



Vermont Legislative Research Service

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State Response to Police Violence During Mental Health Crises

The police shooting database maintained by *The Washington Post* between 2015 and 2024 indicates that, on average, police shot and killed more than 1,000 people per year in the U.S. in that time period, with the highest number occurring in 2024.¹ During this period, 20 percent of fatal police encounters involved victims with mental illness, or who were experiencing a mental health crisis.² The purpose of this report is to compile information on what states have done to improve police training for responding to victims experiencing a mental health crisis. Additionally, we include information as to what states are doing to provide emotional and financial compensation to victims' families.

In this report we use the definition for mental disorder provided by the American Psychological Association:

Any condition characterized by cognitive and emotional disturbances, abnormal behavior, impaired function, or any combination of these. Such disorders cannot be accounted for solely by environmental circumstances and may involve physiological, genetic, chemical, social, and other factors.³

All mental illnesses, as well as developmental and behavioral disabilities such as autism, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia are included in the above definition.

Vermont, Police Shootings, and Mental Health

Currently, Vermont has a number of programs to prevent police misconduct with individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. In 2017, the Vermont Office of the Attorney General allocated \$20,000 to establish a mental health training program for law enforcement officials.⁴ Title 18, implemented in 2024, establishes the Mental Health Crisis Response Commission, which designates training strategies for law enforcement personnel in response to mental health

¹ The Washington Post, "Police Shootings Database," accessed October 2, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>.

² The Washington Post, "Police Shootings Database."

³ American Psychological Association, "APA Dictionary of Psychology," accessed October 1, 2025, <https://dictionary.apa.org/mental-disorder>.

⁴ Vermont Attorney General's Office, "Regarding Law Enforcement Mental Health Trainings," 2017, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/2017-03-15-Act-80-report.pdf>.

crises.⁵ Additionally, the Commission reviews incidents and then offers recommendations for law enforcement personnel on how to handle future interactions with individuals with mental disorders.⁶

Vermont currently mandates a “Use of Force” and an “Interacting with People Experiencing a Mental Health Crisis” training for all law enforcement officers.⁷ The Vermont Department of Public Safety’s most recent “Use of Force” report regarding Vermont State Police recognized 159 “use of force” incidents in 2023, 59 of which listed mental health as a suspected contributing factor.⁸ Additionally, Title 18 instructed the Department of Mental Health to write guidelines for de-escalation techniques and mental health response services for first responders.⁹

Federal Programs and Legislation

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) provides(d) grants to help state, local, and tribal governments establish and run law enforcement training programs. The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program, established in 2004, sought to expand mental health treatment services across the United States.¹⁰ This program provided grants that offered training to law enforcement personnel on how to identify, interact with, and respond to individuals with mental health disorders or experiencing a mental health crisis. The DOJ also houses the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, which was established in 1994.¹¹ Among other things, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services distributes grants to communities seeking to implement mental health training for law enforcement officers. Similarly, the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program provides funding for law enforcement training programs in state and local jurisdictions.¹²

The Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022 directed the Department of Justice to develop a training curriculum regarding the use of force during mental health crises (among other circumstances) and allocated \$124 million to implement the training.¹³ This act is currently implemented by the DOJ’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.¹⁴ Additionally, the

⁵ State of Vermont, Title 18, “Mental Health System of Care”, V.S.A § 7257a, <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/18/174/07257a>.

⁶ V.S.A § 7257a

⁷ State of Vermont Criminal Justice Council, “Annual Training Requirements for Certification (Rule 20),” accessed October 1, 2025, <https://vcjc.vermont.gov/src/rule-20-annual-requirements>.

⁸ Vermont State Police, “Use of Force Data Dashboard,” accessed October 1, 2025, <https://vsp.vermont.gov/public/UOFdata>.

⁹ V.S.A § 7257a

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, “Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program,” accessed October 13, 2025, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/jmhcp/overview>.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, “Office of Community Oriented Policing Services,” accessed October 5, 2025, <https://www.justice.gov/doj/office-community-oriented-policing-services>.

