



VIOLENCE REDUCTION NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2014 TO DECEMBER 2015



Strategic Solutions • Focused Actions • Reduced Violence

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Letter From the VRN Co-Directors

Dear Colleagues:

Two years ago, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) joined with five sites and asked:

**Why is violent crime elevated in your cities?
Who are the experts and how can they help?
What if we partnered using a new model?**

From this challenge, we launched the Violence Reduction Network (VRN or Network). VRN is based on the principle that our efforts to reduce violence in local communities are most effective when local, state, and federal leaders take a unified, strategic approach to address crime. VRN does not prescribe a solution. Rather, local criminal justice leaders and community stakeholders share with DOJ what is working and identify areas in which they need assistance. No two cities are alike, so no one solution is applicable to all sites. DOJ leverages its resources to meet the local leaders on their terms.

VRN uses an “all-hands” approach by delivering strategic, innovative, and evidence-based DOJ resources. We recognize the leadership and staff from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, ATF, DEA, the U.S. Marshals Service, and the FBI for their commitment, as well as the Office of Justice Programs, the COPS Office, and the Office on Violence Against Women. We acknowledge the Strategic Site Liaisons and the program and law enforcement champions who are the face of VRN as they assist each site in navigating DOJ resources—their focus and energy are critical to VRN’s success. Finally, we thank the United States Attorneys, police chiefs, sheriffs, and county and state prosecutors in the VRN sites for their willingness to take a risk and partner with DOJ in VRN.

This annual report serves to highlight the accomplishments of VRN during its first 15 months—September 2014 to December 2015. The report is a testament to the hard work and tremendous progress that VRN produced in a short time. Our Network communities have increased collaboration among local agencies, received numerous trainings from subject-matter experts, and learned best practices from their peers. All of these activities have laid the groundwork for changes in policies and practices, increased information sharing, and improved community relations. Through VRN, DOJ is committed to a new model for providing the tools and resources that cities need to combat violent crime. We look forward to the continued growth and accomplishments of this program in the months and years to come.



Kristie Brackens
VRN Co-Director
BJA Senior Policy Advisor
May 2014 – Present



Michael Seelman
VRN Co-Director
FBI Detailee to BJA
May 2014 – May 2015



Christopher Robinson
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Establishing the Network

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), recognizes that there is no single way to address violent crime. In 2014, the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) was launched to serve as a comprehensive and innovative approach to assisting some of the nation's most violent cities in their local violence reduction efforts. VRN's unique approach is to provide training and technical assistance (TTA), resources, instruction, tactics, and information to fill strategic gaps and help communities more effectively address violent crime—including DOJ resources that may have been underutilized or unknown to the communities with which VRN works.

VRN offers:

Customized Training and Technical Assistance: Sites have expedited access to existing DOJ-sponsored TTA directed to their specific violent crime needs. Site representatives have direct access to subject-matter experts who offer expertise and support to successfully address critical issues.

Strategic Site Liaisons (SSLs): Each site is assigned a law enforcement professional to guide coordination of DOJ resources and work closely with the local United States Attorney, who will serve a federal leadership function. These individuals are highly regarded former police executives who have experienced many of the same issues facing the current VRN chiefs.

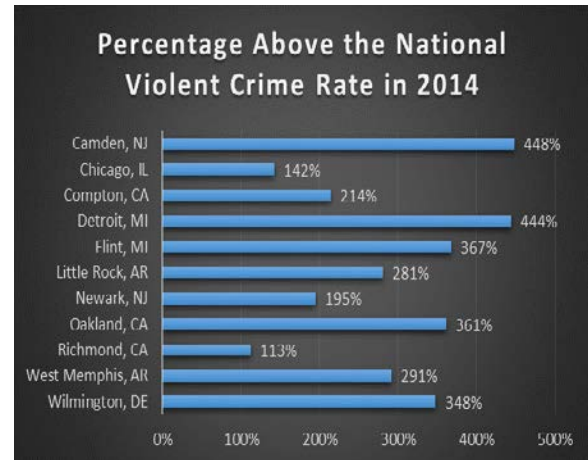
Federal Law Enforcement and Program VRN Site Champions: These individuals serve as points of contact for the site to ensure effective navigation among the multitude of DOJ programmatic and law enforcement resources.

