

Federal Advocacy **BRIEF**

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The American Rescue Plan:

Five Ways Ohio Can Use Recovery Funds to Support Victims and Promote Safety

The [Alliance for Safety and Justice \(ASJ\)](#) has five recommendations for how Ohio's recent collective allocation of almost \$11 billion in American Recovery Plan's (ARP) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds can support victims and reduce the increase in violent crime associated with the COVID-19 pandemic:

Key recommendations to address the needs of underserved crime victims and reduce violence include:

1. [Ensure that trauma recovery and community-based victims' support services are widely available and properly funded, particularly in highly victimized and underserved communities](#)
2. [Provide victims with housing and job assistance](#)
3. [Invest in community-based victim service providers in the communities most impacted by violence](#)
4. [Provide premium pay to essential workers who have assisted victims during the pandemic](#)
5. [Fund research, evaluation, and infrastructure to support and help sustain ARP Recovery Funds' investments.](#)

These five recommendations represent an unprecedented opportunity for state and local policymakers to use ARP funds to make key investments in public-health programming, address the recent rise in violence, and build the infrastructure needed to promote the safety and well-being of all Ohioans. To help inform state and local advocacy, this brief's [appendix](#) includes outreach templates to contact state, local, and federal elected officials.

During the pandemic, many of Ohio’s communities have suffered from severe spikes in certain violent crimes, particularly gun-related homicides.

COVID-19 has had a destabilizing impact throughout Ohio, but it has been especially devastating for many of the state’s rural, low-income, immigrant, Hispanic and Black communities. Lockdowns, job loss, and social disconnection in the state have aggravated pre-existing community-level disadvantages. The state has seen significant spikes in certain violent crimes, with particularly sharp increases in homicides in many Ohio cities.¹ While the precise causes of these spikes in violence are unclear, research has documented a link between public health challenges and safety. Without effective interventions, the public health crisis caused and exacerbated by the pandemic could lock in the increased rates of victimization Ohio has experienced over the last year.

From 2019 to 2020, cities across the state saw shootings and gun related homicides spike, with some cities seeing increases of 30 percent or more. According to the National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, this increase is part of a national trend that has “no modern precedent.”

Ohio is committed to helping victims in need.

While Ohio has been making great strides toward helping victims in their recovery process, there are still unmet needs for victims that the state must address. This past year the state included \$2.5 million dollars into its victim compensation program for fiscal year 2022, providing Ohio victims critical resources they need to heal. The Ohio Senate also Passed SB 36 this session, if the bill becomes law it would expand applicant eligibility and remove critical barriers to accessing victim compensation in the state. These changes are necessary to ensuring Ohio’s most harmed victims are receiving the help they need. Ohio is the only state in the country that denies compensation to a victim and their family based on a suspicion that the victim or applicant committed a felony in the past ten years, even if never charged with a crime. Ohio also denies victim compensation if a victim has a past criminal conviction or is on probation or parole. These eligibility restrictions show that further strengthening of the compensation program is necessary to keep Ohio strong and growing.

Public safety agencies play an essential role in connecting victims to services, from CVC benefits to emergency housing assistance. The problem is that most violent crime is never reported to law enforcement, especially in highly victimized populations. Our [National Crime Victim Survey](#) revealed that 2 out of 3 victims did not receive help following their incident, and those who did were

¹ Smith, N. (2020, October 24). *Ohio sees record increase in gun violence, murder by firearms up 27%*. WRGT. <https://dayton247now.com/news/local/ohio-sees-record-increase-in-gun-violence-murder-by-firearms-up-by-27>

more likely to receive it from family and friends. For victims who access services, the overreliance on the criminal justice system can create many challenges, and having alternative systems in place will help ensure all Ohioans are able to access the services they need .

VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES



One in four people have been a victim of crime in the past 10 years, and roughly half of those have been the victim of a violent crime

-  **Victims of crime are more likely to be: low-income, young, people of color**
-  **Violent crime victims are four times as likely to be repeat crime victims of four or more crimes**

-  **Victims of crime experience significant challenges in recovery and healing** — eight in 10 report experiencing at least one symptom of trauma
-  **More than four in 10 victims have worried for their safety** due to witnessing violence or another crime



Two out of three victims did not receive help following the incident, and those who did were far more likely to receive it from family and friends than the criminal justice system

[Crime Survivors Speak Report: The First-Ever National Survey of Victims' View on Safety and Justice \(2017\). The Alliance for Safety and Justice.](#)

Models exist to address trauma—they just need to be scaled up.

