



Violence Reduction Network Quarterly Newsletter

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We are pleased to introduce the VRN Quarterly Newsletter!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the VRN community with a quarterly overview of activities, including training and technical assistance (TTA), law enforcement resources, Webinars, featured subject-matter experts, site highlights, and more.

In early 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) created VRN as a comprehensive and innovative approach to violence reduction that complements the U.S. Attorney General's Smart on Crime Initiative. VRN leverages the vast array of existing resources across DOJ components to reduce violence in select cities.

VRN joins DOJ law enforcement and grant-making agencies in support of VRN sites. Utilizing existing training and technical assistance and federal law enforcement resources, DOJ collaborates with police chiefs and other local partners on effective approaches to accomplishing their violence reduction strategies. Site leaders have also been given access to leading criminal justice researchers, and practitioners exchange violence reduction best practices through a community of practice network model.

We are optimistic about the progress that the VRN inaugural sites have made during the first quarter and encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by the 2014 VRN sites. We look forward to reporting more good news about VRN in coming editions of the quarterly newsletter!

2014 VRN Summit Overview

The 2014 VRN Summit was held in Washington, DC, on September 29 – October 1, 2014, and brought together executive leaders and key stakeholders from each site. [Attorney General Eric Holder provided opening remarks for the official launch of the VRN](#), and New York City Police Department Commissioner William J. Bratton presented as the keynote speaker.

Summit participants heard from federal law enforcement and program leaders, as well as subject-matter experts in the criminal justice field. Local site delegations met for 2½ days in collaborative working sessions to hear from field experts and explore existing DOJ resources that may be applicable to the violence reduction efforts currently in place in their cities.



“This was the most united effort I have seen from the DOJ, and I am cautiously optimistic that it will continue and be productive.”

—Summit Participant

Expanding the VRN in 2015

The VRN team is exploring potential sites to be included in the network. Stay tuned—sites will be announced in the spring!

The 2015 VRN Summit, which will convene the current and new sites, is tentatively scheduled to be held on September 14–16, 2015, in Washington, DC.

Summit Guest Speakers and Subject-Matter Experts

Commissioner Fred Bealefeld (retired)

Baltimore Police Department

Commissioner William Bratton

New York City Police Department

Professor Amy Crawford

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY

The Honorable Ronald L. Davis, Director

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

Commander Scott Edson

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office

Ellen Kurtz, Ph.D.

Philadelphia Adult Probation and Parole

The Honorable Zane Memeger

United States Attorney, Eastern District of Pennsylvania

Mallory O'Brien, Ph.D.

Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission

Andrew Papachristos, Ph.D.

Yale University

Jerry Ratcliffe, Ph.D.

Temple University

Mr. Michael Roosa

Bureau of Justice Assistance

The Honorable Rod Rosenstein

United States Attorney, District of Maryland

Mr. David Sargent

Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

Faye Taxman, Ph.D.

George Mason University

Craig Uchida, Ph.D.

Bureau of Justice Assistance Fellow

Neil Websdale, Ph.D.

National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative

Chuck Wexler, Executive Director

Police Executive Research Forum

VRN Web Site

The VRN Web site was officially launched in November 2014. The public-access side features a robust violence reduction resource library and additional background information on VRN. The private-access side for VRN site members contains additional functions, including VRN site TTA/resource request tracking, cloud file sharing, VRN contact database, and collaborative calendaring capabilities.

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VRN Violence Reduction Network SEARCH HOME RESOURCES CONTACT US

“Even as crime levels have fallen, many of our communities still suffer from alarming rates of homicides, shootings, and aggravated assaults. Confronting this problem and its root causes with a holistic approach remains a priority for the Department of Justice.”

— U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder
Smart on Crime: Reforming the Criminal Justice System for the 21st Century
August 2013

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is pleased to collaborate with a consortium of cities in the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), an innovative approach to support and enhance local violence reduction efforts. This data-driven, evidence-based initiative complements DOJ’s Smart on Crime initiative through delivery of strategic, intensive training and technical assistance. Designed to enhance a site’s current goals, VRN builds on efforts already under way, leverages lessons learned, and delivers a broad spectrum of resources via a strategic and holistic approach.

LOCALLY FOCUSED AND SUPPORTED

The following organization and structure of VRN are designed to convene federal, state, and local law enforcement and key stakeholders in the selected sites around the issue of violence reduction.

VRN Site Team

Executive leadership provides oversight and support.

United States Attorneys’ Offices and law enforcement leadership will serve as local points of contact and coordinate activities and services for the VRN sites.

