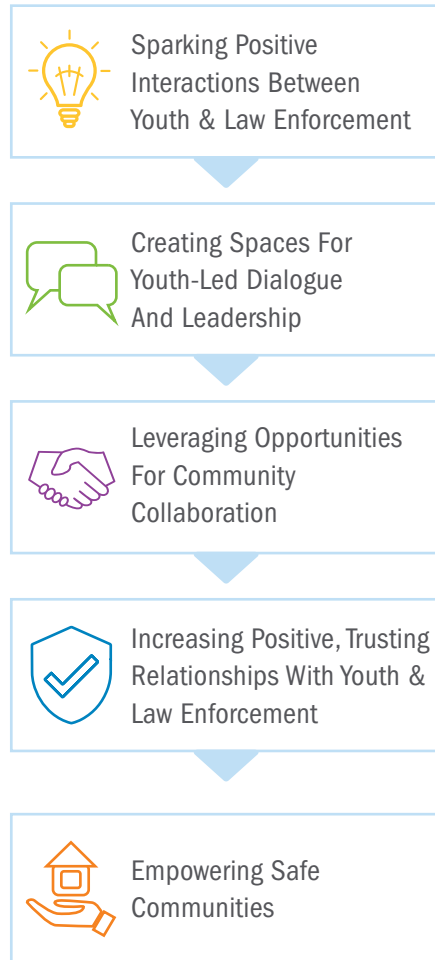
Building on Experience & Creating Pathways to Solutions

Youth as Catalysts for Change

Adolescence is a period in which exposure to perspectives, opportunities, and experiences informs the way young people view the world-- and the extent to which they believe they have the agency and ability to shape it. As the next generation of leaders, youth can be agents of change. Equally important, law enforcement have a lot to gain from stronger relationships with the people and communities they protect and serve. By working together, youth and law enforcement can disrupt the negative perceptions and experiences that stand in the way of safe communities and safe childhoods.

At Boys & Girls Clubs of America, our research demonstrates that emotional and physical safety are key factors of success for youth. Clubs create environments that meet the physical and emotional safety needs of young people. We are leveraging our experience to share ideas and practices that can be used in every community to empower youth and foster productive community partnerships. When youth and law enforcement have positive, trusting relationships, children and families are safer, perceptions change, and communities thrive.

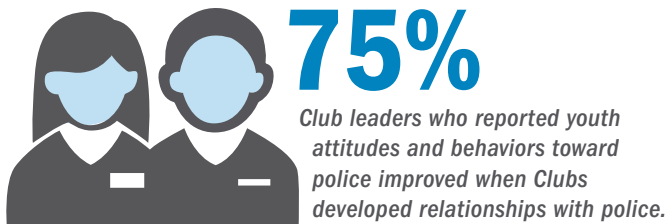
Positive relationship building with youth and law enforcement require collaborative, community-driven solutions and authentic engagement of youth, police, and communities. For dialogue and authentic relationship building to occur, youth and police must have opportunities to see and understand each other as people. Communities can spark positive interactions between youth and law enforcement, create spaces for youth-led dialogue and leadership, and build authentic partnerships that contribute to increased trust, safety, and collaboration.



Partnering to Empower Safe Communities

Sparking Positive Interactions Between Youth & Law Enforcement

A first step in building trust and collaboration is providing opportunities for youth and law enforcement to have positive interactions. The more youth interact and engage with officers outside the context of their enforcement duties, the more likely they are to form favorable perceptions of law enforcement. A 2016 survey found that 75 percent of Boys & Girls Club leaders reported youth attitudes and behaviors toward law enforcement improved when Clubs developed relationships with law enforcement. When law enforcement engage in activities in the community, they can experience first-hand the lives of the youth in the neighborhoods they serve. With this knowledge, officers can interpret behaviors more accurately and appropriately, which may also prevent avoidable escalations while on duty.



Police officers can be especially effective as positive role models and leaders, particularly when they already have close ties to local youth. These types of opportunities for youth, paired with strong support systems and personal connections, may be one of the best investments communities can make. Some particularly effective approaches in this area include utilizing law enforcement as intramural sports coaches through groups like the Police Athletic League or as co-facilitators for programs that give youth a chance to see and know law enforcement officials in capacities outside of their profession.

