

# Maryland's Comprehensive State Crime Control and Prevention Plan 2024-2026 Annual Update

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# Message from the Executive Director



As Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, I am pleased to present *Maryland's Comprehensive State Crime Control and Prevention Plan 2024 - 2026*.

Because of the very recent leadership change, GOCPYVS did not create a new strategic plan for this submission. Instead, this report provides an overview of the Office's current approach to advancing public safety and improving outcomes for youth and crime victims. Please visit our website for the [most recent reports on all GOCPYVS programs](#) and an [interactive map showing all GOCPYVS grantees](#). The remainder of this letter outlines my vision for interagency strategic planning moving forward. That process is in its early phases, and I look forward to providing updates in the coming months.

My focus now is bringing together State and local leaders, researchers, advocates, and concerned community leaders to advise the State on a comprehensive public safety strategy. This collaborative effort will support Governor Moore's goals of investing in Marylanders and providing them with the necessary support systems—addressing the root causes of crime through research-based interventions and relationship building. I believe the collaborative strategic planning process will also result in policies that bolster Maryland's accountability mechanisms for youth and adults. By working across silos, we can develop innovative approaches that will strengthen our communities and improve the lives of all Maryland residents.

Additionally, GOCPYVS will leverage its role as the state administering agency and grantmaker. We are dedicated to investing in programs and initiatives that further a public safety strategy of community investment and focused accountability. Through strategic funding and support, we will empower State and local agencies, organizations, and initiatives that align with the Governor's vision for a safer, healthier Maryland.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication and collaboration as we embark on this journey. We are confident that by joining forces, we can build a stronger, safer, and more resilient Maryland.

I look forward to sharing a completed strategic plan in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.  
Executive Director  
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# Introduction

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2020.01 II D, the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (Office) must submit a three-year Comprehensive State Crime Control and Prevention Plan, with annual updates in the following two years, to the Governor by December 1 of each year.

Pursuant to its charge, *Maryland's Comprehensive State Crime Control and Prevention Plan 2024 - 2026* includes information to support and enhance law enforcement, children and youth, and victim services. It also includes strategies for supporting collaborative enforcement efforts that target gangs, drugs, firearms, and human trafficking organizations, prioritizing a system that reduces adverse childhood experiences in Maryland's youth population, and building a robust system for victims of crime within the State.

# Background

As required by Executive Order 01.01.2020.01 II D, the Office is the designated State Administering Agency for Maryland. The Governor appointed the Office to this role in accordance with federal statute, making the Office responsible for comprehensive criminal justice planning and policy development within the State. As the State Administering Agency, the Office allocates resources statewide and acts to distribute, monitor, and report on spending under many state and federal programs.

The Office is the executive branch agency designated to accept, plan, and distribute criminal justice funds and seeks to leverage State and federal grant dollars to address the needs of statewide and local criminal justice systems. The Office also serves as the primary coordinating body for State and local public safety issue identification, system collaboration, policy development, and system planning and implementation.

Through its mission, the Office serves as a coordinating office that advises the Governor on criminal justice strategies. The office plans, promotes, and funds efforts with government entities, private organizations, and the community to advance public policy, enhance public safety, reduce crime and juvenile delinquency, and serve victims.

The Office also works closely with a multidisciplinary team of state and local entities to achieve the following objectives:

- Develop criminal justice strategies that are coordinated at the local, State, and federal levels.
- Improve victim services for Maryland residents.

- Improve the well-being of all Maryland children and youth.
- Maximize the public safety returns on Maryland's corrections spending.
- Increase the availability of data to support data-driven approaches to criminal justice issues in Maryland.

In addition, the Office uses data to develop, implement, and measure outcomes for initiatives intended to increase public safety in Maryland. In an effort to better understand threats, develop policy, and provide pertinent information to the Governor and his administration, the Office continues to develop a data-sharing system across the State. The Office also works to establish clear memorandums of understanding with agencies regarding sharing and using information and policies to ensure proper storage and dissemination of information in accordance with existing memorandums of understanding and industry best practices.

The Office places a significant emphasis on instituting strategic planning to align priorities at the State and local levels, to ensure it remains ahead of threats that impact the State, and to continue to be good stewards of the funds administered. Implementing evidence-based practices and data-driven decisions ensures the Office allocates resources to issues and jurisdictions in a way that will produce measurable outcomes and assists in developing outcome-based performance measures for grant recipients. In doing this, the Office ensures the best use of resources and a better understanding of how programs increase safety and improve the quality of life for Maryland citizens and visitors.

# Crime Control and Prevention Plan

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.2020.01 II D, *Maryland's Comprehensive State Crime Control and Prevention Plan 2024 -2026* is a comprehensive crime reduction strategy that is based on a three-pronged approach to support and enhance law enforcement, children and youth, and victim services. This approach includes strategies for supporting collaborative enforcement efforts that target gangs, drugs, firearms, and human trafficking organizations, prioritizing a system that reduces adverse childhood experiences in our youth population, and building a robust support system for victims of crime within the State of Maryland. The following pages describe the three focus areas in greater detail, as well as the collaborative efforts to achieve its objectives.

