



2026 CONFERENCE ON VIOLENT CRIME

JUNE 2-4, 2026
THE SHERATON NORFOLK WATERSIDE HOTEL
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Criminal Justice Services

Ashaki McNeil
Director

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June 2, 2026

Dear Conference Participant:

On behalf of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), welcome to the 2026 Conference on Violent Crime. The Commonwealth of Virginia is strengthened when law enforcement and criminal justice partners proactively come together to address public safety challenges.

This gathering is a cornerstone of support for our law enforcement partners, who work tirelessly to safeguard communities across the Commonwealth. DCJS is proud to partner with the Virginia Office of the Attorney General, the Virginia Department of Corrections, the Virginia State Police, and the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice to offer this conference. We are pleased to provide a forum that brings together leading experts in law enforcement and criminal justice to examine violent crime trends and explore current strategies to enhance public safety statewide.

Our goal for this conference is to equip you with valuable knowledge and practical tools to support your work as you continue to implement policies, practices, and initiatives that improve public safety and quality of life in our communities.

We encourage you to use this opportunity to learn from each other, share best practices, and build valuable connections that support your challenging roles and responsibilities. The success of this work depends on your participation. Enjoy the conference, and please let us know how we can further support your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ashaki McNeil".

Ashaki McNeil
Director

AGENDA

TUESDAY, JUNE 2

8:30 am – 9:00 am **Welcome and Opening Ceremony** *All general sessions held in Poplar and Providence Ballrooms*

Presentation of Colors

Virginia State Police Honor Guard

National Anthem

Lynsey Strohming, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Opening Remarks

Division Director Lindsay Burton, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Director Ashaki McNeil, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Attorney General Jay Jones, Office of the Attorney General

Chief Mark Talbot, Norfolk Police Department

Colonel Jeffrey S. Katz, Virginia State Police

9:00 am – 10:30 am **New Orleans Case Study**

Traylon Williams, Federal Bureau of Investigation

This session outlines the FBI's response to the January 1, 2025 violent extremist attack in New Orleans. It highlights the rapid activation of the Crisis Response Plan, coordination with local, state, and federal partners, and the FBI's assumption of lead investigative authority once the attack was determined to be ISIS-inspired.

Attendees will learn how more than two hundred personnel were deployed within 24 hours, how advanced investigative techniques and international partnerships shaped the case, and how an ISIS-affiliated individual overseas was identified and arrested with support from Iraqi authorities.

The session concludes with an overview of ongoing investigative efforts and the critical role of interagency collaboration throughout the operation.

10:30 am – 10:45 am **Break**

10:45 am – 12:15 pm **Building Effective Partnerships Between Law Enforcement (LE) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to Reduce Violent Crime**

Stephen Jenkins and Chantal Matthews, Portsmouth Police Department

This session will provide an overview of the presenters' experiences in building effective partnerships between law enforcement and community-based organizations in Portsmouth.

12:15 pm – 1:15 pm **Lunch** *(provided)*

Stafford and York Ballrooms

1:15 pm – 2:45 pm **Justice in the Age of Generative AI: The Impact of AI on 21st Century Investigations and Prosecutions**

Justin Fitzsimmons, Magnet Forensics

The justice system depends on evidence. Generative AI now challenges the reliability of that evidence while simultaneously offering powerful new investigative capabilities. For violent crime investigators and prosecutors, the stakes are immediate and profound.

This keynote introduces a three-dimensional framework for understanding AI: capabilities, tools, and applications. It examines how synthetic media, AI-generated communications, automated analysis systems, and algorithmic bias affect search decisions, digital evidence collection, forensic interpretation, charging determinations, and courtroom credibility. Attendees will gain practical strategies to identify AI-driven risks, avoid automation bias, maintain evidentiary integrity, and ensure that emerging technology strengthens justice rather than undermining it.

