

# Framing Community Safety: A Messaging Brief



Today, Americans' perceptions about safety, crime, and violence are increasingly divisive and fatalistic. But the events of the past several years have also created openings for more productive conversations about how to create safety and address violence within communities. This brief provides short guidance on how to reframe safety within communities when using the terms *community safety*, *public health approach*, and *social determinants of health and safety*.

## ✓ 1. Show people what **community safety** is, not what it isn't or what you are trying to avoid.

---

### **Sample message:**

When a community is safe, everyone can go about their daily activities and access opportunities with comfort and without the fear, threat, or reality of violence harming them or their loved ones.

**Tip:** Frame your own language! Use these framing strategies in ways that suit your communications and audiences.

**Tip:** Use an aspirational tone so people understand what we can achieve together.

## ✓ 2. Clearly explain the **public health approach**.

---

### **Sample message:**

What we need are practical solutions that help all young people thrive as they reach adulthood. Years of experience show how to promote community safety and support young people's development and wellbeing by investing in proven strategies that build strong relationships with adults and provide opportunities to connect with their communities. *For example ...*

**Tip:** Always include solutions, and make sure they match the causes you discuss.

**Tip:** Make sure to frame your data with a clear explanation of what it means.

## ✓ 3. Name and explain **social determinants** using plain language.

---

### **Sample message:**

To truly tackle gun violence, lawmakers should invest in programs that address the root causes of violence, such as lack of access to jobs, a shortage of safe housing, and high levels of poverty and racial segregation. *For example, our community needs ...*

**Tip:** Point to systems, structures, and policies as root causes so people don't attribute responsibility to individuals or communities.