## Enforcement

The Office's Criminal Justice Programs Division brings together various stakeholders at the federal, State, and local levels to collaborate on advancing public safety by investing in evidence-informed public health approaches, addressing the intersections of behavioral health and criminal justice, strengthening police accountability, and enhancing community relations in order to reduce and prevent crime in the State. This multidisciplinary approach leads to more effective and efficient criminal justice practices and better outcomes for Maryland communities (*as described below*).

## Public Safety

***Objective: Develop criminal justice strategies that are coordinated at the local, State, and federal levels.***

Effective and efficient reduction and prevention of crime in Maryland necessitates coordination across federal, State, and local levels and various disciplines. A key strategy for mitigating violent crime involves allocating resources to identify, disrupt, and dismantle gangs and violent criminal networks. Individuals engaged in activities such as firearm trafficking, violent crimes, human trafficking, illegal drug distribution, and other inherently violent criminal enterprises will remain the focus of collaborative enforcement, prevention, and intervention strategies. This includes coordinated efforts with evidence-based community and youth programs.

## Maryland Criminal Intelligence Network

The Maryland Criminal Intelligence Network (MCIN) is an integral component of Maryland's comprehensive crime prevention initiative, which entails coordinated efforts between local, State, and federal collaborators. Its primary mission is to target gangs, drugs, firearms, and human trafficking, particularly related to those criminal networks that span multiple jurisdictions.

MCIN achieves this objective by facilitating the exchange of information across geographical boundaries.

A fundamental aspect of Maryland's public safety strategy hinges on the utilization of data-driven decision-making processes, both in operational execution and the formulation of policies. To foster collaboration and information sharing, the Office conducts monthly meetings with stakeholders, bringing together analysts, investigators, prosecutors, as well as strategic State partners such as the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, the Maryland Department of State Police Strike Force<sup>7</sup>, and the Governor's Special Operations Group. Moreover, the Office frequently employs the MCIN platform to foster partnerships between law enforcement agencies and non-enforcement organizations to work in concert, similar to the [Handle with Care](#) initiative, the [Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center](#), and heroin and [P.R.O.T.E.C.T.](#) coordinators.

Notable accomplishments and proactive efforts encompass dismantling significant criminal organizations, often followed by joint press conferences featuring partners from Baltimore City, Cecil County, Anne Arundel County, and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

MCIN currently operates in 16 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, including a recent expansion to Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. The Office will continue to provide oversight of MCIN and, based on available funding, allocate grant awards to sites to continue to break down jurisdictional barriers and enable law enforcement and prosecutors to target entire criminal enterprises.

### **Governor's Special Operations Group**

The Governor's Special Operations Group (GSOG), established by the Governor's Council on Gangs and Violent Criminal Networks, brings together the combined resources of law enforcement and prosecutors to address violent criminals, gangs, and criminal organizations. Led by the Senior Law Enforcement Coordinator (SLEC), GSOG remains dedicated to providing analytical intelligence to combat criminal enterprises, including gangs and violent criminal enterprises, operating across jurisdictions in the State with connections to Baltimore City.

GSOG maintains a continuous collaboration with MCIN sites to enhance cooperation and data sharing. This collaborative approach is designed to ensure the smooth integration of various strategies, resources, and intelligence, ultimately leading to more effective targeting of criminal networks and gangs. This collective effort is vital for effectively targeting and countering violent criminal networks and gangs operating throughout the state of Maryland, including Baltimore City.



## **Law Enforcement Coordinating Council & Regional Law Enforcement Council**

In 2021, [Senate Bill 907, 2020/Chapter 19, 2021](#) established the Law Enforcement Coordinating Council within the Maryland Department of State Police. This council, chaired by the Superintendent of the Maryland Department of State Police, includes State officials and the primary law enforcement executive from each jurisdiction. The council meets twice a year to ensure interagency intelligence sharing and to coordinate resources to combat crime throughout the State.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the Act mandated the formation of four Regional Law Enforcement Councils. The four sub-councils comprise State officials and local law enforcement agencies, convening quarterly to exchange intelligence on crime trends and devise strategies for deploying resources to prevent and address regional crime, particularly violent offenses.

## **Maryland Department of State Police Strike Force 7**

The specialized operations unit collaborates with MCIN sites to effectively identify, investigate, and prosecute criminals and their organizations. In partnership with public safety agencies, this special operations unit operates as one of seven investigative and enforcement groups within the federal Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program. Its primary mission is to disrupt and dismantle violent gangs and drug trafficking organizations operating in Baltimore City. The special operations unit is committed to improving collaboration and data-sharing initiatives with MCIN sites. This dedication is in response to the challenge of crime extending across multiple jurisdictions.

