



# OFFICE OF THE RESEARCH DIRECTOR

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Dear Neighbors,

Williamstown is embarking on a community assessment to better understand safety and wellbeing in our town. The goal is to learn more about how Williamstown provides for public safety now, how residents feel about their safety, and how we can create a greater sense of wellbeing and belonging.

## **Why is this happening?**

Over the past year, many Williamstown residents have spoken about how safe (or unsafe) and welcome (or unwelcome) they feel in our town. These conversations echo others happening nationally as we all consider what public safety means and how and for whom our society ensures it. At the same time, they are unique to Williamstown because they address how people feel right here at home.

To learn more about concerns in our own community, a group of local social workers collaborated with the Town of Williamstown to hire me along with an outreach specialist to launch an assessment of community safety and wellbeing. As a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project, this effort is designed to include the community in every step of the process.

## **What will the project look like?**

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Assessment has multiple components, including:

- Interviews with community members (phone, Zoom, or in-person) about perceptions of safety and wellbeing in Williamstown, experiences with the Williamstown Police Department (WPD), and thoughts about how our community can best provide for safety and wellbeing in the future;
- Interviews with members of the WPD about their jobs, their role in the community, and their thoughts about how our community can best provide for safety and wellbeing in the future;
- Assessment of current workload and practices in the WPD to make sure we all understand the day-to-day work of our police department and the kinds of issues they are called on to handle;
- And a review of how other communities are thinking about safety and wellbeing.

*All interviews will be confidential. Your contact information will not be connected with your responses.*

In the community interviews, we want to hear from as many residents as possible, and especially from those who feel unsafe or unwelcome in our town. If we want to live in a community where everyone feels safe and welcome, we need to know what is preventing that from being true right now. We also need to hear from people who *do* feel safe and welcome so that we can understand what is working and what is not. In other words, if you want to be involved, you are welcome.

## **How can you get involved?**

If you would like to learn more about the project or sign up to be interviewed, please go to: <https://williamstownma.gov/community-research>.

Respectfully yours,

Jennifer James  
Research Director for Community Assessment and Engagement

# COMMUNITY - BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a collaborative approach to research that empowers and energizes community members. By developing and strengthening relationships among individuals, community groups, nonprofits, businesses, and local government, CBPR engages a community's existing strengths to resolve problems, stimulate growth, and increase capacity for implementing positive change.

Some examples of research using CBPR:

- **The environment.** Community members have in many cases asked questions leading to probes that uncover environmental contamination and direct and indirect harm to communities.
- **Medical or public health issues.** Research can help cultivate information about health practices and map occurrences of particular conditions in specific communities and surrounding regions.
- **Political and economic issues.** Community members often initiate research to evaluate corruption or systemic inequities in governments, corporations, or other entities that exert power over communities.
- **Social issues.** Community members can work together with researchers to devise interventions to address racism and other forms of systemic and interpersonal oppression in their communities.



## Register to participate!

If you would like to participate, please go to <https://williamstownma.gov/community-research>. Your input will be anonymous, but we need contact information to set up your phone, Zoom, or in-person interview.



CBPR invites community members to partner with skilled researchers to analyze issues impacting the community and identify potential solutions.

This approach is often effective in addressing issues involving social and structural inequities because of the ways that it challenges the power dynamics of traditional research and includes those most affected by a community issue in defining problems and solutions.

## MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

The Williamstown Community Safety and Wellbeing Assessment is starting in May. We want to hear from as many community members as possible, especially those who feel unsafe, unwelcome, or excluded. We also need to hear from people who do feel safe, welcome, and included so that we can understand what is working and what is not. In other words, if you want to be involved, you are welcome!



### REGISTER ONLINE

<https://williamstownma.gov/community-research>

**WILLIAMSTOWN CARES**  
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & RESEARCH



EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO BUILD COMMUNITY