Community of Practice: The VRN sites participate in peer-to-peer learning and work collaboratively as a “community of practice” to address similar needs, problems and interests, resulting in a deeper understanding of the problems and a greater body of knowledge that will benefit other cities. Other cities, outside of VRN, host peer-to-peer visits and have also embraced the practical approach of VRN.

Robust Tools to Enhance Information Sharing: The VRN sites have many opportunities to share information and best practices through a variety of communication vehicles, including peer-to-peer exchanges, the official VRN website—VRNetwork.org, weekly bulletins, monthly podcasts or Webinars, and a quarterly newsletter.

Annual Summit: The annual VRN Summit convenes member sites to participate in collaborative working sessions to analyze site-specific challenges and to discuss the variety of existing DOJ resources available to address the issues. The annual summit's working sessions address topics carefully selected by site leaders and tailored to lay the groundwork for site-specific support for the duration of the program.

To guide site selection, BJA conducted a multiphase analysis of quantitative and qualitative information and consulted with DOJ law enforcement and programmatic partners. VRN sites do not apply to join VRN and do not receive direct grant funding for participation. The sites considered for VRN have violence levels that exceed national averages and exhibit recent increases in violent crime. They also represent jurisdictions with unique law enforcement and local government structures, enabling implementation and assessment of VRN in distinctly different organizational contexts to help DOJ create a model for delivery of training and technical assistance.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports, 2014

VRN seeks to ensure that the Network sites receive the following deliverables:

- ❖ Comprehensive training and technical assistance targeted to the sites' most urgent needs.
- ❖ A thorough and collective understanding of drivers of violent crime within a jurisdiction.
- ❖ An in-depth review of technical, legal, and policy-based obstacles to improve information sharing.
- ❖ Performance metrics and a sustainability plan to measure success and ensure continued progress through improved operational strategies, training, and policy enhancement.
- ❖ A committed focus at the federal, state, and local levels on the identification of violent offenders and an all-hands approach towards holding them accountable through evidence-based practices and constitutionally based policing.
- ❖ A national community of practice around violence prevention, intervention, and reduction.
- ❖ A training and technical assistance delivery model for violence reduction.

One DOJ

To leverage the vast resources that DOJ has to offer, VRN is composed of law enforcement and programmatic agencies working together to fight crime and support local communities. Visualized as “One DOJ,” VRN capitalizes on the strengths of each DOJ partner to address a city’s identified needs with a coordinated response.

Through OJP; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS); the Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA); the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW); and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), VRN sites are offered access



to the full inventory of evidence-based violence reduction resources available from DOJ.

Highlights of the key resources offered to the VRN sites by the DOJ law enforcement partner agencies are listed below. Training, technical assistance, and other resources provided by programmatic agencies are detailed in the VRN Site Success Stories and Core Components sections of this report.

ATF:

- National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)
- Firearms Tracing
- Gun Intelligence and Prevention Training

DEA:

- El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC)
- Gang Targeting Enforcement Coordination Center (TECC)
- Office of Investigative Technology: Emerging Technologies Training
- 360 Strategy

FBI:

- Violent Crime Coordinator (VCC)
- Digital Imaging Video Response Team (DIVRT) Initiative
- Safe Streets Violent Gang/Violent Crime Task Forces
- Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST)/Cell Site Simulator Assets
- HUMINT Development and Field Intelligence Groups (FIGs)
- Office of Public Affairs and Digital Billboards

USMS:

- Fugitive Task Forces
- Tactical Training
- Warrant Analysis and Response (W.A.R.)