While unresolved trauma can perpetuate victimization, survivors of violence are resilient, particularly when they are able to access the resources they need. Likewise, research indicates that when victims are provided with assistance without the conditions criminal justice systems typically impose on them, they are more likely to want to work with law enforcement to address their crime.

In recent years, Ohio has made important investments in public health and community-based responses to violence. Since 2017, Ohio has used a combination of state and federal funds to open [eight](#) Trauma Recovery Centers (TRCs) across the state. The TRC is an [evidence-based program](#) designed to provide wrap-around mental health and other kinds of essential services to underserved crime victims. The problem is not that solutions like the TRC do not exist for Ohio victims. It is that they are not supported at scale to reach and support the number of people in need. Among the tens of thousands of people who are victims of violent crime in Ohio every year, the state's current TRCs can serve, at most, a few hundred annually.

The ARP funds represent an unprecedented federal investment to address violence through a public health response. It is important that funding be directed to interventions that center the needs of crime victims, and will address their trauma and allow them to heal.

Recommendations

These recommendations represent the core statutory purposes of the ARP Recovery Funds to address the pandemic's public health crisis and negative economic impact using guidance from the [U.S. Department of the Treasury's Interim Rule](#). When quoting from the Interim Rule, this brief will hyperlink to the paragraph/section in which the text appears.

1. **Ensure that trauma recovery and community-based victims' support services are widely available and properly funded, particularly in highly victimized and underserved communities.**

Model trauma recovery programs like the TRC that provide wraparound case management and mental health support as well as peer-to-peer support can help victims heal and prevent further victimization and violence.

Policymakers should:

- **Expand access and maintain sustainable funding to trauma recovery.** While Ohio has opened TRCs in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Springfield, Toledo, and South Euclid, more trauma-informed service providers are needed. This should include new TRCs in communities that need them as well as training and capacity-building for existing community-based organizations to work with victims who may not need TRC's intensive mental health services but would still benefit from trauma-informed programming and assistance.
- **Expand trauma support at schools.** Places that have nearly daily contact with young people, like schools, are an ideal touchpoint for youth traumatized by violence, as well as a means of connecting their families to services. Policymakers should use ARP Recovery Funds to increase support for these kinds of proven, trauma-informed interventions led by school-based mental health clinicians—particularly in schools where a high proportion of students has been exposed to violence.

2. **Provide victims with housing and job assistance.**

The pandemic has exacerbated two factors that increase victims' risk of future victimization: housing instability and a lack of living wage work. The ARP Recovery Funds provide multiple ways to break the cycle of violence that the lack of safe housing and living-wage employment engender, at

both the individual and community level. These resources should be made available wherever victims seek help.

Policyholders should:

- **Ensure that victims have safe, affordable, and stable housing.** In the aftermath of a crime, a victim may need immediate safe housing, and the ability to transition to permanent housing while in recovery. The Interim Rule outlines several examples of how policy makers can use ARP Recovery Funds to invest in [supportive housing services](#), [affordable housing development](#), and [housing vouchers](#). These resources should be specifically provided to victims.
- **Provide victims with job training and assistance.** One of the core statutory purposes of the ARP Recovery Funds is to address the pandemic's negative economic impact. The Interim Rule encourages state and local governments to focus employment resources on helping people who struggled to work a job that pays living wage during the pandemic. Like housing assistance, ARP Recovery-funded employment resources should be specifically provided to victims. While victimization would not automatically make someone eligible for these funds, research indicates that poverty is strongly associated with higher rates of victimization, and that being a crime victim can deeply impact the ability to attain employment or remain at work.

3. Invest in community-based victim service providers in the communities most impacted by violence.

As the causes of violence are often rooted in concentrated community-level disadvantages, community investment should be seen as an essential part of trauma recovery and violence prevention. The federal funds should be focused on the expansion of services in the places most impacted by crime, and should prioritize community-based victim service providers.

Policyholders should:

- **Fund community based victim service providers in places that experience the most violence.** Research shows that the most chronically underserved victims are young, low income, and from communities of color. According to the Department of the Treasury, the types of community-based victims service interventions that can be funded include:
 - [Funding community health workers to help community members access health services and services to address the social determinants of health](#)
 - [Funding public benefits navigators to assist community members with navigating and applying for available Federal, State, and local public benefits or services.”](#) such as Crime Victim Compensation;

- [“Housing services to support healthy living environments and neighborhoods conducive to mental and physical wellness;](#)
- [Remediation of lead paint or other lead hazards to reduce risk of elevated blood lead levels among children; and](#)
- [Evidence-based community violence intervention programs to prevent violence and mitigate the increase in violence during the pandemic.”](#)

4. Provide premium pay to essential workers who have assisted victims during the pandemic.

One of the mandated purposes of the ARP Recovery Funds is to support eligible essential workers with premium pay. Premium pay may also be [“retrospective.”](#) In other words, essential workers can be paid this extra income for eligible essential work they performed at any time during the pandemic, including in 2020.