¹² U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, “Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program,” accessed October 13, 2025, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/jag/overview>.

¹³ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Law Enforcement De-Escalation Training Act of 2022*, S.B. 4003, 117th Congress, introduced in Senate April 5, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4003/text>.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services, “Community Policing Development: Implementation of the De-escalation Training Act Program,” accessed October 12, 2025, https://cops.usdoj.gov/de-escalation_training_act.

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 allocated funding for the education and training of first responders in the identification and prevention of mental health crises. This funding is no longer available although many states are still utilizing the funds allocated earlier.¹⁵

State Legislation Regarding Police Training and Use of Force

Using the National Conference of State Legislatures Policing Legislation Database, we were able to identify all state bills tagged with ‘training’ and ‘use of force’ passed between 2020 and 2025.¹⁶ We pulled the bills that included provisions for mental illness and mental health crises and summarized our findings below. To narrow down our search, we focused on the 6 states with the most recent legislation: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Nevada, and Virginia.

Arizona

The Arizona State Legislature passed a bill implementing a “Seek and Find” alert notification system designed for people with cognitive disabilities, developmental disabilities, and people sixty-five years or older.¹⁷ For this program to be utilized, authorized law enforcement personnel must request an activation of the emergency alert system if all other local resources have been used, the person is missing under unexplained circumstances, and the person is in danger due to their condition or other external reasons.¹⁸ All law enforcement agencies in Arizona are required to develop and implement specialized training for this program.

Florida

The Florida State Legislature passed the “Tristin Murphy Act” in June of 2025.¹⁹ The bill offers counties implementation and expansion grants for use in developing plans to treat adults and juveniles with mental illness or substance abuse disorder in the criminal justice system or are at risk of entering it. These grants can support programs and initiatives including but not limited to mental health courts, crisis intervention teams, and training for criminal justice, juvenile justice, and treatment services professionals.²⁰ This bill also implements specialized training for responses to mental health crises for law enforcement officials and other first responders. Additionally, another 2025 Florida statute introduced a standardized system for locating children with autism and includes education for law enforcement on their response.²¹ Previously, a 2024

¹⁵ U.S. Economic Development Administration, “American Rescue Plan Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed October 10, 2025, <https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/american-rescue-plan/faq>.

¹⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures, “Policing Legislation Database,” accessed October 1, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/policing-legislation-database>.

¹⁷ State of Arizona, ARS H.B. 2894, § 41-1728, (2025) https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:AZ2025000H2894&ciq=ncsl&client_md=17bafdd686dac28c93f57b1dc711168c&mode=current_text.

¹⁸ ARS § 41-1728

¹⁹ State of Florida, FL S.B. 198, “Tristin Murphy Act,” § 2-394.658, (2025) https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:FL2025000S168&ciq=ncsl&client_md=960f66fd85358181d06ef945cdc816c7&mode=current_text.

²⁰ FL § 2-394.658

²¹ State of Florida, FL H.B. 711, “An Act relating to Spectrum Alert”, § 937.0401, (2025), https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:FL2025000H711&ciq=ncsl&client_md=4d4f771fc096c920f15e543403f6ab8d&mode=current_text.

bill implemented specific training requirements for police officer interaction with individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.²²

Georgia

The Georgia State Legislature passed a bill in 2025 regarding police response to at-risk adults, whom they define as individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, as well as victims of trafficking, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.²³ This bill implements specific training requirements for all law enforcement officials including training to recognize behavioral health crises. It also advocates for a “victim centered and trauma informed” approach.²⁴

Illinois

The Illinois State Legislature passed several relevant pieces of legislation in 2025. In August, the state amended the Illinois Police Training Act outlining a comprehensive training program to be implemented for all state law enforcement officials.²⁵ This amendment introduced crisis intervention training, use of force requirements, and criteria for recognizing mental health crises, in order to minimize trauma to the victim. Another amendment to the Illinois Police Training Act introduced a crisis intervention team program that trains officers to identify signs of mental illness, de-escalate mental health crises, and provide victims with more specialized crisis treatment.²⁶

