

BLACK COMMUNITY
RESOURCE CENTRE

2026 EDITION

Justice & Law

Enforcement Toolkit

(BASED ON EDUCALOI 2022 POLICE AND CRIME MATERIALS,
UPDATED TO 2026 LEGAL STANDARDS)





Introduction

Police officers play an important role in keeping communities safe. They investigate crimes, respond to emergencies, and help maintain order. But police also have limits on their power, and people, including youth, have rights that must be respected.

This toolkit explains:

- What police are allowed to do
- What counts as a crime
- What your rights are if you are stopped or arrested
- How youth are treated differently under the law
- What racial profiling is and why it is harmful
- How to file a complaint if police act unfairly
- How to stay safe and calm during police interactions



How Police Become Police Officers

(Québec, 2026)

Becoming a police officer in Québec takes several years. This helps ensure that officers are trained, responsible, and prepared for difficult situations.

2.1 Required Training

To become a police officer, a person must:

1. Complete a 3-year Police Technology program at a CEGEP
2. Complete a 15-week practical training at the École nationale de police du Québec (ENPQ)
3. Pass medical and psychological tests
4. Have no criminal record
5. Show good judgment, honesty, and physical fitness

2.2 Why This Matters

Police officers make decisions that affect people's freedom and safety. Their training teaches them:

- *How to de-escalate conflict*
- *How to use force safely and only when necessary*
- *How to respect people's rights*
- *How to communicate clearly*
- *How to investigate crimes fairly*



What Police Are Allowed to Do, and What They Are Not Allowed to Do

Police have legal powers, but they also have strict limits.

3.1 Police Can:

- Stop someone if they have a legal reason
- Detain someone briefly during an investigation
- Arrest someone if they have reasonable grounds
- Search someone during an arrest
- Use force, but only when necessary and proportional

3.2 Police Cannot:

- *Stop someone randomly without a reason (**Québec banned random street checks**)*
- *Search your phone without a warrant or consent*
- *Use unnecessary force*
- *Treat people disrespectfully*
- *Target someone based on race, religion, or appearance*



Understanding Criminal Law (2026)



Criminal law in Canada is the same across the country. It defines what actions are illegal and what the consequences are.

4.1 Types of Crimes

There are three categories:

Summary Offences

Less serious crimes. Maximum penalty:

- 2 years less a day in jail
- \$5,000 fine

Indictable Offences

More serious crimes. Examples: robbery, aggravated assault, arson.

Hybrid Offences

Most crimes fall here. The prosecutor decides whether to treat the crime as summary or indictable.



Key Legal Concepts Explained Simply

5.1 “Ignorance of the law is not an excuse.” Even if you didn’t know something was illegal, you can still be charged.

5.2 Aiding and Abetting: If you help someone commit a crime, even by acting as a lookout, you can be charged.

5.3 Accessory After the Fact: Helping someone hide or escape after a crime is also illegal.

5.4 Willful Blindness: If you “should have known” something was illegal (like buying a suspiciously cheap phone), you can be charged.

5.5 Borrowing Without Permission: = Theft: Even if you plan to return the item.





Common Crimes Youth Encounter (Explained Simply)

Theft: Taking something that isn't yours.



Mischief / Vandalism: Damaging property (graffiti, breaking windows, destroying school property).

Arson: Starting a fire on purpose or through reckless behavior.

Extortion: Using threats to get something from someone.

Identity Theft: Using someone else's personal information.

Gang Activity: Participating in or helping a criminal organization.

What Happens When Police Stop You

Police can stop you for different reasons. Understanding the difference helps you know your rights.

7.1 Being Stopped for Questioning (Not Under Arrest)

This is called detention.

Police must have a reason, such as:

- Investigating a crime
- Looking for a suspect
- Ensuring public safety

Your Rights During Detention

- You do not have to answer questions
- You can ask: “Am I free to go?”
- You have the right to remain silent
- You have the right to a lawyer

7.2 Being Arrested

Police must:

Tell you that you are under arrest

Explain why

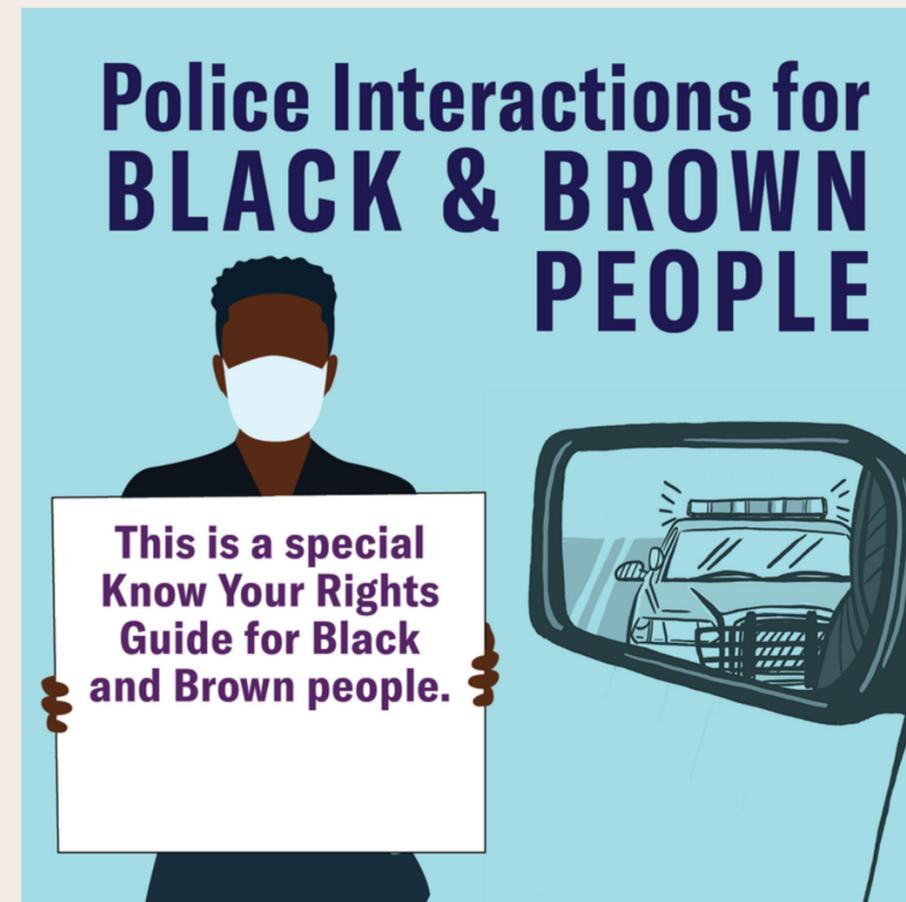
- Tell you your rights
- Allow you to call a lawyer
- Bring you before a judge within 24 hours

What You Must Tell Police

Only your:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Address

You do not have to explain anything else



What Happens When Police Stop You

Police can stop you for different reasons. Understanding the difference helps you know your rights.

8.1 Pat-Down Search (During Detention):

Police can pat down your clothing if they think you might have a weapon.

8.2 Full Search (During Arrest):

Police can search:

- Your pockets
- Your bags
- Your immediate surroundings

8.3 Phone Searches

Police cannot search your phone unless:

- You give consent
- They have a warrant
- There is an immediate threat to life
- You can say: “I do not consent to a search of my phone.”



Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA): Special Protections for Ages 12–17

Youth are treated differently from adults because the law recognizes:

- Young people make mistakes
- They are still developing
- Rehabilitation is more effective than punishment

Youth Rights Include:

- Parents must be notified
- Rights must be explained in simple language
- You can speak to a lawyer
- You can have a parent or trusted adult with you
- Your identity is protected in the media
- Youth records are sealed after a set time





Extrajudicial Measures (Youth Only)

These are alternatives to court for less serious offences.

Police may:

- Give a warning
- Refer you to an Organisme de justice alternative (OJA)
- Recommend community programs



These options help youth learn from mistakes without getting a criminal record.

Racial Profiling (Explained Simply)



Racial profiling happens when police treat someone differently because of:

- Race
- Skin color
- Religion
- Language
- Cultural background

It is illegal and harmful.

If you believe you were profiled:

- Stay calm
- Ask for badge number
- Write down what happened
- File a complaint
- Contact a community organization



Filming the Police

You are allowed to record police in public as long as you:

- Do not interfere
- Keep a safe distance
- Do not block their work

Police cannot

- Take your phone
- Force you to delete videos



Youth Rights and Responsibilities (2026)

Rights During Police Interactions

Youth have the right to:

- Be treated respectfully
- Remain silent
- Speak to a lawyer
- Have an interpreter if they do not speak English or French
- Be free from discrimination or racial profiling



Responsibilities

Youth must:

- Provide basic identifying information when required
- Avoid interfering with police duties
- Follow lawful instructions
- Understand that helping, encouraging, or hiding information can lead to charges

If an officer violates the Code of Ethics, consequences may include:

- Mandatory training
- Written reprimands
- Suspension
- Dismissal

Oversight protects both the public and officers by ensuring transparency.



Scenario Themes

This module includes scenarios that explore:

1. Witnessing a Crime: How to stay safe, what information to provide, and how to support investigations.
2. Police Stops in Public Spaces: Understanding rights, responsibilities, and respectful communication.
3. Racial Profiling: Experiencing or witnessing profiling and exploring its emotional and social impacts.
4. Shoplifting & Peer Pressure: Understanding aiding, abetting, and consequences.
5. Community Trust & Reporting: How trust is built or broken between police and communities.



Discussion Questions

This module includes scenarios that explore:

1. What makes a police interaction feel respectful or disrespectful?
2. How does racial profiling affect trust in the justice system?
3. What responsibilities do youth have when witnessing a crime?
4. How can communities and police rebuild trust?
5. What does accountability look like in policing?



Community Resources

This module includes scenarios that explore:

- CRARR
- Head & Hands
- Black Coalition of Quebec
- CDPDJ
- Projet 10
- ATQ
- AlterHéros



Community Resources

This module includes scenarios that explore:

- **Arrest:** When police take away your freedom because they believe you committed a crime.
- **Detention:** When police stop you and you are not free to leave.
- **Extrajudicial Measures:** Alternatives to court for youth.
- **Indictable Offence:** Serious crime.
- **Summary Offence:** Less serious crime.
- **Hybrid Offence:** Can be treated as serious or less serious.
- **Reasonable Grounds:** A good reason based on facts.
- **Search:** When police look through your clothing, bags, or belongings.
- **Seizure:** When police take something from you as evidence.
- **Racial Profiling:** Treating someone differently because of race or identity.