VRN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Tailored Technical Assistance**—Ongoing, tailored technical assistance, based on goals developed at the summit, to enhance local violence reduction initiatives.
- **Community of Practice**—Working collaboratively with DOJ and practitioners and researchers, the VRN sites will have the opportunity to collaborate with other participating sites in a community of practice to address similar needs, problems, and interests.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning**—Opportunities to engage in meaningful, hands-on exchange among VRN sites to maximize opportunities for knowledge transfer and information sharing.

www.vrnnetwork.org

TTA/Resource Requests

VRN site users can track their requests for TTA and resources made through VRN via the Web site. The current status, pending tasks, and progress entries are itemized for each request.

Resource Library

An extensive library of open source publications, Web sites, and other valuable resources is organized and linked on the VRN Web site for the network and other jurisdictions interested in violence reduction materials. In addition to the publicly available resources, the private side of the Web site includes resources with sensitive information available to the VRN community only.

Webinars

▶ **Top Offender Lists**

November 2014

VRN hosted a Webinar on top offender lists on November 12, 2014. With research indicating that a relatively small number of offenders are responsible for a large number of the crimes that are committed, identifying top offenders for the targeting of scarce resources can be a successful strategy to address and decrease crime in the community.

▶ **VALOR Executive Briefing**

December 2014

The goal of the VALOR Executive Briefing Webinar was to advance officer safety strategies by providing an environment for law enforcement executives to review contemporary policies, procedures, and best practices to further define their agencies’ approaches to officer safety issues.

▶ **Innovative Strategies to Address Youth Violence**

January 2015

This Webinar engaged participants in discussions about innovative approaches to working with high-risk and gang-involved youth, based on the city of San Jose’s Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force and the application of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission process on Juvenile Case Review. In addition, local police department representatives shared their expertise.

▶ **Upcoming VRN Webinars**

February

Peer-to-peer Webinar: Community Engagement in High-Violence Neighborhoods is scheduled on February 24, 2015, at 2:00–3:30 p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

For more information about upcoming Webinars or to suggest topics for future Webinars, please e-mail us at info@vrnnetwork.org.

Training, Technical Assistance, and Resources Across the Network

Did you know that there were more than 70 requests for assistance from the five VRN sites? Many requests have already been addressed, with the program's goal to deliver training and/or technical assistance within 90 days of the site's request. Here are a few examples that happened during the first quarter:

DIVRT Training

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has delivered Digital Imaging and Video Response Team (DIVRT) training to all five VRN sites within the past year. The DIVRT initiative provides free training to state and local law enforcement to (1) develop the skills and abilities to rapidly recover and extract video evidence from areas near a crime scene and (2) exploit video evidence through the utilization of both traditional and social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, in order to solicit and obtain public assistance in solving crime. DIVRT originated in Philadelphia as a joint partnership between the FBI and the Philadelphia Police Department in 2007. Since its inception, DIVRT has aided the Philadelphia Police Department in increasing its clearance rates of violent crimes through direct public engagement.

Grant Training and Technical Assistance

Ms. Joan Brody provided grant training and technical assistance to Camden, Oakland/Richmond, and Wilmington since the summit. Chicago and Detroit are anticipating site visits from Ms. Brody within the next few months.

Homicide Review Training

Participants from the Detroit Police Department, the Oakland Police Department, the Richmond Police Department, and the Wilmington Police Department attended the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Homicide Review Commission Training on November 18–19, 2014. Another training is scheduled for spring 2015. Interested in participating? Contact your SSL!

Technology Review

BJA Senior Policy Advisor Mike Roosa is in the process of conducting technology assessments at each site to help agencies identify areas for technological enhancement.

Requests for Information

Through various DOJ program offices and TTA partners, information regarding body-worn cameras, smart policing, smart prosecution, the OJP Diagnostic Center, the National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC), Crime Analysis on Demand, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, and grant solicitations has been provided to requesting sites.

“I believe over the next couple of years, the VRN partnership will greatly aid in refining our efforts to be more effective in reducing violence. I am excited to see the additional progress we can make with this unique team approach.”

—Chief of Police J. Scott Thomson

Subject-Matter Expert Spotlight— Ms. Joan Brody



Ms. Brody works with government and nonprofit agencies to obtain additional public and private grant funding and assists in grant development, grant writing, and project implementation.