A third 2025 bill amending the Illinois State Police Law implemented one-time training for responding to individuals with autism spectrum disorders, and yearly crisis intervention training for all mental and behavioral health disorders.²⁷ Additionally, the bill requires training for arrests, use of force, and control tactics that focus on de-escalation techniques and preserving the civil and human rights of the victim.²⁸ This bill is unique in that it details the number of hours and frequency of each training requirement.²⁹ A fourth bill, amending the Reimagine Public Safety Act, implemented training that targets use of force and firearm violence prevention.³⁰ This

²² State of Florida, H.B. 801, § 943.17299, (2024)
https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:FL2024000H801&ciq=ncsl&client_md=9af9940bec63cba5c075d0e1f038d6ec&mode=current_text.

²³ State of Georgia, GA H.B. 338, Amending Official Code of Georgia § 35-5-8 (2025),
https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:GA2025000H238&ciq=ncsl&client_md=63839548f5460249383874e09ed1669b&mode=current_text.

²⁴ GA § 35-5-8

²⁵ State of Illinois, IL Public Act 104-0084, Amending the Illinois Police Training Act, § 7-104-0084 (2025),
https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:IL2025000S1195&ciq=ncsl&client_md=862594f1c6864dd372710368e9f70a87&mode=current_text.

²⁶ State of Illinois, IL S.B. 1491, Amending the Illinois Police Training Act. § ILCS 705-10.17 (2025),
https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:IL2025000S1491&ciq=ncsl&client_md=ae8d13672a98408d871e3d4b9bf7900f&mode=current_text.

²⁷ State of Illinois, IL S.B. 1764, Amending Illinois State Police Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois § ILCS 2605-10 (2025),
https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:IL2025000S1764&ciq=ncsl&client_md=dd837a0c0afd0e865350ef7c9f308b75&mode=current_text.

²⁸ ILCS § 2605-51

²⁹ ILCS § 2605-51

³⁰ ILCS § 69-35-25

amendment specifically required the consultation of mental health experts when training officers to respond to mental and behavioral health crises.

Nevada

A 2025 Nevada bill directs the Nevada Legislative Commission to develop a crisis intervention training system that addresses mental and behavioral health, focusing on responses to victims with developmental disabilities.³¹ While this bill does mention general mental health crises, the training is curated for law enforcement responses to people with developmental disabilities like autism.³²

Virginia

The State of Virginia made several amendments in 2024 and 2025 to their arrest and use of force training curriculum.³³ These amendments included specific training provisions for interacting with people with Alzheimer's or dementia but also addressed other behavioral health concerns.³⁴ Additionally, the amendments established retraining standards for law enforcement officers working with individuals with mental health issues or substance abuse disorders.³⁵ One particular amendment directs state agencies to apply for federal grants for use towards training services.³⁶

Other Policies and Programs

In 2022 the Congressional Research Service published a report on police officer responses towards victims of mental illness.³⁷ They documented that local governments have employed several programs, including:

- Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs), specially trained law enforcement officers who collaborate with mental health providers;

³¹ State of Nevada, NV S.B. 380.389, Amending NRS 289.605 § NRS 289.010, (2025), https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:NV2025000S380&ciq=ncsl&client_md=dc6a4feb6711568671a4eaaf080ff60e&mode=current_text.

³² NRS § 289.510

³³ State of Virginia, VA S.B. 1994, Amending the Code of Virginia § 9.1-102 (2025), https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:VA2024000S1194&ciq=ncsl&client_md=a31d49cd88ae416e889a18196047d190&mode=current_text; State of Virginia, VA S.B.547, Amending the Code of Virginia § 9.1-102 (2024), https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:VA2024000S547&ciq=ncsl&client_md=0ca958e547e2d4f20cb23717afe593f1&mode=current_text.

³⁴ VA § 9.1-102-10; State of Virginia, VA H.B. 933, Amending the Code of Virginia, § 9.1-203.2, (2024) https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:VA2024000H933&ciq=ncsl&client_md=c97b9525a161b87913e7d0b32f8fa321&mode=current_text.