Continued

AGENDA

TUESDAY, JUNE 2 (CONTINUED)

2:45 pm - 3:00 pm **Break**

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm **BREAKOUT SESSIONS — Set One**

1. Understanding Child Abductions and Offender Behavior

Riverwalk

Daniel O'Donnell and Jake Hardie, Federal Bureau of Investigation

The primary purpose of this block is to provide instruction on the behavioral dynamics of sexually motivated child abductions and insights into offender behavior and victimology in order to support investigative best practices and considerations.

2. Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP): Enhancing of Coordinated Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence

Monticello

Ashley Manuel, Office of the Attorney General

Based on the "Maryland Model" and the research by Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, Virginia's Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is an innovative strategy to prevent Intimate Partner Violence homicides and serious injuries. Using an 11-question, evidence-based Lethality Assessment field tool, law enforcement can assess the risk of serious injury or homicide by an intimate partner and immediately connect the victim, via a hotline call, to the local domestic violence service program (DVSP) for emergency safety planning and enhanced service provision. This session will provide an overview of LAP and its implementation throughout the Commonwealth since 2015.

3. Uber Resources for Law Enforcement: Uber Public Safety Response and Investigative Support

Merrimac

Danielle McDonald, Uber Technologies

This presentation will provide the audience with an overview of Uber's Global Public Safety team and how we work with law enforcement to support investigations, critical incidents, and community safety. The audience will learn more about Uber's various lines of business, data collection and privacy, and how to submit requests to obtain information for criminal investigations. The presenter will demonstrate Uber's in-app safety features and highlight cases that resulted in successful location, recovery, and arrests.

4. Serial Offenders

Brandon A/B

Tom Seftick, Federal Bureau of Investigation

This block of instruction provides the audience with an overview of serial offenses such as homicide, sexual assault, and robbery. The audience will be given insight into the offender behavior, investigative techniques for these cases, and case linkage.

5. Coded Communication – The Message Within

Claremont

Wesley Diggs, Virginia Department of Corrections

This course provides participants with an overview of a variety of cipher systems and cryptic communications commonly used by gangs, other organizations, and sometimes non-affiliates to disguise and confuse authorities and avoid detection. Through real-world examples and practical analysis, attendees will have the opportunity to decipher examples of coded communication. This course will also explore how specific subcultures and geography contribute to the use of coded communication.

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3

8:00 am - 8:30 am What The Data Shows: Recent Trends in Crime, Drugs, Jails and More

Baron Blakley, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

This session will cover various criminal justice trends, including violent crime and gun violence, and will identify online sources for data on crimes, drugs, and more in Virginia.

8:30 am - 9:30 am Reducing Violent Crime: The Twelve Principles and Practices

Mark Talbot, Norfolk Police Department

The City of Norfolk has seen a decrease in homicides and gun violence since 2023. This hour-long discussion summarizes the principles and practices necessary to achieve sustainable reductions in violence, providing an actionable pathway toward safer communities.

9:30 am - 10:45 am No Buyers, No Business: The Role of Demand in Sex Trafficking

McKayla Burnett, Department of Criminal Justice Services

Sex trafficking occurs daily across Virginia, with traffickers targeting individuals with vulnerabilities and exploiting them for profit. While much attention is rightly focused on traffickers and survivors, far less is understood about the role of buyers in sustaining this system. Sex trafficking operates within a framework of supply and demand—without demand, exploitation would not be profitable.

This presentation examines the critical role buyers play in perpetuating trafficking. It explores emerging insights into buyer behavior, including patterns of coercion, violence, and abuse that directly contribute to victim harm. The session will also address strategies communities can implement to disrupt demand, hold buyers accountable, and reduce the conditions that allow trafficking to persist.

10:45 am - 11:00 am Break

11:00 am - 12:15 pm Advanced Cellular Exploitation Techniques and Innovative Intelligence Collection

Brian Fleming, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation

There are more cellular devices in the world than people. Are we maximizing all this data to its fullest? Do other agencies hold intelligence that could solve our case? How do we overcome the siloing of this information? This presentation will explore these questions and more.