## **P.R.O.T.E.C.T. (Public Resources Organizing to End Crime Together) Program**

[Senate Bill 929, 2020/Chapter 20 of 2021](#) established the P.R.O.T.E.C.T. Program to optimize the utilization of State, local, and community resources to address neighborhood decline issues across Maryland. The program aims to facilitate comprehensive strategies to reduce crime and the associated fear within communities, with a particular focus on engaging local law enforcement in direct public safety roles.

Through a strategic analysis of violent crime data spanning a five-year period, the Office identified high-crime micro-zones in the following locations: Anne Arundel County, Allegany County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Cecil County, Dorchester County, Frederick County, Prince George's County, Washington County, and Wicomico County. Presently, the Office is in the process of recruiting P.R.O.T.E.C.T. Coordinators. These coordinators will work towards the

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<sup>1</sup> Casetext. [Section 01.01.2012.03 - State Law Enforcement Coordinating Council](#). It is important to note that, in 2012, Executive Order 01.01.2012.03 created a similar council, the State Law Enforcement Coordinating Council, to coordinate among its members agencies to further the safety and security of State residents and to improve the administration and enforcement of the laws of Maryland by ensuring that police resources are deployed across the State to address statewide crime trends, regional and local crime, maintain homeland security, respond to any threats to homeland security, and to address emergencies either natural or man-made.

effective use of existing crime prevention programs and grants, coordinate community and youth initiatives, support community mobilization efforts, participate in activities aimed at reclaiming public spaces, assist in swift responses to public nuisances, and foster community engagement with the local law enforcement agency within the high-crime micro-zones.

P.R.O.T.E.C.T. Coordinators are currently in five locations: Anne Arundel County, Cecil County, Wicomico County, Prince George's County and Dorchester County. The coordinators have participated in numerous community events such as National Night Out, Trunk or Treat, attended The Office will conduct an in-depth examination of the data-driven P.R.O.T.E.C.T. program to guarantee that the designated sites are adequately equipped with the essential resources required to diminish fear and crime within Maryland communities.

### **Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center**

Established through a collaboration between the Office and the University of Maryland, the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC) harnesses the resources within the University of Maryland to facilitate the alignment of the State's crime control and prevention initiatives with the three key focus areas of the Office. MCRIC is responsible for conducting interdisciplinary research and furthering state policies and programs by forging connections with agencies and departments throughout the entire State, spanning from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore. This support extends to MCIN sites by providing them with embedded data analysts, interns, and collaborative research programs. In addition, MCRIC researchers are actively involved in bolstering statewide crime and criminal justice data analyses and contributing to the establishment of Maryland's Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence. The Office, in collaboration with MCRIC, aims to seize opportunities for future research and advancements in public safety. For more information, please refer to [Maryland's Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence Strategic Plan](#).<sup>2</sup>

### **Justice Reinvestment**

***Objective: Maximize the public safety returns on Maryland's corrections spending.***

The Criminal Justice Division oversees the implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA); a data-driven approach to improve public safety outcomes, reduce corrections spending, and reinvest savings into evidence-based strategies that decrease crime and recidivism. Established through JRA, the Performance Incentive Grant Fund (PIGF), invests in programming to improve reentry outcomes, reduce the impacts of incarceration on communities, provide

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<sup>2</sup> Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center. (2023). *Maryland's Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence Strategic Plan*. [https://bsos.umd.edu/sites/bsos.umd.edu/files/EXECUTIVE\\_SUMMARY\\_BH\\_PS\\_CoE.pdf](https://bsos.umd.edu/sites/bsos.umd.edu/files/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_BH_PS_CoE.pdf)

resources for victims of crime, and connect individuals to mental and behavioral health treatment.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, and in collaboration with the Opioid Operational Command Center (OCCC), the division coordinates with criminal justice partners to prevent, treat, and reduce opioid use in Maryland; promote a coordinated law enforcement and investigative strategy to combat the epidemic through data sharing; and streamline reporting efforts on the implementation and progress of programs for opioid use disorder screening, evaluation, and treatment in local correctional facilities and in the Baltimore City Pretrial Complex.

### **Justice Reinvestment Initiative**

The Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) is a nationwide data-driven approach that advocates treatment for those struggling with addiction, provides an opportunity to elevate the voice of victims, focuses prison beds on serious, repeat offenders, and strengthens community supervision through evidence-based practices.

The Office staffs and coordinates the following three boards:

- Justice Reinvestment Oversight Board
- Local Government Justice Reinvestment Commission
- Justice Reinvestment Advisory Board

Through JRA's data-driven approach, Maryland has witnessed a decrease in the State prison population and a reduction in corrections spending. The Office remains committed to developing more opportunities to share data between criminal justice and behavioral health entities and tracking treatment outcomes. The Office also seeks to build an infrastructure to allow Maryland agencies to collect, analyze, and report relevant data that promote and measure reentry success.

### **Heroin Coordinator Program**

In collaboration with the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and the OCCC, this program employs a combination of law enforcement and investigative strategies to combat the illicit substance epidemic. It achieves this through cross-jurisdictional cooperation and data sharing to generate actionable information beneficial for both public health and public safety. The Office is dedicated to directing more individuals to public health resources while evaluating the program's effectiveness. Since January 2018, this program has successfully facilitated over 16,255 treatment referrals.