VRN Site Success Stories

In September 2014, Attorney General Eric Holder announced the first five VRN sites at the inaugural VRN Summit: Camden, New Jersey; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Oakland/Richmond, California; and Wilmington, Delaware. In September 2015, Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates announced the expansion of VRN to five new cities: Compton, California; Flint, Michigan; Little Rock, Arkansas; Newark, New Jersey; and West Memphis, Arkansas. Each site has identified critical needs and focus areas for VRN assistance to enhance and complement its current violence reduction strategies. In the past year, the VRN sites have received an abundance of trainings, federal law enforcement support, and technical assistance from subject-matter experts and have participated in peer exchanges—leading to implementation of new strategies, policy enhancements, improved technology, increased analytic capacity, and overall successful outcomes in the communities. The information included in this section provides success stories that resulted from VRN resource delivery and describes how the successful strategies are implemented across the Network.

Phase 1 VRN Sites

Camden, New Jersey

Spotlight on Success: One of the initial gaps identified by Camden partners was the need for a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) machine. The Camden County Police Department has a disproportionately high national gun homicide rate, and the integration of NIBIN into agency operations would be a positive contribution to reducing this rate, through the improved evaluation of ballistics for investigative leads. To support this VRN site in its violent crime reduction efforts, ATF helped Camden purchase its own machine for conducting ballistics analysis, reducing the processing time from four to seven days to six to eight hours. This faster timeline made it easier for local police to quickly link guns used in crimes to other shootings, develop leads, and ultimately arrest perpetrators. The Camden County Police Department has developed 77 investigatory leads with this ATF technology.

“The selection of Camden as a partner in the VRN will help us build on successes we’ve already seen through things like C4, the unprecedented fusion center in Camden that brings federal, state, and local partners together in a truly collaborative approach to fighting violent crime. VRN will ensure that we make the best possible use of federal resources as we work together to create safer communities. Making Camden safer is the mission shared by my office and our terrific local, county, state, and federal partners.”

—U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman

Network-Wide Implementation: One of the early successes of VRN has been the provision of federal law enforcement-related resources to VRN sites, including ATF’s NIBIN technology and

firearms tracing assistance, DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) and Emerging Technologies Training; the FBI's Violent Crime Coordinator assigned to each site and Digital Imaging Video Response Team (DIVRT) Initiative; and USMS fugitive task forces, tactical training, and warrant analysis and response.

Chicago, Illinois

Spotlight on Success: The FBI provided DIVRT training and kits to Chicago. DIVRT training helps law enforcement officers develop skills to rapidly recover and extract video evidence from areas near a crime scene, exploit video evidence through the utilization of both traditional and social media platforms, and generate tips from public citizens in solving crime. This effort led to the posting of crime videos on the department's Facebook page; the first posting led to the arrest of a suspect within eight days of posting.

Network-Wide Implementation: The FBI serves as a key partner in VRN and its violence reduction efforts. The FBI has provided extensive resources to VRN sites—including DIVRT training (10 sites), media training (three sites), task force initiatives, and a VRN FBI Violent Crime Coordinator assigned to each site to ensure effective navigation of FBI resources—and has enhanced its partnership and collaboration opportunities with the sites, focusing on improving investigative efforts.

Detroit, Michigan

Spotlight on Success: Sponsored by BJA and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and in partnership with Michigan State University, the Detroit site has embedded analysts from the university into multiple major VRN partner agencies, including the Detroit Police Department, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, the Michigan State Police, the Detroit Public Schools Police Department, and the Michigan Department of Corrections. The analysts support violence reduction efforts of the local agencies, promoting proactive and data-driven crime prevention and control efforts, including development of weekly crime updates. The analysts provide weekly analytic products and have professionalized the analytical unit within the police department. Police officers formerly serving as ad hoc crime analysts have been redeployed back into communities, and the student analysts, working under the cooperative supervision of the police department and the university, deliver high-quality analytical reports to police leadership.