Training Officers to Engage Youth

In San Francisco, police cadets in academy training spend four afternoons at local Clubs to learn about youth and communities at the very start of their career. This intentional community engagement helps officers better understand the lives of the people they serve.

Officers as Supporters & Role Models

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City has emphasized training teens in leadership and life skills that will help equip them to plan



for their futures. The Clubs also work with local police officers to strengthen youth support systems. To help do this, youth are introduced to local officers as leaders and role models, orienting their focus on how to use officers as a positive force. In turn, officers benefit from being advocates for youth who can help champion their future goals. They also have the opportunity to build a richer understanding of the lives of youth in their community, including the challenges they face and the issues that are important to them. This intentional focus lets youth and police officers approach their interactions with the confidence in themselves and mutual respect that may not occur organically outside the Club environment.

Fostering Workforce Development Skills

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay partner with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. From board leadership, to funding support, youth employment, and strategic planning, the Sheriff's Office works as a partner within the fabric of all initiatives at the local Boys & Girls Clubs. They also participate in the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay YES Academy, serving teens in job placement. Since 2014, the Sheriff's Office has employed nearly 100 teens during the summer months, several securing full time employment.

Creating Spaces for Youth-Led Dialogue and Leadership

Another strategy for building trust and collaboration is creating spaces for youth-led dialogue and leadership. Creating experiences for youth to develop leadership skills on the personal, interpersonal and community levels supports youth to build relationships with people who are similar and different from them – a vital skill in our increasingly complex and interconnected world. By using a youth-centered learning approach, youth gain knowledge independently, finding solutions to questions and problems on their own, in partnership with peers and with coaching from adults. Youth become motivated to learn, engage deeply with the material covered and retain new competencies and skills.

Providing spaces where youth and teens can speak about the issues that impact their lives empowers them to advocate for and create positive changes in their families, schools and communities. As youth lead dialogue and elevate their voice on issues that are important to them, they form connections with law enforcement, reducing bias and leading toward more effective and meaningful interactions.

Facilitating Open Discussion

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Memphis worked to integrate law enforcement into the community through consistent formal and informal engagement of officers at Clubs. Officers are given opportunities to serve on the Board of Directors, volunteer and even work part-time at Clubs and become mentors.



Once a year, officers come into one Memphis Club to help facilitate an open discussions on topics chosen by the youth. These types of opportunities help officers build trusting relationships and give youth a voice on the issues that affect their lives.

#OurLivesMatter

Education was a powerful tool for collaboration and relationship building in Washington D.C., where the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington developed and led the #OurLivesMatter Town Hall roundtable. Consisting of teens, law enforcement and community members, discussions focused on issues like police interaction with youth, educational advocacy, community violence and conflict resolution. Both youth and law enforcement learned from each other by talking through their questions and fears.

Clubs as a Community Catalyst

One way to encourage youth-led dialogue with law enforcement is to create a space that engages them on the issue intentionally. The “Youth-Led Dialogue with Law Enforcement Toolkit” guides Boys & Girls Clubs on hosting a teen-led dialogue with local law enforcement. While designed for Clubs, other community organizations may find the toolkit useful to promote authentic youth voice on this issue. The main objectives of the toolkit are to:

1

Bring to light the questions teens have about teen/law enforcement interactions

2

Invite Club teens, non-Club teens, law enforcement, parents and other community leaders to participate in constructive dialogue and open conversation with local law enforcement officials

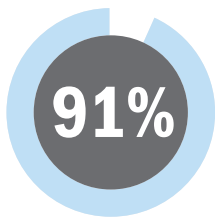
3

And take a first step in building or strengthening positive youth relationships with law enforcement in our communities

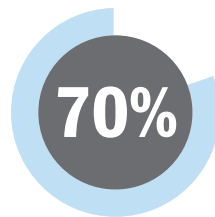
Learn more and download the toolkit to get started at www.BGCA.org/kids-in-need/research-insights/safer-childhoods

Leveraging Opportunities for Community Collaboration

Community collaboration is one of the most transformative forces in improving relationships with law enforcement and the people they serve. Opportunities that enable youth and law enforcement to work together toward a common goal, like solving a community problem or need, can help to deepen these new relationships and create even stronger bonds.



Club members want to help when they see someone having a problem.



Club teens volunteer in their community at least once a year.