The Office is focused on remaining informed about local, State, national, and global trends. To achieve this, the Office actively participates in monthly heroin coordinator calls and international

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<sup>3</sup> Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services. Performance Incentive Grant Fund (PIGF). <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/pigf/>

conferences. Recent evidence suggests that the escalated heroin addiction crisis is largely due to the presence of substances like fentanyl, [xylazine](#), and counterfeit pills. To address this in Maryland, there are currently 20 Heroin Coordinators covering the State's 24 jurisdictions to provide real-time actionable intelligence.

## **Center of Excellence**

***Objective: To promote fair, equitable, and just treatment of individuals with behavioral health needs before, during, and after justice system interaction; foster evidence-based, data-driven decision making; and be a leader in implementing innovative approaches to connecting individuals with behavioral health needs to the services they need as part of a continuum of care.***

The Maryland General Assembly established the Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence (CIT-COE) and the Maryland Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence (BHPS-COE) within the Office's Criminal Justice Division. Collectively known as the Center of Excellence, it advises the Office on efforts that support Maryland communities in improving the criminal justice response to and treatment of individuals with mental health challenges and substance use disorder, reducing the incarceration of individuals with behavioral health needs, and providing linkages to treatment. In its role as a statewide clearinghouse for behavioral health-related treatment and diversion programs, the Center of Excellence develops strategic plans to increase treatment and reduce detention for those with behavioral health disorders in the judicial system, provides technical support for localities, advances crisis intervention programming, and coordinates with State agencies to measure program effectiveness. It also looks to reduce the negative response of law enforcement to individuals with mental health issues.

### **Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence**

[Senate Bill 305 \(2020\)](#) established the Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence to provide technical support to local governments, law enforcement, public safety agencies, behavioral health agencies, and crisis service providers and develop and implement a "crisis intervention model program." It also established a Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee for the Center to review services and training provided by the Center; develop outcome measures for and evaluation of the Center; develop recommendations for the full implementation of the crisis intervention model program at the municipal, county, and State level; and provide general oversight of the Center.

Since its enactment on October 1, 2020, the Office has approved all positions required for the Collaborative Planning and Implementation Committee and held formal meetings and informal

training sessions with forward progress while staff is onboarded. The Office has also hired staff for the Center to work towards the goals set forth by legislation.

### **Maryland Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence**

[Senate Bill 857/House Bill 1280](#) (2021) established the Maryland Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence to develop the following resources: a statewide model for law enforcement-assisted diversion; recommendations for pretrial services; procedures for sharing deflection and diversion statistics among relevant State agencies; recommendations for statewide implementation of law enforcement-assisted diversion programs; and a statewide model for community crisis intervention services other than law enforcement. It also requires the Center to produce and update a statewide strategic plan and host an annual State Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Summit. The Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) details how individuals with mental and substance use disorders come into contact with and move through the criminal justice system.

In addition, the bills expressed the intent of the General Assembly that the Center apply to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for grant funding to hold subsequent annual State Sequential Intercept Model Summits and identify opportunities to fund (1) behavioral health crisis grants; (2) training for 9-1-1 operators; (3) peer support services; (4) behavioral health screenings; (5) scholarships for students who attend a Maryland HBCU (historically black college and university) to study behavioral health-, public safety-, or criminal justice-related issues; and (6) behavioral health initiatives in rural communities.

In 2022, the Office successfully partnered with SAMHSA to train 17 statewide SIM facilitators. In 2023, the Office trained an additional 23 statewide SIM facilitators. These facilitators are available, upon request, to assist with the development of the SIM mapping for jurisdictions across the State.

The Office also entered into partnership with the University of Maryland, MCRIC, to develop the Statewide Strategic Plan for Crisis Response which was released in September 2023.

The Office, with assistance from the Maryland Department of Health and the Mental Health Association of Maryland, will evaluate the role and define the responsibilities of staff as they integrate into the Centers of Excellence: Crisis Intervention Team Center of Excellence and Maryland Behavioral Health and Public Safety Center of Excellence.

### **Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program**

The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program (LEAD) is a police-led diversion initiative that connects police directly to service providers who respond immediately to assist individuals identified by police. In partnership with the Maryland Department of Health and the OOC, the

Office provides technical assistance and resources for the development of new partnerships to address substance use disorders and diversion programs. Furthermore, the Office supports and coordinates crisis intervention training for law enforcement officers with expertise in the de-escalation of individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. This effort entails ongoing training across Maryland for law enforcement and public health professionals, and the Office prioritizes funding for such programs. In 2019, the Office received a \$6.5 million federal grant to support police-led diversion and detention-based referrals across Maryland over three years, and to reduce opioid overdose deaths while increasing access to treatment. In addition, the Office received \$6 million in 2023 from a federal grant to continue with the State's effort in diversion and deflection programming.