Network-Wide Implementation: Integrating crime analysis into law enforcement operations can have a positive impact on violence reduction efforts. To encourage and support the potential to increase analytic capacity within the Network, VRN has provided opportunities to conduct peer exchanges to observe how other agencies both in and outside the Network utilize crime analysis to drive their crime reduction and prevention strategies. In addition to peer learning opportunities, VRN has provided crime analysis assistance (such as Crime Analysis on Demand, Crime Analysis for Executives training, crime analysis general technical assistance) to all 10 sites.

Oakland/Richmond, California

Spotlight on Success: Technology can have a beneficial impact on violence reduction efforts, helping sites understand their technology capabilities and the improvements and enhancements available to them. As a result of the VRN-sponsored technology assessment from BJA subject-matter experts, the Oakland/Richmond site has established a technology working group to better understand technology capabilities within the site, enhance existing processes, and enhance communication, collaboration, and regional information sharing among the local partners.

Network-Wide Implementation: Through VRN, all sites are offered the opportunity for BJA to conduct a technology assessment that is designed to identify technology-related successes and recommendations for improvement. Technology assessments have been provided to all 10 sites and are able to equip sites with a comprehensive understanding of their technology strengths, gaps, and available resources for improvement.

“The combined VRN site in California is forward-thinking and has a really collaborative mind-set. The teams are reaching out to one another, collectively training, and actively listening to each other. The sheriffs and district attorneys are actively involved.”

—Strategic Site Liaison Louis Quijas

Wilmington, Delaware

Spotlight on Success: One of the early needs identified by Wilmington was to improve homicide investigations and increase homicide clearance rates. Prior to VRN involvement, Wilmington’s homicide clearance rate was approximately 10 percent. As a result of this need, VRN delivered a homicide investigation assessment, training for police and prosecutors, and a peer learning opportunity with the Richmond, Virginia, Police Department homicide unit. Through the support of VRN resources, the Wilmington Police Department implemented changes to its homicide investigative process, which included the use of checklists to delineate actions and responsibilities at a crime scene; use of social media to promote transparency with the community; and enhanced assistance for victims and witnesses. This coordinated delivery process, in addition to other local violence reduction efforts, helped Wilmington increase its homicide clearance rate by 40 percent in 2015.

Network-Wide Implementation: The delivery of training and technical assistance to support sites in improving their investigative efforts has been a key success of VRN. Homicide investigation assessments and trainings have been delivered to five VRN sites; domestic violence training and assistance and peer exchanges have been delivered to four sites.

“The department’s involvement with the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) program has also contributed to the increased homicide clearance rate. As Wilmington was among just five cities selected to participate in the elite new federal network, which provided the department with access to experienced federal government officials and resources, officers in the detective division were able to receive extensive training. Through the VRN, officers were trained on homicide protocol, how to execute effective crime-solving strategies, and case management. The Executive Officer of the Criminal Investigative Division also holds regular meetings with the Attorney General’s Office, which has facilitated a more effective process for moving homicide cases to arrests.”

—Chief Bobby Cummings
Press Release
September 2, 2015

Phase 2 VRN Sites

Compton, California

Spotlight on Success: In efforts to increase collaboration and information sharing and to accelerate investigations of violent crime cases in Compton, DOJ federal partners provided extensive assistance to Compton in 2015. This assistance included law enforcement operational support from the FBI resulting in the execution of multiple search warrants and arrests and the recovery of several firearms; NIBIN and firearms tracing training from ATF; numerous VRN-related felony cases filed by the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office; embedding of an Assistant U.S. Attorney, two FBI agents, and a FBI Violent Crime Coordinator in the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department Compton Station; and support from the USMS on apprehending defendants with outstanding arrest warrants for felony cases.

Network-Wide Implementation: Enhancing and expanding collaboration and information sharing among local and federal partners are two notable accomplishments of VRN. This increased collaboration develops at the annual VRN Summit, where local and federal partners are brought together to discuss violence issues and reduction strategies, leading to increased interaction and partnerships as new strategies and opportunities are identified and implemented within each VRN site.