Both youth and adults benefit from opportunities that allow them to work together on meaningful projects. Community service plays a vital role in expanding young people's lens, in which they can see and experience their role first-hand in achieving beneficial change in their communities through service. Volunteering can bolster character and strengthen leadership skills. These types of experiences have significant impacts by giving youth a sense of something larger than themselves. Adults benefit from being able to coach and learn from young people, developing a deeper appreciation for their experiences, insights, and ideas. In addition to helping build stronger relationships between youth and law enforcement, service learning opportunities can also be leveraged to engage the broader community in collaboration.

Working Together to #KnowYourRights

By working with local kids and teens to understand their questions and fears and ensure that they know their legal rights, officers and youth can build a relationship that will keep each other safer. Club teens in New York City set out on a service project to do just that. The teens felt that greater education about their legal rights would help to create a mutual respect in the community and designed a service project called #KnowYourRightsNYC. Under the guidance of Club staff, the teens produced a one day summit with teens and law enforcement that consisted of a day of training, workshops, games, discussion and focus groups. The summit gave everyone the opportunity to talk about their feelings on tough topics like racial profiling and police brutality, while also providing space to share ideas and brainstorm about how to move forward together.

Community Partnerships



Following the violence in Ferguson, MO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis quickly addressed the issue by bringing local law enforcement into the Clubs, facilitating positive interactions with youth. It wasn't easy. When law enforcement organized a winter coat donation drive for local kids in need, youth were so reluctant to be seen associating with police officers that they had to be coaxed to take a group photo with the volunteers. Even then, some of the teens stood far in the back and declined to smile. Over time, the officers and youth slowly built trust at a critical period for the community. A new Club was also opened at Ferguson Middle School to help meet the needs of local youth for a safe place after school and during the summer.

From Building to Taking Action

From national to local partners, everyone plays an essential and unique role in forming stronger relationships between youth and law enforcement. Want to empower safe communities? Here's how you can help.

Community Organizations

Provide opportunities for quality youth development.

Training youth in leadership and life skills is a critical component in their success and safety. Provide access to opportunities during out-of-school time to build and hone their relationship skills, social and emotional resiliency, and leadership skills. Introducing young people to information and experiences that they may not otherwise have access to is proven to have a profound impact on their goal setting and achievement, and can serve as a stepping stone to building skills for success for college or career readiness, too.

Elevate and engage youth and law enforcement in community dialogue.

Organize events, discussions and programs that create spaces for youth and law enforcement to formally and informally engage in the community. Communities benefit from building relationships proactively, as well as in the wake of crisis. [The Youth-Led Dialogue with Law Enforcement Toolkit](#) is a great place to get started on creating a dialogue with youth and law enforcement. When kids and teens are successful in making a positive difference in the community, help spread the word and provide recognition for their service.

Amplify positive messages about law enforcement and youth doing good in your community

When you provide recognition for collaborative efforts with youth and law enforcement in your community, you increase the likelihood these behaviors will continue. Examples could include highlighting uplifting stories involving law enforcement in your newsletter, sharing supportive experiences with the people you interact with every day, or recognizing officers who go above and beyond for young people.

Law Enforcement

Partner with youth-serving organizations to make community collaboration an integral part of your approach to policing.

Reach out to organizations that serve youth in your community, especially those that work with at-risk or underserved youth. Provide incentives to officers who go above and beyond to connect with the community, both on and off-duty. Examples could include using uncommitted time budgeted for officers to prioritize this engagement, incorporating community engagement basics into police academy training, or implementing requirements for community service.

Leverage engagement opportunities to increase respect and understanding between officers and youth.

Engage with youth to better understand their experiences as young people in the community. and educate others on the challenges and opportunities law enforcement face in the line of duty. Use role-playing, scenario testing and implicit bias training to give everyone the chance to better understand how they can contribute to de-escalation and safer communities. Provide training for officers in adolescent development, adverse childhood experiences, and trauma informed care to enable officers to more effectively interact with youth.

Connect and communicate with the community regularly, especially in times of crisis.

Encourage officers to understand and empathize with the experiences of communities they serve, including acknowledging loss or crisis. Simple gestures like expressing sympathy during times of crisis go a long way in building trust, ensuring youth know officers see them as people and maintaining an open dialogue between law enforcement and communities. This can be as simple as talking about a crisis or current event or as involved as attending a prayer vigil or service. Acknowledge when officers may be in the wrong and create accountability to improve systems and responses.