The Office will continue to partner with State and local stakeholders such as the Maryland Department of Health, the Behavioral Health Administration, the Office of the Public Defender, and multiple agencies from nine local partner jurisdictions. In addition, the Maryland Statistical Analysis Center, which is housed in the Office, will be engaged in this project to support action-oriented research, performance management, and evaluation of all selected sites.

## **Police Accountability and Enhancing Community Relations**

*Objective: Develop criminal justice strategies that advance law enforcement lawfulness and legitimacy.*

The Criminal Justice Programs Division supports law enforcement agencies across the state of Maryland with the development of effective accountability procedures to achieve their goals of lawfulness and legitimacy while ensuring community relations and transparency.

### **Police Accountability and Community Transparency**

The Police Accountability and Community Transparency (PACT) is a three-year strategic program aimed at assisting law enforcement with the development of effective accountability procedures to achieve their goals of lawfulness and legitimacy while enhancing community relations and transparency. This program supports the Office's goals of increasing safety and training for law enforcement and promoting safe communities and community engagement. The program also seeks to enhance the relationship between law enforcement and the community by developing criminal justice reform measures at the local and State level; implementing training that fosters relationships between law enforcement, communities, and businesses; providing technology that builds trust coupled with transparency between law enforcement and the citizens it serves; and maximizing best practices in law enforcement to make a safer Maryland.

In State fiscal year 2023, the PACT grant program provided nearly \$7.5 million in grant funding to 19 local, 20 jurisdictions, four State, and three college/university law enforcement/government

agencies. Funds were used to address legislative mandates for police reform regarding police oversight, methods and procedures, consequences for misconduct, and transparency. Examples of applicant requests include funding for body-worn camera and in-car camera systems, community-facing complaint/misconduct software, de-escalation training and simulators, early intervention systems, officer wellness applications/services, and community policing training. One additional award was made to support I Care, Baltimore which highlights programs that are deemed to be effective in reducing violence in Baltimore City. For State fiscal year 2024, the PACT grant program will be extended to nonprofit organizations including faith-based institutions to ensure greater community involvement. The Office will continue to review emerging trends and strategies in the upcoming program years to ensure program effectiveness.

## **Children and Youth**

The overall goal of the Office's Children and Youth Division is to improve the well-being of Maryland's children and youth. This is accomplished by preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), promoting trauma-informed practices, decreasing juvenile delinquency through diversion efforts, reducing out-of-home placements, and decreasing child abuse and neglect.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

***Objective: Improve the well-being for all Maryland children and youth by supporting children and youth who experience traumatic events.***

Research shows a strong relationship between stressful or traumatic events, or ACEs, including: child abuse (emotional, physical, and/or sexual), household challenges (domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, parental separation or divorce, and/or incarcerated family member), neglect (emotional and/or physical), and negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood. Additionally, Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and resilience research has found that experiences which build a child's sense of belonging and connection can buffer the impact of ACEs and predict positive outcomes (now and in adulthood). The Office envisions a comprehensive trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approach to address the root causes of juvenile delinquency, criminality, and victimization.

### **Handle with Care Maryland**

The Handle with Care Maryland initiative is designed to help children who are exposed to traumatic events through seamless and careful communication and collaboration between law enforcement, schools, and community organizations. The Handle with Care program creates a partnership between first responders (law enforcement, EMTs, etc.) and school personnel. Handle with Care opens lines of communication through notices sent from first responders to schools to provide a "heads-up" that allows the school personnel to observe the impacted



child(ren). Staff at schools are then more prepared to be sensitive to the needs of these children and provide assistance when needed. Through this cornerstone program, the Office provides training for law enforcement on various types of trauma which prompts them to connect with schools when they feel that a child has witnessed or experienced something traumatic. The schools then provide the child with support if they need it. Handle with Care Maryland is currently in more than 700 schools in 19 of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. The Office seeks to implement the program in all 24 jurisdictions by the end of 2025.

## **Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Practices**

***Objective: Improve the well-being for all Maryland children and youth by supporting children and youth who experience traumatic events.***

The Children and Youth Division seeks to promote trauma-informed, resilience-oriented practices throughout the State to improve the well-being of children and youth.

### **Commission on Trauma-Informed Care**

[Chapter 722 of 2021](#) established the Commission on Trauma-Informed Care to coordinate a statewide initiative to prioritize the trauma-responsive and trauma-informed delivery of State services that affect children, youth, families, and older adults. The Commission held its first meeting on November 18, 2021, and continues to meet on a monthly basis to identify workgroups and processes to meet the goals of the Commission. During the September 15, 2022 meeting, the Commission adopted “The Maryland Way: Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented, Equitable/Care and Culture (TIROE).”<sup>4</sup> This framework provides a common understanding of trauma and trauma-informed care in Maryland. This shared understanding will guide the Commission’s work to develop and provide training to State agencies and stakeholders with the goal of building a unified language for agencies and systems to talk about and understand trauma, and to guide the State to become trauma-informed. Each of the 15 State agencies identified in the legislation<sup>5</sup> are required to submit annual reports to the Commission on the

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The legislation identified the following State agencies:

- (1) The Office Of The Attorney General;
- (2) The Department Of Budget And Management;
- (3) The Department Of Disabilities;
- (4) The Maryland Department Of Health;
- (5) The Department Of Housing And Community Development;
- (6) The Department Of Human Services;
- (7) The Department Of Juvenile Services;
- (8) The Department Of Natural Resources;
- (9) The Department Of Planning;
- (10) The Department Of Public Works;



progress made to become trauma-informed, resilience-oriented organizations. These agency reports, in addition to the progress made by the Commission, are described in detail in the [FY 2023 Commission on Trauma-Informed Care: Annual Report](#).