Flint, Michigan

Spotlight on Success: Flint received ATF firearms tracing and technical assistance, enabling the police department to process 784 firearms and eliminate its backlog. This effort has allowed the police department to rapidly process newly submitted firearms and has provided investigative leads to older gun-related crimes. In addition, following ATF’s assistance, the police department

instituted policy changes related to firearm testing and ballistics submissions so that backlogs do not occur in the future.

Network-Wide Implementation: Enhanced federal law enforcement resources have been an instrumental component of VRN efforts. Many VRN sites have been able to reduce firearm processing backlogs, enhance operational efforts, improve prosecutions, and improve investigations as a result of federal law enforcement partnerships, including support from ATF, FBI, DEA, USMS, and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices.

Little Rock, Arkansas

Spotlight on Success: Through a VRN-supported peer exchange visit to an intelligence-driven prosecution symposium, Little Rock's Office of the Prosecuting Attorney has enhanced its violence reduction efforts and is now targeting offenders charged with lesser crimes using vertical prosecution. In addition, the office is providing notifications to parents of juvenile gang members involved in crimes.

Network-Wide Implementation: Violence reduction is not solely a law enforcement effort; it requires a holistic approach which includes input from and partnerships with prosecution. As a part of the VRN mission and beginning with the annual VRN Summit, representatives from all justice components, including law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, probation and parole and others, are brought together to discuss how their site can improve and enhance its violence reduction strategies.

Newark, New Jersey

Spotlight on Success: Newark representatives participated in a peer exchange visit to VRN site Camden to discuss a variety of violence reduction efforts, including ATF's NIBIN processes and the Camden County Crime Commission Initiative, and to explore Camden's Real Time Crime Center. This peer exchange also provided the opportunity for Newark and Camden leadership to share experiences and lessons learned in VRN.

Network-Wide Implementation: In 2015, VRN coordinated 26 peer exchanges among the VRN sites and other jurisdictions across the country. These peer learning opportunities allow VRN sites to share best practices, information, tactics, and experiences within the Network and with agencies outside the Network, promoting a community of practice. Peer exchanges delivered in 2015 include trips to DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center; the New York City Police Department; High Point, North Carolina; and Richmond, Virginia, focused on homicide investigations, technology, CompStat, intelligence analysis, and other areas. In addition to peer learning outside of VRN, VRN sites Camden, Chicago, Wilmington, and Oakland/Richmond have hosted other VRN partners this year to share experiences and processes.

West Memphis, Arkansas

Spotlight on Success: After receiving training and technical assistance for developing and enhancing its crime analysis capabilities, the West Memphis Police Department (WMPD) created its first law enforcement analyst position to support investigative and intelligence capabilities in the Criminal Intelligence Division. VRN helped WMPD develop an online social media presence to aid in community outreach and analytic capacity.

Network-Wide Implementation: VRN provides resources and support to assist sites in their efforts to reduce violent crime. One of these resource areas is crime analysis. The integration and use of analysis in a criminal justice agency can support agency leadership as they focus on crime reduction strategies through applying evidence-based statistics and findings to direct resources.

Core Components

Annual Summit



*Deputy Attorney General
Sally Quillian Yates at the
2015 VRN Summit.*

The annual VRN Summit convenes member sites to participate in collaborative working sessions to analyze site-specific violence challenges and to discuss the variety of existing DOJ resources available to address the issues. The annual summit's working sessions address carefully selected topics proposed by site leaders and tailored to lay the groundwork for site-specific support for the duration of the program. Between 2014 and 2015, VRN hosted two summits, convening DOJ leaders, site representatives, and nationally recognized subject-matter experts to engage in dialogue and address cities' violence reduction needs. The inaugural VRN Summit was held in Washington, DC, in September 2014 and served as the official launch of the VRN program. As the Network expanded, the 2015 summit was held in Detroit, Michigan, where Deputy Attorney General Sally Quillian Yates announced five additional cities.