Partner with Boys & Girls Clubs

Did we mention we're local? Clubs across the country are already working with their local law enforcement on building positive, trusting relationship with youth and we'd love to add you to our growing numbers.

Visit [BGCA.org/get-involved/find-a-club](https://www.bgca.org/get-involved/find-a-club) to connect with your local Boys & Girls Club.

Parents, Teachers, and Out of School Time

Support youth development and ensure kids have spaces where they feel emotionally and physically safe.

Young people need space where they feel comfortable being themselves and secure in the knowledge that they have the supports and tools they need to learn and grow and trustworthy adults to guide them. Connect youth with the support and resources necessary to navigate difficult conversations and situations through the development of youth voice. Youth voice gives youth opportunities to provide input on issues that affect them and thoughts on how these issues could be addressed.

Talk to kids and teens about the role of law enforcement to serve and protect.

Work with your child to develop a plan for how they will respond when interacting with law enforcement even unexpectedly. Make sure kids know how to identify situations, regardless of whether their behavior is in the right or wrong, and navigate de-escalation safely if needed. Educate young people about their legal rights.

Advocate for the needs of youth in your local community.

Policy makers and government agencies exist to serve the public. Hold policymakers and law enforcement accountable to the needs of your community. Advocate for resources and opportunities for relationship building between youth and law enforcement.

Policy Makers

Support public funding for programs that build more meaningful relationships between youth and law enforcement.

Support increased funding for youth development and law enforcement programs that engage in community relationship building. From resources enabling positive youth development programming and curricula to collaborative councils with representation from important stakeholders, invest in relationship-building strategies that equip communities long-term. Encourage sharing of best practices between stakeholders through local, regional, and national forums.

Prioritize prevention over enforcement when measuring the success of law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies are accountable and responsive to the expectations and outcomes set by policymakers. Emphasize protecting and serving over enforcement and encourage agencies to work collaboratively with local communities. Work directly with law enforcement agencies to understand and adjust how outcomes, deliverables, and measurements of success impact both police operations and community needs.

Invest in more robust data collection on the impact of community relationship building strategies, especially with youth.

While evidence suggests that collaborative, community-based approaches are a powerful deterrent in prevention of juvenile delinquency, more data is needed to establish a stronger policy and business case.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Youth Dialogue with Law Enforcement Toolkit

Created to be used by Boys & Girls Clubs, this guide provides information, resources, and tips on hosting a teen-led dialogue with local law enforcement.

www.BGCA.org/kids-in-need/research-insights/safer-childhoods

Teaching Tolerance

A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance provides classroom resources, professional development materials and reading on how to embed diversity, equity and justice into learning spaces.

www.tolerance.org

Police Youth Dialogue Toolkit

Developed by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, this resource provides additional resources for engaging youth and law enforcement in dialogue—including suggested discussion topics.

www.courtinnovation.org

Hands All Together

These resources can help teach escalation and de-escalation strategies for safer interactions with people and police. These modules offer strategies and tactics for both people and police on how to CARE- Comply with the law, Act orderly, Respect each other with words and actions, and Empathize.

www.handsalltogether.com

IACP Youth Focused Policing Resource Center

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) resource center provides tools, resources, and technical assistance for law enforcement groups interested in engaging the community to reduce crime and increase opportunities.

www.iacpyouth.org

Models for Change

An initiative funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Models for Change combines research, tools, findings, and lessons from a decade of juvenile justice systems reform aimed at improving outcomes for youth and communities.

www.modelsforchange.net

Policing in Communities of Color

The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) white paper resources provide solutions for police on how to enhance collaborative, community policing practices and strengthen relationships with communities.

www.noblenational.org/white-paper-portal

Forging Partnerships with Law Enforcement

The Annie E. Casey Foundation employs data-driven strategies, programs, and resources focused on those children, families and communities who need them most. Their guide for juvenile justice reformers provides examples and advice on effective partnerships with law enforcement agencies.

www.aecf.org/resources/forging-partnerships-with-law-enforcement

Building Community between Police and Youth

This resource from Afterschool Alliance provides resources on how to build relationships with officers and youth.

www.afterschoolalliance.org

GREAT FUTURES START HERE.



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OF AMERICA**

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