

**NEW
ERA
OF
PUBLIC
SAFETY**

AN ADVOCACY TOOLKIT FOR FAIR, SAFE,
AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY POLICING

Opportunities for Action

Sometimes, events create opportunities to pressure different decision-makers in the system. These include:

The appointment of a new head of a law enforcement agency

Whenever a new police chief is being selected, community members have the opportunity to educate the mayor and advocate for candidates who have a particular vision or approach to policing, relevant experience, and a strong track record.

Budget season

Every year, state and local legislators approve budgets, including budgets for law enforcement. This creates an important opportunity to advocate for changes to the structure, function, and resources of a police department and against allocation of funds to buy military equipment.

Critical incidents

Individual incidents of excessive or lethal force, or of other officer misconduct, are important opportunities to pressure officials to make necessary changes to policing policies and practices, as well as to increase accountability and oversight.

Release of data

If the police department regularly releases information about stops, searches, and arrests, it can create opportunities to call for changes to the department's practices and priorities based on what the data show.

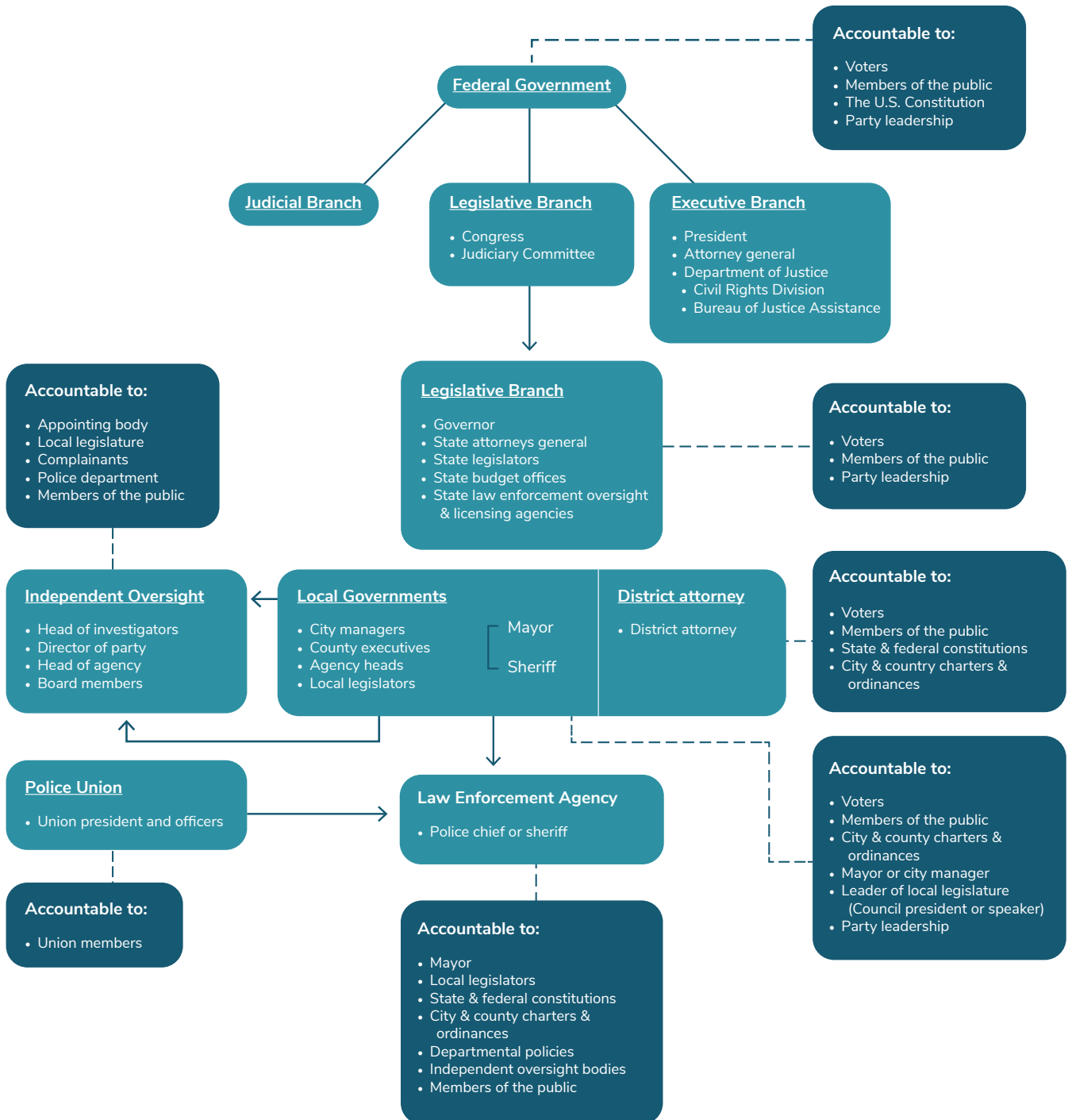
Elections

Elections for key positions, such as mayor, sheriff, and district attorney, present critical opportunities to raise issues about the impact of policing policies and to press candidates for their position on policing and public safety during public fora, one-on-one interactions, and campaign rallies; in the press; and on social media.

Oversight hearings

Local legislators can call oversight hearings and ask questions of agencies they fund. Typically, the public safety committee conducts hearings about how police departments operate, but hearings can also be called on topics such as race relations, health, and safety. Hearings offer opportunities to testify about policing practices, to pressure legislators, and to ask the department specific questions.

Mechanisms of Change



Change Training

Change policing practices by advocating for more or better training. This is often the first response to a policing problem.

Pros:

- + Training is an effective way to reeducate officers on department policies and practices.
- + Chiefs of police can mandate training.

Cons:

- × Training can be expensive and cost money that could be invested in other services.
- × Not all trainings are equal, and outdated curricula or low-quality instructors do not improve officer performance.