The Commission is partnering with the Maryland Department of Health through a contract with the Frameworks Institute to frame the training and communications created by the Commission and its workgroups. The Commission is required to provide training annually to State agency designees as well as members of the Commission. These trainings occurred in late 2023.

Additionally, the Commission, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and the Maryland Health Care Commission, must study and develop a process or framework for implementing an ACEs Aware program in Maryland and implement the program. The purpose of the program is to screen for adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress to provide targeted evidence-based interventions to support individual and family health, in order to improve individual and family well-being and reduce health care costs. Additional findings are available in the [FY 2023 Commission on Trauma-Informed Care: Findings and Recommendations on the Development and Implementation of the Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Aware Program](#).

## **Juvenile Delinquency**

***Objective: Improve the well-being for all Maryland children and youth by preventing and addressing youth crime.***

The Children and Youth Division partners with the child serving agencies to decrease juvenile delinquency through various initiatives and diversion efforts.

### **State Advisory Group**

The State Advisory Group assists the Office in the development of a juvenile justice and delinquency prevention three-year plan as well as reviewing grant applications and making funding recommendations. For the [2021-2023 Three-Year Plan](#), the group identified the following priority areas of focus: programs for positive youth development; diversion; community-based alternatives (including home-based alternatives) to incarceration and institutionalization; and community-based programs and services.

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- (11) The Department Of State Police;
  - (12) The State Department Of Education;
  - (13) The Department Of Transportation;
  - (14) The Department Of Aging; And
  - (15) The Governor's Office Of Crime Prevention, Youth, And Victim Services.

## **Boys & Girls Clubs**

The Office supports youth prevention and intervention initiatives that engage youth within their communities, schools, organizations, and peer groups in a manner that is productive and recognizes and enhances the youth's strengths. These programs, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, promote positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and providing the support and encouragement needed to build the youth's leadership skills. To date, grant funding through the Office has supported Boys & Girls Club programming in the following areas: Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Cecil County, Harford County, Frederick County, Westminster, Washington County, and Greater Washington (Prince George's County). As of August 2023, there are a total of 82 active sites implementing such programs in Maryland and will continue to expand with the reach of Project Bounce Back through 2024.

## **Out-of-Home Placements**

***Objective: Improve the well-being for all Maryland children and youth.***

The Children and Youth Division partners with Maryland's Children's Cabinet agencies to strengthen the system of care for children and youth at the local level through a coordinated approach to interagency case management. The goal of this coordinated approach is to return or divert children and youth from preventable out-of-home, out-of-State, and hospital and other overstay placements through the provision of community-based services. From 2020 to 2023, the number of youth experiencing an out-of-State placement has decreased 46.12%.<sup>6</sup>

## **Maryland's Children's Cabinet**

Chaired by the Executive Director of the Office, and represented by key stakeholders, the Children's Cabinet coordinates the child and family-focused service delivery system by emphasizing prevention, early intervention, and community-based services for all children and families. The Office, through the Children and Youth Division, works to coordinate and facilitate the Children's Cabinet, and the Local Management Boards (LMBs) that they fund, to continue addressing the following priorities:

- Reduce the impact of parental incarceration on children, youth, families, and communities.
- Reduce youth homelessness.
- Improve outcomes for disconnected/opportunity youth.
- Reduce childhood hunger.
- Increase youth justice diversion.
- Increase community-based programs and services.

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<sup>6</sup> For additional data points, please refer to the [Out-of-Home Placement Data Dashabord](#).

- Reduce out-of-home placements.

Additionally, the Children's Cabinet has adopted three overall themes that support its collective work: (1) Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED); (2) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed practices (TIPs); and (3) research-based practices. These themes are incorporated into the LMBs community planning and need assessment processes; program/strategy development, implementation, and evaluation; and capacity building activities.

### **Local Management Boards**

LMBs use the Results-Based Accountability framework to identify, evaluate, and develop the programs and strategies needed to address local community needs and provide resources for children and families in their jurisdiction. Boards bring together local child-serving agencies, child providers, youth, families, and communities to make decisions about priorities and how resources are deployed to address local needs.

### **Youth Justice Diversion**

The Office supports community-based programs and services to reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system and/or out-of-home placements by providing supportive services within the youth's community. This can include law enforcement-based diversion programs, restorative justice programs such as youth or teen courts, victim-offender mediation, and restorative circles. These diversion programs also include youth involved in school-based offenses.