For more information on VRN Summits, visit
<https://vrnetwork.org/Home/ItemsOfInterest/Summits>.

Training and Technical Assistance



Multiple VRN sites participated in social network analysis training delivered by Yale University's Dr. Andrew Papachristos and sponsored by the COPS Office.

Once VRN sites are selected to join the Network, the key stakeholders are provided with an extensive Training and Technical Assistance Catalog of resource offerings from DOJ program offices, OJP, OVW, and the COPS Office. As the sites work with their SSLs, champions and analysts to identify focus areas and needs, trainings, SME technical assistance, and other resources are identified to be delivered to the sites to achieve their goals.

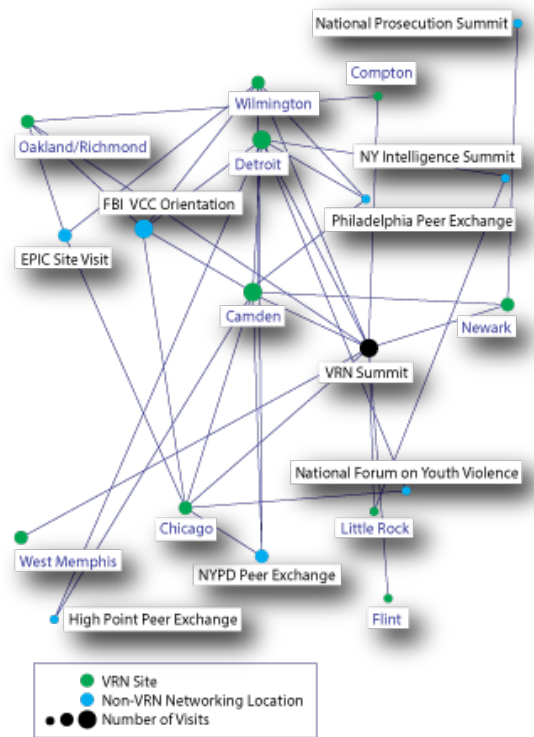
Within the first year of VRN, 60 trainings (representing 21,400 hours) were delivered to over 1,900 participants in VRN from DOJ program offices and law enforcement partners. Trainings delivered through VRN help each site augment and improve its local crime-fighting efforts. Trainings related to crime analysis, building community trust, social network analysis, police legitimacy, community policing, crime prevention through environmental design, victim/witness services, and various federal law enforcement resources have been delivered to the sites.

Since September 2014, subject-matter experts have provided over 700 hours of technical assistance to the VRN sites in the areas of grant strategy and development, technology assessments, crime analysis, social network analysis, domestic violence victimization, homicide investigations, and victim/witness services.

Peer Exchanges

To promote a community of practice, VRN provides the opportunity and resources for VRN site leaders to visit other cities within and outside the Network to explore various best practices and strategies for violence reduction. Peer-to-peer exchanges promote cross-agency collaboration and information sharing that solidify the “Network” vision and allow for the exposure to alternative and emerging policing practices. In 2015, VRN sites participated in 26 peer exchanges, some of which are highlighted below.

- The Camden County Police Department, the Chicago Police Department, and the Wilmington Police Department participated in peer exchange visits to the New York City Police Department to explore technology, intelligence capabilities, CompStat processes, and other violence reduction efforts.
- Representatives from the Wilmington and Oakland/Richmond sites visited the DEA-led El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) to enable the agencies to gain a greater understanding of analytic resources and tools available through EPIC to aid in their crime reduction strategies.
- OVW sponsored a peer exchange for VRN teams from Camden and Detroit to visit the High Point, North Carolina, Police Department (HPPD) to participate in a two-day exchange and informational session and to receive information on its Offender-Focused Domestic Violence Initiative (OFDVI). The HPPD has implemented a successful model to combat domestic violence using the focused-deterrence method of policing that was conceptualized by Dr. David Kennedy. This approach has been used to deter other types of criminals but had not been applied to domestic violence prior to the HPPD.
- Representatives from the Camden County Police Department (CCPD) visited the Chicago Police Department to explore Chicago’s intelligence and crime-fighting technologies to learn how they might apply to CCPD technology implementation.