- × Training alone cannot shift systemic policing practices; policies, accountability, and culture change are needed to ensure they take hold.

Change Oversight

Change policing practices by advocating for the creation or expansion of police department oversight.

Pros:

- + Oversight agencies give complainants a place to voice their concerns outside of law enforcement agencies.
- + Oversight agencies strengthen community relations by fostering trust between the community and police department.
- + Oversight agencies can improve the quality of internal investigations.

Cons:

- × Oversight agencies can be difficult to implement, particularly when police unions lobby against them.
- × Some oversight agencies lack the authority to change policies and hold officers accountable.

[For examples of effective oversight agencies, visit:](#)

Denver Office of the Independent Monitor:

<https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/office-of-the-independent-monitor.html>

Austin Police Monitor:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/police-monitor>

Change Policy

Change policing practices by advocating for changes to departmental policies.

Pros:

- + Changing policy is easier than passing new laws. The sheriff or police chief can change a department policy with a written or verbal statement.

Cons:

- × Policies can be changed or repealed.
- × Individuals, organizations, and communities generally cannot directly enforce policies or hold police officers accountable for violating policies, though they can pressure department leaders to impose discipline and ensure accountability.

Change the Law

Change policing practices by passing, repealing, or changing a law. States and cities have passed laws banning profiling, regulating the use of force, banning consent searches, regulating the purchase of military equipment, and mandating transparent police department records.

Pros:

- + Once passed, laws cannot be easily changed; another law must be passed to change or repeal it.
- + Laws create opportunities for enforcement by community members through a private right of action.
- + Laws can establish oversight through task forces, annual audits, or data reporting requirements.

Cons:

- × Enacting laws is harder than changing a policy. You need to:
 1. Draft a bill
 2. Find a legislator willing to introduce it
 3. Persuade enough legislators to vote it out of committee
 4. Persuade a majority of legislators to vote for it
 5. Persuade the president, governor, or mayor to sign it
- × Legislation about policing issues can be controversial and hard to build support around, particularly when police unions lobby against it.



The Leadership
Conference

The Leadership
Conference
Education Fund