Policymakers should:

- *Establish a fund to pay premium pay to eligible essential workers in community organizations who have assisted victims during the pandemic.*

5. Fund research, evaluation, and infrastructure to support and help sustain ARP Recovery Funds’ investments.

While state and local governments have long supported programming to reduce violence and assist victims, they often lack the capacities to use data and research to plan, implement, and evaluate government-funded interventions. As a result, there is very little data available to hold public systems accountable, and plan for more resources to be reallocated to community-based victim service providers that are targeting underserved crime survivors.

Policymakers should:

- *Fund researchers to work with victims, victim service providers, violence intervention organizations, and communities in crisis to identify, implement, and evaluate the assistance they need to heal and recover from the pandemic’s public health crisis.*
- *Invest in data collection and infrastructure needed to provide policymakers and communities feedback they need to ensure that interventions are measurably increasing safety and wellbeing.*

Appendix

Language to request state and local fiscal recovery funds from Governor DeWine, mayors, and county board executives

Governor DeWine, Ohio mayors, and county board executives will primarily be responsible for overseeing Ohio's State and Local ARP Fiscal Recovery Funds. As described above, while there will be significant competition for these resources, the ARP supplies several ways that these elected and government leaders can use these funds to support community-led safety initiatives. The best funding requests will combine what ARP mandates the funds should be used for, an analysis of how the pandemic has negatively impacted the organizations making the request, and an estimate of the funding needed for these organizations to address the specific harms caused by the pandemic. As these funds expire on December 31, 2024, requests could be spread out over the next three years.

To contact Governor DeWine, go to

<https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/contact>

Dear [ELECTED OFFICIAL/GOVERNMENT LEADER],

Representing more than [NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS AND THE KINDS OF SERVICES THEY PROVIDE] that serve [JURISDICTION'S] communities most impacted by crime, violence, and unaddressed trauma, we believe that immediate, targeted, and additional investments are urgently needed to address the severe increases in homicides and victimization associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As [ELECTED OFFICIAL/GOVERNMENT LEADER] determines how it will spend the approximate [TOTAL AMOUNT] of fiscal recovery funds it will receive from the American Rescue Plan (ARP), we ask that you dedicate [REQUESTED AMOUNT] to support [LIST SAFETY PROGRAMMING] through the end of 2024, when the funds expire.

As the ARP makes clear, these funds are dedicated "to respond to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)," which includes "the negative economic impacts" it has had on "nonprofits." These mandated purposes perfectly align with our requests. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profoundly destabilizing impact on [JURISDICTION], driving severe spikes in violence and crime. [USE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA AND/OR DATA FROM ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES ON HOW CRIME AND HARMS HAVE INCREASED DURING THE PANDEMIC.]

In normal times, our organizations are on the frontlines of addressing violence. During the pandemic,

our organizations have gone above and beyond their normal work to respond to this aspect of the pandemic’s “public health emergency.” Throughout [JURISDICTION], the staff of our organizations have risked their own health and safety to serve as front-line workers, mediating conflicts, preventing violence, and responding to crisis mental health needs during the pandemic, as well as delivering food, PPE, and other essential services to people who lack access to vital resources.

On behalf of [ORGANIZATIONS], we urge you to make these targeted investments with the [JURISDICTION’S] ARP fiscal relief funds in communities that have suffered from increases in homicides associated with the pandemic. By investing in these proven solutions that provide targeted prevention and recovery to communities in crisis, [JURISDICTION] can reduce violence and promote safety and well-being of all its residents.

Sincerely,

Outreach language for Senator Brown, Senator Portman, Representatives, and state and local champions

Members of Congress and state and local elected officials can be vital champions to help access ARP resources. Use the language below to inform them about your work, asking for assistance that they can provide. Your request for assistance will depend on the official you are contacting and the funds you are seeking, but should include requests like asking for help meeting with state and local executives and support for your request for fiscal relief.

To find your state legislator, go to

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislators/district-maps>

To find your member of Congress, go to

[https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/map#address=.](https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/map#address=)

Dear [ELECTED OFFICIAL],

Representing more than [NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS AND THE KINDS OF SERVICES THEY PROVIDE] that serve [JURISDICTION'S] communities most impacted by crime, violence, and unaddressed trauma, we are contacting your office today to inform you about our work to access resources from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and to ask [BE AS PRECISE AS POSSIBLE IN YOUR REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE.]

