



COVID-19: Alternative Methods for Delivering Essential Law Enforcement Services

Educate Yourself. Stay Informed. Be Safe.

In light of the public health risk that Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) presents and the pressing need for law enforcement agencies to be engaged on both the public health and public safety fronts, agencies should carefully consider whether discretionary interactions with the public can be minimized and arrests limited to offenses that are immediate public safety risks. Agencies should also consider revised practices for mandatory interactions in the field such as those for detention, transport, and booking. Regardless of policy or protocol changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, law enforcement agencies will continue to uphold the rule of law to maintain public safety, prevent victimization, and support vulnerable communities.

As the number of COVID-19 cases increases globally, law enforcement agencies should be prepared for the likelihood that the virus will impact their communities. Guidance from the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control have stated the critical importance of social distancing, frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and water or using alcohol-based sanitizer, and both self-quarantining and seeking treatment from medical professionals if people experience symptoms.¹ Due to physical and contraband regulations, some jails may have limited ability to fully enact these precautions, putting the jail population and those who work in them at particularly high risk.

The following document outlines considerations for law enforcement agencies on triaging calls for service and limiting the spread of the virus. Each agency should determine what incidents are critical for enforcement and those incidents for which enforcement can be suspended. If agencies suspend or modify enforcement during this time, they should provide all changes in protocol to sworn staff, nonsworn staff, justice system stakeholders, and community partners and have clear messaging to the community that serious and violent offenses will still be fully enforced.

Triaging Calls

- Prioritization of calls for service:
 - Consider modifications to the department's call prioritization system that would allow for significantly deferred response, or the use of alternative responses to certain types of calls for service (such as suspension of all responses to nuisance offenses, alarm activations, and minor thefts).
- Differential response to calls for service:
 - Encourage resolution of minor incidents over the phone, when possible, especially crimes where the chances of collection of evidence is minimal and officer's presence on scene is not required. Consider expanding the duties of the community service desk and community service officers and Internet reporting of minor property crimes and other misdemeanors or nonviolent crimes.
- Consider diverting non-emergency concerns to a 24/7 hotline, non-emergency number, or online portal that is frequently monitored. These concerns may include, but are not limited to general questions regarding COVID-19, noise concerns, loitering, vandalism, etc.
 - Advertise this hotline on all available mediums, including but not limited to social media, law enforcement agency homepage, local media, and local news.
- Consider allowing members of the public to file a report or complaint online for non-emergency incidents, such as lost property, lost vehicle tags, theft/theft from auto when there is not a risk of credit card fraud or identity theft, destruction or damage to property.
 - Advertise this website on all available mediums, including but not limited to social media, law enforcement agency homepage, local media, and local news.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2F-transmission.html; <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>



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Traffic Enforcement

- Determine what violations are core to upholding public safety and consider limiting traffic enforcement for non-critical concerns, such as parking violations, expired tags, and missing headlights, etc.

Probation/Parole Violations and Bench Warrants

- In conjunction with probation and parole departments and courts, carefully consider alternative methods, such as postponement or suspension, in place of physically detaining people for violations of probation and parole, as well as bench warrants, for those who do not pose an immediate risk to public safety.

Misdemeanor Enforcement

- In conjunction with other system stakeholders especially holding facilities as well as partners from the public and behavioral health systems, create ways to address misdemeanors that are low-level, nonviolent offenses through alternatives to arrest, including citation, summons, or ticket in lieu of arrest and front-end diversion to community-based resources.

Felony Enforcement

- While violent felonies should still be enforced, nonviolent felonies may not present an immediate threat to the public. Agencies, in partnership with their prosecutorial partners, must carefully weigh the threat to public health and the threat to public safety when determining if, and which, felonies may receive a citation, summons, or ticket in lieu of arrest.

Example Policies and Procedures

- Law enforcement agencies across the globe are carefully considering how best to support both public health and public safety in their communities. Visit IACP's **COVID-19 Library of Resources** <https://www.myiacp.org/COVID19libraryofresources> to find example policies and procedures from agencies across the globe for alternatives to arrest prior to, and during, the COVID-19 pandemic.