

The set up of our policing system right now is not serving the most marginalized folks in our community, Vermonters who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, LGBTQ+, poor, disabled, or at intersections of any of those. I work at the Pride Center of Vermont as the Transgender Program Coordinator and part of my work is to support folks who are experiencing violence. No Trans folks I have worked with in domestic and sexual violence situations have felt comfortable using police as an avenue for reporting or to help get them out of harmful situations. Most Trans people, and this is even more prevalent for Trans BIPOC, come to expect violence at the hands of the police due to the national statistics showing that Trans people are 370% more likely to be brutalized by police than cisgender people. Trans people of color are disproportionately incarcerated for low-level offenses that other identities face non-prison sanctions for, and for this reason no Trans person I have worked with has felt safe with police. The police in these cases have been seen as a tool for punishment when what our communities need are avenues for de-escalation, harm reduction, and ways to meet the needs they have that are not going to further the harm they go through. I have not had a case yet where the police were a benefit or support to the folks I have worked with. Some of our community come to us after harmful experiences with police across the state, and we work to connect them to other options when they exist. However, many parts of our state either do not have other resources for reporting and dealing with harm or have resources that are maxed out in their capacity. I believe that our communities would be better served and cared for by shifting funding that usually goes into militarizing the police force into community programs for BIPOC folks and to support anti-violence efforts. I believe that Vermont as a state that is a safe haven for so many Trans people needs to do more to reform the policing systems that we have in place, starting with reinvesting some of the funds that go into our police into the community, but also making the system more accountable to the community rather than the other way around.

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