Although statistically significant conclusions cannot be made for the programs individually, the improvement in the results and indicators measured annually and documented in [Maryland's Results for Child Well-Being](#) can be attributed, at least in part, to the collaborative efforts implemented by the diverse funding streams supported by the Children and Youth Division. Data reported by the Local Management Boards for at-risk youth prevention and diversion programs indicate that children who received preventive services show improvement in overall functioning as measured by various assessments and/or a decrease in negative behaviors and outcomes. The data regarding out-of-home placements for those youth specifically involved in the Juvenile Justice system has also decreased 69.70% from 2019 to 2023.

### **Local Care Teams**

Local Care Teams serve as the point of access to services for children and youth. As of January 1, 2018, LMBs are the administrative home for the Local Care Teams. Parents, family members, or agencies make referrals directly to the Local Care Teams to seek assistance with accessing services, to develop plans of care for community-based services, and to coordinate services from multiple agencies. Families and children at-risk of out-of-home or out-of-State placement with complex needs and/or who are in crisis are identified as priorities for the Local Care Teams.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

***Objective: Improve the well-being for all Maryland children and youth by reducing incidences of child abuse and neglect.***

The Children and Youth Division partners with child serving agencies, to include the Children's Justice Act Committee members and Child Advocacy Centers, to decrease child abuse and neglect in Maryland.

### **Children's Justice Act Committee**

The Children's Justice Act Committee reviews and evaluates the State's investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment, specifically child sexual abuse and exploitation per the federal Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA). The committee is responsible for reviewing grant applications and making funding recommendations to the Office. These recommendations are then used to inform funding decisions in which the Office provides support to programs that improve the administrative, judicial, and investigative response to child abuse and neglect. The Office's goals for the Children's Justice Act program are developed in partnership with the federally-mandated Children's Justice Act Committee to:

- Enhance the ability of law enforcement to appropriately recognize, assess, and investigate child abuse and/or neglect, and to identify threats to a child's safety during police responses to suspected child abuse and/or neglect cases.
- Strengthen the skills of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), lawyers who represent children (i.e., Children In Need of Assistance (CINA) cases, dependency cases, etc.), and judges in handling child maltreatment cases and enhancing court sensitivity to child victims and witnesses while improving the courts' handling of cases that involve children of a very young age.
- Increase responses to child abuse and neglect in public and privately operated institutional juvenile facilities, including but not limited to: group homes, residential facilities for youth, and foster homes.
- Enhance interventions for child abuse or neglect victims who have physical, mental, and/or behavioral disabilities, cognitive impairments, or other serious health conditions, including but not limited to: autism and autism spectrum disorder; fetal alcohol spectrum disorders; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; attention deficit disorder; and language, hearing, and speech impairments.
- Improve the recognition, assessment, screening, response, referral, and joint investigative process for suspected child abuse and/or neglect cases, including but not limited to:

victims of child human trafficking, LGBTQ youth, and families with limited English proficiency.

### **Child Advocacy Centers**

The Office continues to bolster and support the use of multidisciplinary teams within accredited Child Advocacy Centers (CACs). Accredited CACs serve children in a youth-friendly environment where law enforcement, state's attorneys, and child protective services work together to promptly investigate alleged incidents of abuse or neglect. The children and their families also receive specialized mental health services to help cope with the trauma they have endured. Specifically, trained forensic interviewers also collect necessary information to successfully investigate and prosecute the cases.

### **Victim Services**

The Victim Services Unit is a centralized State level resource for crime victims which is comprised of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, the Sexual Assault Reimbursement Unit, and subject matter experts to address policy change to improve victim services across the State. The unit was created, within the Office, to promote services and policies that provide victims of crime: the right to be safe in their homes and in their communities; the right to have increased access to services; the right to possess the requisite tools to become self-sufficient in the aftermath of criminal activity; and the indispensable right to receive restitution. The Office conducts victims' needs assessments, strategic planning workgroup sessions, and administers surveys to assist the Victim Services Unit's strategic mission to align with the core principles listed above. The Office achieves these goals by continuing to align strategic goals with its Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA), and incorporating these goals into all funding decisions while utilizing best and promising practices.

The Office envisions an overall trauma-responsive approach to victim services to address the unique needs of each victim utilizing research-based knowledge, such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) studies, to promote effective strategies.

### **Victim Services Policy and Programs**

***Objective: Improve victim services for Maryland residents.***

The Victim Services Unit partners with subject matter experts to address policy change to improve victim services for Maryland residents.

### **Restitution**

The Victim Services Unit focuses on coordinating and improving the collection of restitution, and works with stakeholders to ensure victims have the services they need to be safe and

self-sufficient. The Office has reconvened the Restitution Workgroup to focus on both short- and long-term goals to improve restitution collection statewide. The current priorities include researching an electronic payment system, better utilization of the Central Collections Unit, exploring the creation of a pilot restitution court, and many other overall improvements.