12:15 pm - 1:15 pm Lunch (provided)

Stafford and York Ballrooms

1:15 pm - 2:45 pm Legacy Physical Security Is Outdated: The Evolution of Small Unmanned Aerial Systems

William Edwards, Phoenix 6 Consulting LLC

This presentation examines how traditional physical security models—built around fixed perimeters, access control, and ground-based threats—are increasingly ineffective against the rapid evolution of small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS). It explores how commercially available drones have transformed the threat landscape by enabling low-cost, highly adaptable aerial surveillance and strike capabilities that bypass conventional defenses.

Drawing on recent operational examples and emerging trends, the session highlights critical vulnerabilities across military installations, critical infrastructure, and domestic security environments.

Participants will gain insight into the operational characteristics of sUAS, the gaps in current detection and response frameworks, and the growing need for integrated counter-UAS (C-UAS) strategies. The presentation emphasizes layered defense approaches, including sensor fusion, electronic warfare considerations, and interagency coordination, to address these challenges.

2:45 pm - 3:00 pm Break

Continued

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm **BREAKOUT SESSIONS — Set Two**

1. Suicide Risk, Violence Risk, & Mental Health: A Complicated and Often Misunderstood Relationship

Jeffrey Aaron, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Riverwalk

Mental health problems are often linked to violence risk, and mental health treatment to violence risk reduction. This formulation allows people with different perspectives to come together and pursue shared goals. However, the rationale behind these linkages is based on both accurate and inaccurate appraisals of the nature of those associations. Productive policy and supportive responses to students in crisis or suspected of being at risk for violence will come from a solid understanding of the relationship between mental health problems and violence risk; this presentation will provide information on the nature of that relationship. Audience members will then be challenged to consider the tensions and conflicts that may arise when navigating a landscape that involves real and perceived threats, and shared obligations to individuals and the public safety.

2. Legal Update

Jason Kowalski, Commonwealth Attorney's Service Council

Monticello

This presentation reviews key legal updates from the Virginia General Assembly that affect law enforcement, Departments of Corrections (DOC), and Departments of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). This session highlights new laws, focusing on the practical implications of these updates and how agencies can maintain compliance with current legal standards.

3. Digging Deeper: Additional Innovative Techniques and Case Studies that Demonstrate These Practices

Brian Fleming, North Carolina Bureau of Investigation

Merrimac

This breakout session will build upon the methodologies discussed during the keynote, providing additional approaches and case studies that highlight the techniques in practice.

4. ICAC Overview and Child Exploitation Resources

Courtney Simmonds, Virginia State Police

Brandon A/B

This presentation provides an overview of the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. Attendees will gain insight into the types of online child exploitation cases ICAC investigates, how the task force network operates, and how investigators can effectively leverage ICAC resources for CyberTip triage, digital forensic support, and multi-state coordination. It also highlights current challenges, such as rising case volume and cross-platform offender behavior, and includes a gaming platform case study demonstrating how offenders contact minors and how these investigations unfold.

5. Proven Techniques to Increase Clearance Rates and Reduce Incidents of Violent Crime

Phillip Figura, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Brian Russell, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Claremont

This block of instruction identifies common themes, technical gaps, and recommendations found across completed NFS and homicide reports across all National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) sites. The presentation will provide stakeholders with an understanding of the types of recommendations made to PSP sites through non-fatal shooting and homicide assessments. The presentation will identify common gaps in non-fatal shootings and homicide investigation capabilities and practices to strengthen investigative capacity.

Some common findings and recommendations include:

- Identifying the impact on investigations with delayed submission of evidence to the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) for analysis.
- Identifying proven requirements and establishing policies, protocols, and practices involving homicide and non-fatal shooting investigative practices.
- Identifying the impact of designating investigators with specialized knowledge of and techniques involved with homicide and non-fatal shootings investigations.
- Importance of partnering with federal law enforcement agencies to strengthen investigations.
- Recognizing how investigator outreach to neighborhoods experiencing high rates of homicides and non-fatal shooting incidents can promote victim-witness safety and cooperation, promote public safety, and reduce fear and violence.