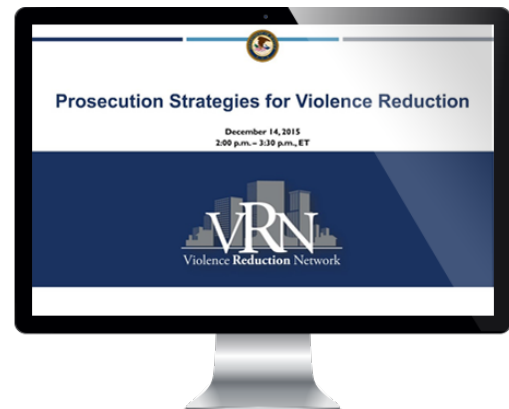
VRN peer exchanges and networking opportunities

- A VRN team from Compton visited the Oakland and Richmond Police Departments to discuss VRN experiences and procedural justice trainings and to share violence reduction strategies pertaining to homicide investigations, gangs, guns, human trafficking, mental health, and crime analysis.

Webinars

The Webinars hosted by VRN provide an opportunity for the VRN sites and other professionals outside the Network nationwide to engage in dialogue and discussion with subject-matter experts to increase knowledge about violence reduction strategies and initiatives and to learn how the strategies can be further integrated into their respective efforts. In 2014 and 2015, VRN hosted 12 Webinars to the VRN sites and other law enforcement and criminal justice professionals across the country. VRN Webinars are delivered to the field on emerging areas of need within the VRN sites and the collective criminal justice community and have addressed a variety of topics, including:

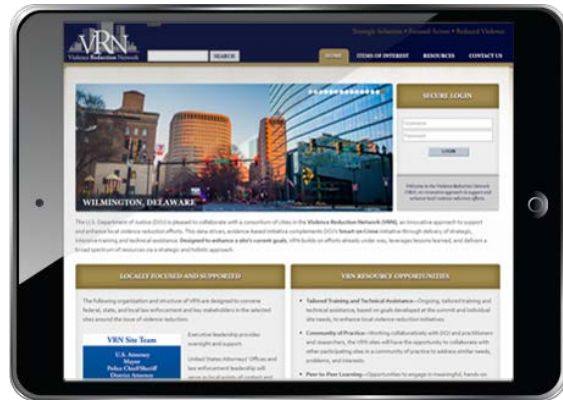
- Strategies to Address Witness Intimidation
- Strategies to Increase Homicide Clearance Rates
- Resources for Victim Service Providers Involved in VRN
- Social Media Analysis
- Utilizing Social Network Analysis to Reduce Violent Crime
- Innovative Strategies to Address Youth Violence
- Community Engagement in High Violence Neighborhoods
- Prosecution Strategies for Violence Reduction
- The New Era in Community Policing
- Executive-Level VRN Forum
- Enhancing Your VRN Strategy by Targeting High-Rate Offenders: Prospects, Practices, and Concerns
- Executive Briefing Webinar through the BJA VALOR Program



VRN Webinars are recorded and made available on the public side of the VRN website at <https://vrnetwork.org/Home/ItemsOfInterest/VRNWebinars>.

Web Site

In October 2014, VRN launched a website, www.vrnetwork.org, which is designed to provide an understanding and awareness of VRN as well as provide additional resources for participating VRN sites.



