



YOUTH AND POLICING IN CLEVELAND

A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION

WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

For several years following the police shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice, a number of Cleveland community partners, in collaboration with the Schubert Center and *Strategies for Youth*, worked to bring attention to the importance of having officers recognize and protect the youthfulness of the children and teens they encounter. This requires the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) to develop policies, training and ongoing support to ensure understanding of age-appropriate expectations by officers during their interactions with young people.

In 2021, the CDP adopted a first-of-its-kind *Interactions with Youth Policy*, part of a comprehensive set of policy reforms, which recognizes how children and teenagers are developmentally less mature than adults and require age-appropriate protections and care.

Community partners – neighborhood groups, organizations, educators, artists, activists, public institutions and other providers serving children and teens – play a vital role as protectors and supporters of youth.

This 5-minute video and Toolkit are designed to spark dialogue, understanding and action among adults working with children and teens in our community – in organizations supporting youth, recreational programs, schools and other settings. The goal is to help raise awareness about these important changes in our Cleveland community and to provide background information about the new CDP Interactions with Youth Policy. This Toolkit also offers discussion questions, links to other resources, and strategies and actions for the community groups who serve as valued partners in supporting our kids and helping to deter criminal justice system involvement.

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SCHUBERT CENTER
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YOUTH AND POLICING IN CLEVELAND

ACTIONS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE NOW!

1

WATCH THE VIDEO & HAVE A CONVERSATION.

- Watch the 5-minute [video](#) with your colleagues and see the “Discussion Guide” for ideas to help facilitate a conversation about how this kind of policy impacts the kids you serve.
- Convene a multi-generational dialogue with your staff and the youth you work with to talk about their experiences and ideas for effective communication, de-escalation techniques and community support.
- Invite the CDP district commander or other police representatives in your area to a screening with your team. During the dialogue, ask them to share how they are putting the policy in action and how your organization can be a partner to support youth who police encounter.

2

RAISE AWARENESS OF THE NEW POLICE YOUTH POLICY.

- Create a social media campaign with photos of youth, messages from and a link to the video, and a hashtag (like [#BetterPolicing4Kids](#)). Invite partners to share pictures of their events and forums using the hashtag – who can get the most likes and retweets?
- Share the [video](#) and what you’ve learned on your website and social media, tagging groups like the CDP (@CLEpolice), city council members (@CleCityCouncil), the Mayor (@CityofCleveland), the Schubert Center (@SchubertCenter) and/or other neighborhood organizations.
- Explore ways to share these resources with the adults in your community. Ask youth to re-watch the [video](#) at home with their families and discuss their responses.

3

EXPLORE OTHER WAYS TO INCREASE IMPACT.

- Host or participate in a youth-led training on the new policy and strategies for responding to youth in crisis.
- Share information with other community organizations, local and elsewhere, to garner support for policies like these.
- Provide feedback on what you’ve learned and ideas for further action by [completing the short 3-question survey](#) issued by the Schubert Center. Join the email list for announcements about future opportunities.

LEARN MORE!

Additional resources [on our website](#) and linked below will equip you and your colleagues to understand what the *Interactions with Youth Policy* and other reforms mean for the community partners dedicated to our children and young people.

[Policy Overview: The purpose and potential of the Interactions with Youth Policy](#)

[Cleveland Division of Police Interactions with Youth Policy](#)

[Training Police in Responding Effectively to Youth](#)

[Overview of all CDP Policies with a Youth-specific Focus](#)

[Citizen’s Guide to the Consent Decree, with a Special Focus on Implications for Youth and Young People](#)

[Strategies for Youth: Connecting Cops & Kids](#)



YOUTH AND POLICING IN CLEVELAND

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION

This discussion guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the short *Youth and Policing in Cleveland* video. We encourage groups to consider the following questions to help frame a conversation before or after viewing the video together. You should feel free to address the questions in any order and/or to develop your own.

QUESTIONS FOR ADULTS WHO WORK WITH YOUTH

- What interactions have you had personally with police? What are some ways you've seen police interact with youth (negatively and/or positively)?
- The *Interactions with Youth Policy* calls for police to explore community options to deter involvement in the juvenile justice system. What options do we offer? How might we share those with police? How might we deter police involvement with young people in our agency?
- Police officers will be trained in age-appropriate de-escalation techniques as part of the *Interactions with Youth Policy*. What de-escalation techniques have you found most effective? How can we share those with our colleagues and/or parents?
- Research shows the importance of empathy for effective engagement with youth. How do we promote empathy for youth internally? What does empathy in action look like in our organization? What other steps can we take to increase empathy for our kids outside our walls?
- What impact do you believe this policy might have on the youth in our community? On adults who work with youth? What factors might most influence that impact?
- How can our organization increase awareness of the new CDP policy? Where can we share this video (i.e. social media, colleagues, etc.)?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH AND MULTI-GENERATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

- After watching the video, which ideas or images stand out most to you? What parts of the story do you connect with? Why?
- How have your ideas about police changed as you've gotten older? What experiences with police – positive and negative – have you had?
- What do you wish adults knew about you and your life? How do you think adults and the rest of the world see you? What would you like police officers to know about you, your friends and your family?
- What kinds of things do you and other kids your age enjoy doing? What would make you feel most safe and supported by your community?
- The video talks about "age-appropriate de-escalation techniques," which means "ways to help kids calm down safely." What helps you and the kids you know calm down when you're stressed or scared? How can you share those techniques with the grown-ups in your life?
- What impact do you believe this policy might have on the youth in your community? On adults who work with youth? What factors will most influence that impact?
- How can you help teach others about the new *Interactions with Youth Policy*? Who do you think needs to know about it most?