### **Regional Navigator Pilot Program**

The regional navigator program is administered through the Office as required by the [Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019](#). The Act requires law enforcement and local Departments of Social Services, with reason to believe a child is a victim of sex trafficking, to notify a regional navigator in their jurisdiction to offer support and connect the child to appropriate services. The Office launched a pilot program on November 1, 2019, in three pilot jurisdictions to evaluate program development, performance measures, and data. In November 2020, seven additional jurisdictions joined the three existing sites, expanding services to Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Cecil County, Frederick County, Harford County, Howard County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and Washington County. Despite the challenges created by the restricted use of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds to allow for the mandated statewide expansion of the program, the Office released a NOFA in late summer and is working to expand these critical services statewide by the end of 2023.

### **Evidence-based Programs**

The Office works to improve victim safety, assist victims in achieving self-sufficiency, and ensure victims and the community are aware of resources available. In doing this, the Office funds evidence-based programs that achieve positive outcomes for victims of crime, and connects victims of crime with accessible resources. The work of these programs and resources have been tested and evaluated to ensure that they are effective in providing impactful services to crime victims.

### **Victims' Rights and Accessibility to Resources**

The Office coordinates the Maryland State Board of Victim Services and the Governor's Family Violence Council, and collaborates with those boards and other stakeholders in the victim services community, to further the strategic efforts that support victims' rights and increase access and availability of services. In doing this, and based on the identified needs of crime victims, the Office allocates funds to provide a positive impact that can be measured for success.

### **Increase Knowledge of Victims' Rights in the Community**

The main vehicle for this initiative is the Annual Maryland Crime Victims' Rights Conference, hosted in partnership with the Maryland State Board of Victim Services. The conference provides information on emerging and best practices for serving crime victims. Attendees include victim advocates from state's attorney's offices, law enforcement, comprehensive and community based victim services organizations, and statewide victim serving coalitions. The

Maryland State Board of Victim Services is mandated to develop and distribute several brochures and forms in order for crime victims to be aware of their rights and guide them through the complex criminal justice process. The brochures and forms can be found at <https://goccp.maryland.gov/victim-services/rights-resources/brochures-forms/>. The Office continues to collaborate with stakeholders to conduct outreach campaigns for victims' rights. These efforts include expanded use of social media, public service announcements, and other public platforms to promote availability of services and awareness of issues impacting victims of crime.

### **Leverage Resources to Address Underserved Populations**

The Office works with federal, State, and local stakeholders to increase the safety, self-sufficiency, and awareness of resources for victims of crime to foster our vision for a safer Maryland. This includes leveraging State and federal resources to provide comprehensive services to underserved populations. This can be accomplished by working with subgrantees to evolve their program outputs to address the needs of the underserved communities with a goal of improving future outcomes.

### **Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking Services**

The Victim Services Unit represents the Office on many statewide and local task forces, boards, committees, subcommittees, and workgroups to address all aspects of sexual assault and human trafficking. It is imperative for Office staff to remain knowledgeable of both positive and negative trends in these communities to best address the needs of these vulnerable victim populations. Site visits, provider and survivor surveys, and Office staff participation in workgroups, boards, and committees allow the Office to remain knowledgeable of trends and service barriers that impact victims.

### **Direct Victim Services**

*Objective: Improve victim services for Maryland residents.*

The Victim Services Unit provides direct victim services through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the Sexual Assault Reimbursement Unit.

### **Criminal Injuries Compensation Board**

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) operates under Title 11, Subtitle 8 of the Criminal Procedure Article and is designed to provide reimbursement to crime victims who qualify under the designated statute. The agency financially assists with unreimbursed medical and dental, counseling, funeral, loss of wages, loss of support, disability as well as other related expenses as approved by the Board. The CICB further assists crime victims by generating referrals in areas not covered by the agency, but are critical areas of need for crime victims.

## **Sexual Assault Reimbursement Unit**

The Sexual Assault Reimbursement Unit operates under the Code of Maryland Regulations 10.12.02, Rape and Sexual Offenses - Physician and Hospital Charges, to provide reimbursement for the physical examination, collection of evidence, and emergency treatment of individuals for injuries resulting from alleged rape, sexual assault, or child sexual assault. Additionally, the unit reimburses hospitals, physicians, laboratories, and other medical entities on behalf of victims of an alleged rape or sexual offense or a victim of alleged child sexual abuse. The victim would be provided with a full course of non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (nPEP) treatment and follow-up care for the prevention of HIV infection that could potentially occur after a rape or sexual assault. The unit aims to prevent individuals and their families from re-victimization by easing the reimbursement process associated with medical-forensic claims processing.

## **Conclusion**

Interagency cooperation, information sharing, and accountability are vital to ensuring the success of this plan, and play a large role in the development of new innovative strategies and policies. The Office is committed to allocating resources in a way that maximizes efficiency and impact. The Office will continue to work with its community, local, State, and federal partners to identify new funding sources for the State, fund projects and initiatives that align with its objectives and strategies, and promote best and promising practices for a safer Maryland.