Ms. Brody has more than 24 years of experience and expertise working with government agencies, where she developed and coordinated strategies to bring public funding for the cities of New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In addition, Ms. Brody helps small and large jurisdictions access private funding through corporate and foundation giving programs. Ms. Brody also works with police departments to set up police foundations, nonprofit organizations to fund innovative police programs that otherwise would not be funded in the regular police budget.

After the launch of VRN in September 2014, several of the VRN sites requested Ms. Brody's assistance to assess individual grant needs and strategies. During the first quarter, Ms. Brody met with officials from the Camden, Oakland/Richmond, and Wilmington sites to discuss strategies and approaches for the acquisition of grant funding. After her initial site visit, Ms. Brody provided a summary report to the local agencies.

As a result of Ms. Brody's site visit, Camden site officials are now evaluating grant opportunities and anticipate additional training from Ms. Brody for other city partners to be conducted in the coming months. In Oakland/Richmond, the local city partners met with Ms. Brody for training and are now working to develop a collaborative regional grant agenda. In Wilmington, Ms. Brody is working with the Wilmington Police Department, the city of Wilmington, and the New Castle County Prosecutor's Office on grant strategies.

Site Highlights

Camden, New Jersey

During the first few months of VRN, Camden stakeholders—from the local law enforcement and county prosecutor to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), the FBI, and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA)—have been working collectively to identify immediate needs and DOJ resources to continue decreasing violent crime. From the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment to training and a technology review site visit, Camden has already received a number of valuable resources.

During initial discussions at the VRN Summit, Camden identified procuring a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) machine as a top priority. ATF officials committed to delivering a solution, and following the summit, site visits were conducted at the Camden County Police Department to prepare for installation of a NIBIN machine. Chief J. Scott Thomson and Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey are partnering to cohost the NIBIN machine for the region.

“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

During the quarter, Camden collaborated with the FBI to leverage their relationship with a highway billboard company to feature wanted fugitives on **digital billboards in the city**. Also through the FBI, critical Digital Imaging Video Response Team (DIVRT) training and kits were

delivered to Camden this quarter, and Camden has already engaged the use of these tools with positive results.

Through collaboration with BJA leadership and the New Jersey State Police, Camden County Police now have **access to statewide probation and parole data** to enhance the department’s daily operations. Camden is working to meld this information with gun crime data and has met with officials from the University of Chicago to discuss additional gun crime analysis strategies.



One of the most valuable tools in Camden’s violence reduction efforts is the **Camden County Crime Collaboration (C4)**—a collaborative effort of the Camden County Police Department’s homicide and undercover operations with the ATF, FBI, DEA, USMS, and the United States Attorney’s Office (USAO). C4 agencies and partners are colocated in shared space in Camden County, providing an avenue for the agencies to easily share information and work together on various crime reduction strategies. Agents and local investigators meet four days a week to review pending cases, and the C4 Executive Board holds monthly meetings that also include the U.S. Attorney, the County Prosecutor, the New Jersey State Police, and the Probation and Parole Board to enhance collaboration at all levels.

In the coming months, Camden, along with Detroit, is scheduled to participate in a peer exchange focused on the topic of domestic violence in High Point, North Carolina. In addition, VRN Camden stakeholders will participate in numerous training opportunities, to include **FBI Active Shooter training, National Gang Center training, U.S. Marshals VirTra training, and DEA exploitation training**. Additional grant technical assistance to Camden partners is in the works, and a site visit to NYPD is planned that will include its Real Time Crime Center, CompStat approach, integrated investigative dashboard, and other capabilities.



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Site Highlights

Chicago, Illinois

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One of the key highlights for Chicago since the launch of VRN is the success of the recently implemented **FBI Digital Imaging Video Response Team (DIVRT)** initiative—part of the VRN menu of resources—and the site is already experiencing positive results. Utilizing DIVRT resources, the Chicago Police Department used its Facebook page to post a video of suspected criminals and request the public's help. Posting videos on social media platforms allows citizens to replay the video and share with others, capabilities that can be limited when videos are released only to the media. In fact, since the first video was posted on November 4, it has received approximately 62,000 views and has been shared over 950 times! After numerous calls from citizens to the police department with names and birth dates of the suspects, one suspect was identified and charged within eight days of the video posting. Following the success of this video, the Chicago Police Department has begun posting additional videos of suspected criminals on Facebook in anticipation of continuing the positive results. We look forward to sharing more success stories from Chicago and the DIVRT initiative!