³⁵ VA § 9.2-81.3

³⁶ State of Virginia, VA H.B. 2435, Amending the Code of Virginia, § 9.1-102 (2025), https://custom.statenet.com/public/resources.cgi?id=ID:bill:VA2024000H2435&ciq=ncsl&client_md=423850daeef15edfd1a47b8f29b14c37&mode=current_text.

³⁷ Johnathan H. Duff, Jill C. Gallagher, Nathan James, and Isobel Sorenson, *Issues in Law Enforcement Reform: Responding to Mental Health Crises*, Congressional Research Service, October 17, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47285>.

- Co-Responder Teams (CRTs), law enforcement officers who are paired with trained clinicians; and,
- Mobile Crisis Teams (MCTs), community-based mental health professionals that typically do not involve a law enforcement response.³⁸

The International Association of Chiefs of Police's One Mind Campaign seeks to improve communication between law enforcement officers, community organizations, and individuals with mental disorders.³⁹ To join the campaign, law enforcement must plan to implement four strategies within a 12–36-month timeframe:

- Establish a partnership with one or more community health organizations;
- Develop and implement a model policy addressing law enforcement response to individuals with mental health conditions;
- Train and certify 100% of sworn officers in mental health awareness courses by providing Mental Health First Aid training; and,
- Provide CIT training to a minimum of 20% of sworn officers.⁴⁰

Crime Victim Compensation Policies and Programs

Crime victim compensation programs that aim to provide aid to victims and their families in the wake of a violent crime exist in every state.⁴¹ These programs provide funding for medical costs, funeral expenses, crime scene cleanup, and more. Federally, the DOJ Office for Victims of Crime allocates funds to victims on an application basis. According to their Victim Compensation Data Dashboard, the DOJ allocated over \$87 million to victims of homicide in 2024.⁴² It is worth noting that many state-level crime victim compensation programs include an innocence clause that may prevent victims of police violence from receiving aid.⁴³

Case Study: Washington

Our research concludes that Washington is the only state to have a program that specifically allocates funding to victims of police violence. The Washington State legislature passed a bill in 2021 that established the Washington State Office of Investigations (OII). The Office was created to conduct investigations into cases involving serious use of force by law enforcement. After investigating the incident, the Office refers reports on the investigation to prosecutors who determine if the use of force was justified, or if criminal charges should be filed against the

³⁸ Duff, et al., *Issues in Law Enforcement Reform: Responding to Mental Health Crises*.

³⁹ International Association of Chiefs of Police, "One Mind Campaign," Accessed October 7, 2025, <https://www.theiacp.org/projects/one-mind-campaign>.

⁴⁰ International Association of Chiefs of Police, "One Mind Campaign."

⁴¹ Valena E. Beety, "Compensating Victims of Police Violence," *Emory Law Scholarly Commons*, 47 (2021), <https://scholarlycommons.law.emory.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=elj-online>.

⁴² Office for Victims of Crime, "VOCA Victim Compensation Data Dashboard (2021-2024)," accessed October 2, 2025, <https://ovc.ojp.gov/funding/performance-measures/data-analyses/voca-victim-compensation>.

⁴³ Beety, "Compensating Victims of Police Violence."

involved law enforcement officers.⁴⁴ The legislature clarified that the bill was not meant to change the nature of investigations into use of force by law enforcement; it only changes who investigates the incident.⁴⁵

The OII is led by a civilian director and is staffed by investigators, family liaisons, and community liaisons. The OII's Family Liaison Program ensures that families are kept up to date when the office is investigating the death of a loved one. They also help families work with other agencies such as coroners and medical examiners. Finally, the family liaison can connect families to local community services such as counseling and support groups.⁴⁶

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Disclaimer: The material contained in the report does not reflect the official policy of the University of Vermont.

⁴⁴State of Washington, Engrossed Substitute H.B. 1267, WA § 1267, (2021) <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/House%20Passed%20Legislature/1267-S.PL.pdf#page=>.

⁴⁵ WA § 1267

⁴⁶ Washington State Office of Investigations, "Information for Families," accessed October 2, 2025, <https://oii.wa.gov/information-families>.