We believe that the ARP presents a significant opportunity to invest in public-health programming and infrastructure that can help our communities recover from the pandemic by investing in the solutions that we need to reduce violence and promote safety.

As you know, the COVID-19 has had a profoundly destabilizing impact on [JURISDICTION], driving severe spikes in violence and crime. [USE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA AND/OR DATA FROM ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES ON HOW CRIME AND HARMS HAVE INCREASED DURING THE PANDEMIC.] In normal times, our organizations are on the frontlines of addressing violence. During the pandemic, our organizations have gone above and beyond their normal work to respond to this aspect of the pandemic's "public health emergency." Throughout [JURISDICTION], the staff of our organizations have risked their own health and safety to serve as front-line workers, mediating conflicts, preventing violence, and responding to crisis mental health needs during the pandemic, as well as delivering food, PPE, and other essential services to people who lack access to vital resources.

Consistent with the ARP's statutory purposes, we have asked [GOVERNOR/MAYOR/COUNTY EXECUTIVE] for [AMOUNT OF FISCAL RELIEF] to support our organization's work "to respond to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)." We are also preparing to apply for funding opportunities, including [LIST RELEVANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES LISTED ABOVE].

On behalf of [ORGANIZATIONS], we ask for your support in using APR resources to provide the vital assistance needed by our communities that have suffered from increases in victimization associated with the pandemic. By investing in solutions that provide targeted prevention and recovery to communities in crisis, [JURISDICTION] can reduce violence and promote safety and well-being of all its residents.

Sincerely,

Language to request funding for Brenda Glass Trauma Center in Cuyahoga County

Dear Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish,

I am one of more than 700 Cuyahoga County victims of crime that are members of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (CSSJ), an organization that supports underserved victims in communities most impacted by crime, violence, and unaddressed trauma. As crime victims, we believe that immediate, targeted, and additional investments are urgently needed to address the severe increases in homicides and victimization associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the Cuyahoga County Executive Office determines how it will spend the approximate \$239 million of fiscal recovery funds it will receive from the American Rescue Plan (ARP), I ask that you dedicate \$5,000,000.00 to support the Brenda Glass Trauma Recovery Center through the end of 2024 when the funds expire. The ARP presents a significant opportunity to invest in public-health programming and infrastructure that can help our communities recover from the pandemic by investing in the solutions that we need to help people heal, reduce violence, and promote safety.

As you know, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has had a profoundly destabilizing impact on Cuyahoga County, driving severe spikes in violence and crime. In 2020 Cleveland experienced an increase in all violent crimes, however, the city reported an alarming 175 homicides during the pandemic. That's an increase of 42% from 2019. In normal times, Trauma Recovery Centers are on the frontlines of addressing violence. During the pandemic, the Brenda Glass Trauma Recovery Center has gone above and beyond their normal work to respond to this aspect of the pandemic's "public health emergency." Throughout Cuyahoga County, the staff of the Brenda Glass Trauma Recovery Center have risked their own health and safety to serve as front-line workers, mediating conflicts, preventing violence, and responding to crisis mental health needs during the pandemic, as well as, delivering food, PPE, and other essential services to people who lack access to vital resources. As the ARP makes clear, these funds are dedicated "to respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19" which includes "the negative economic impacts" it has had on "non-profits."

As a member of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, I urge you to make this \$5,000,000.00 targeted investment to the Brenda Glass Trauma Recovery Center with the ARP fiscal resources to provide the vital assistance needed by our communities that have suffered from increases in victimization associated with the pandemic. By investing in these proven solutions that provide targeted prevention and recovery to communities in crisis, Cuyahoga County can reduce violence and promote safety and well-being of all its residents.

Sincerely,

[Add your full name here]

<https://www.brendaglasstraumacenter.org/>

<https://www.traumarecoverycentermodel.org/>

About the series from the Alliance for Safety and Justice.

This is the third report from the innovations division of the Alliance for Safety and Justice that takes a deep dive into the American Rescue plan, and how federal funds can be used to address core safety issues. Other reports in the series include The Promise of the American Rescue Plan Funding Opportunities to Reduce Violence, Meet the Needs of Underserved Communities, and Promote a Vision for Shared Safety (April, 2021), and Seven key takeaways that show how State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds can support innovative safety policies and programs (June 2021).

About the Alliance for Safety and Justice.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice is a national organization that aims to win new safety priorities in states across the country, and brings together diverse crime survivors to advance policies that help communities most harmed by crime and violence.