AGENDA

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

8:30 am – 10:00 am Engaging Leadership: Building Relationships and Resiliency to Overcome Adversity

Paul Bailey, Bailey Training & Consulting

Engaging Leadership: Building Relationships and Resiliency to Overcome Adversity is a program that supports and inspires an organization's members to go that extra step and connect with those people and places within their areas of influence, and support resiliency within the organization and your personnel, all while keeping an eye on the future and developing personnel to step up and take the reins when their time comes.

People, places, the things they do, and the times they do them. These simple benchmarks can help street officers know their beat and effectively police their areas of responsibility. They are also the same four points of focus that can help senior and executive level leaders guide their agencies in a manner that promotes professionalism, attentiveness to the community, and officer morale and resiliency.

10:00 am – 10:15 am Break

10:15 am – 12:15 pm Neo-Nazis, Swatting, and Warning Behaviors: A Case Study in Teenage Radicalization

Denise French, Orange County (CA) Sheriff's Department

In June of 2023, a group proclaiming themselves as the Eurocell Swatting Group targeted Jewish, LGBTQ, and African American gathering centers via suicide hotlines and would threaten mass shootings and bombings. An extensive investigation involving the Federal Bureau of Investigation, local law enforcement, and the Anti-Defamation League revealed five subjects, two of whom were juveniles living in California. During this process, suspects exhibited multiple warning behaviors including identification, fixation, and pathway behaviors. We attempted to trace the path from what seems to be a "normal" existence, down the rabbit hole of internet radicalization, to committing hate crimes and showing all the threat signs of mass violence being their next step. Threat management language focusing on the pathway was utilized to obtain search warrants and other legal processes to begin enforcement before any kind of mass violence was perpetuated.

This presentation explores radicalization, pathway behavior, enforcement options, and how to use threat management tools to prevent mass violence events.

12:15 pm Conference Concludes

RESOURCES

Conference Page

www.dcs.virginia.gov/training-events/2026-conference-violent-crime



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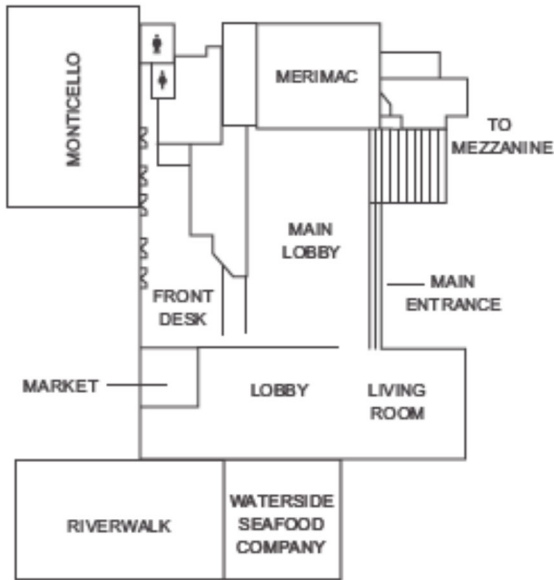
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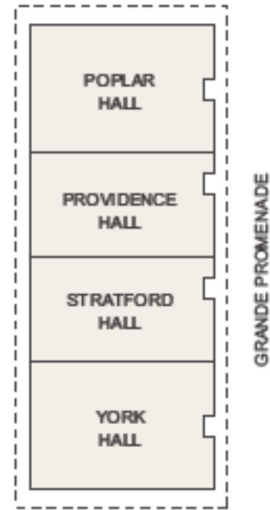
Please note: Photos and/or videos from this event may appear on the DCJS website, social media sites, and in other agency materials.

V E N U E M A P

LOBBY LEVEL



3RD FLOOR



THE INTERNATIONAL BALLROOM IS DIVISIBLE INTO 4 SECTIONS

4TH FLOOR