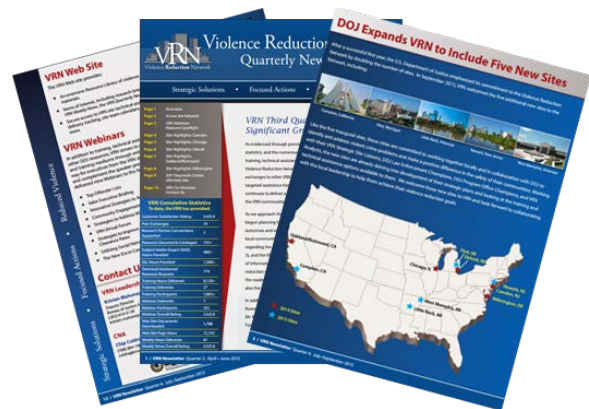
The public-facing side of the website features background information on VRN; an extensive resource library containing violence reduction-related publications, websites, and other resources sorted by topic area; and an Items of Interest page that houses all VRN-related publications and materials, such as Webinars, VRN research briefs, quarterly newsletters, weekly news archives and VRN Summit information.

The private-access side of the website is designed for VRN site local representatives and VRN project team members to serve as a collaboration and project management tool. Users have access to a collaboration calendar, a contact database, a file-sharing system, a map of DOJ violence reduction programs across the country, and a mechanism for extensive requesting and tracking of VRN activities across the Network.

Quarterly Newsletter

The *VRN Quarterly Newsletter* provides an overview of quarterly activities, including training and technical assistance, Webinars, featured subject-matter experts, site highlights, law enforcement and programmatic resources, and more. The *VRN Quarterly Newsletter* offers a great way to monitor and feature the growth and success of the VRN program.

In 2015, VRN published four *Quarterly Newsletters*, covering October 2014 to September 2015. *The issue covering October – December 2015 was published March 2016.*



Weekly Site News

The *VRN Weekly Site News* is a weekly publication of VRN site news articles, trainings, grant opportunities, and other resources that may be of interest to VRN city partners, DOJ, and other criminal justice practitioners seeking insight into violence reduction efforts. The intent of the weekly news is to provide awareness and information about the successes and challenges faced by each VRN city. In 2014 and 2015, 87 deliveries (1,901 articles) of the weekly news have been produced and disseminated to over 600 subscribers from DOJ, VRN sites, and other criminal justice professionals and law enforcement nationwide.



The Future

The future of VRN is rooted in the “One DOJ” concept of a Justice-wide effort to provide intensive tools, training, and technical resources to some of the nation’s most violent cities in a strategic and formalized manner. VRN strives to be responsive to the needs of site leadership and supportive of their violence reduction plans at the local level. VRN is based on the principles that change comes from the community level and that complex problems require flexible, integrated solutions. It is the goal of VRN that at the end of their two years’ participation, state, local, and federal officials will have increased knowledge, improved policies, implemented proven crime reduction strategies, and enhanced partnerships that will pay lifesaving dividends for years to come. In addition to providing direct assistance to the Network sites, VRN strives to promote a community of practice through facilitation of peer exchanges, training opportunities, and sharing of resources and lessons learned in violence reduction with other communities across the country.

Clearinghouse

Next year, VRN will launch an online violence reduction clearinghouse that will serve as a guide for law enforcement, prosecutors, and other local and state agencies across the country to access DOJ and VRN resources—through customized results based on areas of need, types of resources, agency size, and other criteria. This resource will be available publicly for any agency to access, providing a way for VRN resources to be shared with non-VRN sites.

Sustainability

As the inaugural VRN sites approach the completion of their official two-year VRN engagement, each site is developing a site-specific sustainability plan. The goal of the plan is to ensure that local and federal partnerships built and enhanced through VRN are long-lasting, that the violence reduction strategies are passed on to subsequent leaders, and that the lessons learned and knowledge gained from VRN TTA continue to have positive impacts on local cities’ violence reduction efforts.

Expansion

Participation in VRN means being part of an emerging national “community of practice” around violence reduction. A goal of VRN is to expand its outreach to non-VRN cities and bring an additional ten cities into the Network in the next two fiscal years.