

Our Premise and Purpose:

All Georgians should live in communities that are safe and where we all engage each other with the highest level of mutual dignity, respect and responsibility. The recent highly publicized incidents of police encounters with citizens in Ferguson, North Charleston, Baltimore, and in several Georgia communities (and the unrest that often followed) set the stage for needed crucial conversations and collaborative action—action designed to assure that such tragedies are avoided to the fullest extent possible and that, if they do occur, the ensuing investigation and charging decision process is fair.

Crucial Conversations:

“But what can we do?” This is a question that has plagued many concerned citizens over the last several months. The Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice seeks to start to answer this question by seeking the views of community members throughout Georgia—law enforcement personnel; prosecutors, defense lawyers, neighborhood associations, faith leaders, political leaders, nonprofits, and others—to help in assessing the nature of police-community relations in our state and to seek recommendations for changes to law, policies and practices that could improve or enhance them.

Collaborative Action:

Using detailed legal research that has been accomplished by our law firm volunteers and the input from stakeholders gleaned from the interviews, Georgia Appleseed (with critical input from an expert advisory committee) will craft a preliminary report and recommendations document that will include specific recommendations for changes to law or policy. These suggestions will then be the subject of a convening of stakeholders to be held with the goal of developing consensus on specific actions that should be taken by state and local policy makers. These consensus recommendations would then be presented to community members around the state to gain further insights and, hopefully, develop wide-ranging support for change. If these recommendations include proposed statutory changes, a 2016 General Assembly advocacy plan will be developed and implemented.

Our Commitment

We bring to this effort a firm commitment to objective, data driven assessment, a deep respect for the extraordinarily difficult and important service that law enforcement personnel provide to our society, and an abiding belief that all of Georgia’s citizens must be afforded the rights to which they are entitled under the federal and state constitutions.