YOUTH POLICY OVERVIEW

IMPORTANCE OF POLICE-YOUTH INTERACTIONS AND THE CLEVELAND DIVISION OF POLICE (CDP) INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH POLICY

BACKGROUND – WHY DOES THE WAY WE POLICE KIDS & TEENS MATTER?

Police regularly encounter children and youth, whether through informal stops, warn and release, formal arrests, or children witnessing interactions between police and their peers, parents or other family members. How youth perceive and the degree to which they trust the police and the criminal justice system is largely informed by their personal encounters with law enforcement.

Neuroscience sheds light on how a teen’s brain development leads them to prefer, and be more likely to engage in, risky behaviors, and have less ability to anticipate consequences and make decisions that require an understanding of the future, especially under stress.

The legal system has increasingly recognized how kids are developmentally less mature than adults and require special legal and procedural protections and opportunities for rehabilitation. Police encounters with youth can be challenging for all these reasons.

WHAT IS A “DEVELOPMENTALLY- OR AGE- APPROPRIATE” APPROACH TO POLICING?

Effectively working with children and youth requires special skills, knowledge, and practices. A “developmentally-appropriate” approach demonstrates a general understanding of the unique social, emotional, physical, neurological, behavioral, and moral aspects of development in childhood through adolescence, in order to effectively use age-appropriate communication, de-escalation and intervention tactics with minors. This includes an understanding of how childhood trauma can

impact police interactions with youth, as well as implicit biases and how the intersection of race, age, gender and mental health status can impact police encounters with youth. For example, studies show Black children, especially Black boys 10-years-old and older, are seen as older (on average 4-1/2 years older) and less innocent when suspected of a crime than White children, which can negatively impact how police perceive and treat them.

WHAT IS THE CDP *INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH POLICY*? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The CDP *Interactions with Youth Policy* is a General Police Order (GPO), adopted in 2021. Coupled with new age-appropriate protections in a number of other CDP policies (e.g. Crisis Intervention, Use of Force, De-Escalation, Search & Seizure, Interrogation and Miranda, Investigatory Stops, Probable Cause, and Bias-Free policing), this GPO is groundbreaking in clarifying CDP’s vision and commitment to fostering positive interactions with children and youth.

Combined, these policies reflect an understanding of adolescent development, trauma and how the combination of age and race bias can be especially challenging in the context of police-youth encounters. These policies offer an opportunity to help improve encounters with our young people while ensuring safety.

Policy is critical because it reflects the values and priorities of the agency; it provides clarity and guidance for police officers in the field, along with appropriate training; and it holds systems accountable to the expectations we have for these interactions with children and youth.

YOUTH POLICY OVERVIEW

(CONTINUED)

WHAT DOES THE CDP *INTERACTIONS WITH YOUTH POLICY* ACTUALLY REQUIRE?

Importantly, this policy is proactive, offering guidance about what officers should or must do, rather than just noting what they can't do. Age-specific guidance and procedures are provided in a number of areas (along with training), beginning with a general requirement that "officers shall conduct law enforcement activities without discrimination on the basis of a youth's demographic category" (Sec 1.B.2). Such interactions include:

- *Approaching youth in a calm and respectful manner*
- *Explaining the purpose of the interaction in an age-appropriate manner*
- *Not cursing at or using derogatory language to refer to youth*
- *Not making fun of or engaging in demeaning or humiliation tactics*

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YOUTH POLICY INCLUDE:

- **Investigatory stops:** A youth's "behavioral responses alone cannot provide the basis for probable cause."
- **Interviews and Interrogations:** Requires "Administering Juvenile Miranda Warning and Waiver," providing breaks and limiting total interrogation time to ensure "voluntary, non-coercive, and non-traumatic results."
- **Redirection and Referrals:** "Officers shall not arrest a juvenile under the age of 13 for a non-violent offense." Officers are encouraged to choose alternatives to arrest and to make referrals for rehabilitation and other youth programs and services.



- **Arrest and Custody:** Officers "shall attempt to notify juvenile's parent...and document all attempts."
- **Medical Attention:** Officers "shall seek medical attention" for any serious injury, after use of taser or OC spray, suicide risk, intoxication, or when a youth requests medical attention.
- **Handcuffing:** Officers shall consider that "handcuffs may trigger a traumatic response" when assessing whether to use them on a child.
- **De-escalation/Use of Force:** "An age-appropriate response to youth when safe and feasible" is required. "Officers shall only use force when necessary, proportional, and objectively reasonable" and shall consider "perceived age and emotional condition" in addition to body mass and physical build.
- **Special circumstances and other areas include:** Arrest of Children with Disabilities; School Encounters with Students; Parent Arrest (in the presence of children); Youth in Crisis (including Suicide Risk/Attempt); Human Trafficking of youth; and Domestic Violence involving youth.

The full *Interactions with Youth Policy* can be [found here](#).



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SPECIAL THANKS



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF NORTHEAST OHIO



Cleveland Public Library
CWRU Provost Scholars Program
Madvocator Educational and Healthcare Advocacy Training
NAACP
Positive Education Program
Youth Opportunities Unlimited