Another invaluable violence reduction asset in Chicago is the **Chicago Crime Gun Intelligence Center**, a collaboration of local, state, and federal partners, including ATF, the Chicago Police Department, the FBI, and others. The center is hosted in the Chicago ATF office and serves as a regional resource for agencies to use innovative technology to solve crimes. The center facilitates increased collaboration among agencies and

allows for augmented information sharing to identify, investigate, and prosecute criminals.

In November, VRN conducted its first Webinar on top offender lists, during which several leaders from VRN sites shared their agency's approach on the topic. Chicago Police Department Chief of Crime Control Strategies Bob Tracy provided vital information on how technology supports their efforts in the identification and targeting of offenders in Chicago.

This quarter, Chicago Police Department Commander Jonathan Lewin and State's Attorney Anita Alvarez requested and received information related to **body-worn cameras** and the **Smart Policing Initiative retaliatory violence project** in Rochester, New York. The **National Youth Forum on Youth Violence Prevention** provided the VRN Chicago team with a report on Chicago's involvement and success with the initiative.

VRN is supporting an upcoming **peer exchange** between Chicago and Camden to discuss areas of mutual interest, such as Real Time Crime Centers, CCTV, body-worn cameras, integrated investigative databases, and other crime-fighting technologies. In addition, Ms. Joan Brody is planning a site visit to provide **technical assistance with grants**, and Chicago is also scheduled to host the **International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) Crime Analysis workshop** in June.



Since the launch of VRN, Detroit has been identifying areas where DOJ resources can support and enhance its current strategies to drive down violent crime. In November, Mr. Patrick Muscat of the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, along with Lieutenant Nathaniel McQueen and Inspector Phil Menna of the Michigan State Police, participated in the **Milwaukee Homicide Review Training**. In December, BJA Senior Policy Advisor Mike Roosa visited Detroit to assess **technology/National Data Exchange** (N-DEx) data and has developed a report detailing the assessment. The Detroit Public Schools, the Detroit Police Department, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, and the Michigan State Police all participated in the site visit.

In the coming months, Detroit will receive or participate in a number of DOJ training and technical assistance resources, to include:

- A **peer exchange** is scheduled in High Point, North Carolina, to examine **domestic violence reduction strategies**. Individuals from the mayor's office, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, the Michigan State Police, and the Detroit Police Department and a police victim advocate will attend. Detroit will be joined by VRN Camden representatives for this important exchange of information.
- A site visit and **grant strategies technical assistance** will be provided by Ms. Joan Brody.
- The **National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Training** will be provided in Detroit, and VRN partner Camden will participate as well. This training program generally focuses on a variety of domestic violence-related topics, such as sexual assault, which includes stranger assault as well as intimate partner violence; fatality and nonfatal cases; issues unique to children; individuals with disabilities; stalking; witness issues; ethics and professional responsibility; cross-examination strategies; and more. This training will be a mixture of general sessions, simultaneous lectures, and hands-on trial advocacy.
- **IADLEST Crime Analysis Executive Training** will be delivered. BJA Deputy Director Kristen Mahoney and Director Denise O'Donnell have worked with many focus groups to design a product that they hope will help law enforcement executives and command staff of the VRN sites and beyond to **better understand crime analysis**, how to build a unit, and how to work better with their analysts.
- Dr. Neil Websdale, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University and Director of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative, will conduct a site visit to Detroit to provide **domestic violence fatality review assistance and training**.



Site Highlights

Oakland/Richmond, California

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Not only is the VRN site in California composed of two cities, but there are also two chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, and counties all collaborating on a common goal: **violence reduction and safer communities!**

The Oakland/Richmond site has made tremendous progress in accessing DOJ resources via VRN since the September launch. Site stakeholders—local agencies and federal partners—are engaged in **biweekly calls and regular communications** around their shared goal of identifying and accessing DOJ resources and reducing violent crime.

Highlights of the quarter were the attendance of officers from Richmond and Oakland at the

Milwaukee Homicide

Review Training in November, a site visit for **grant technical assistance** conducted by Ms. Joan Brody in December, and numerous literature requests delivered to the various partners, regarding **crime analysis on demand, crime prevention through environmental design, community surveys,** and **DOJ grant information.**

Looking ahead, through BJA, VRN, and the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice,

a **Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice Summit** will be jointly hosted in March 2015 by the site's seven local district attorney's offices, the Oakland Police Department, the Richmond Police Department, and the San Francisco Police Department. This event will bring 150 high-level law enforcement officials, including police chiefs, sheriffs, members of their command staffs, federal law enforcement

agency heads, and others, together for a robust and deep discussion regarding **police legitimacy and procedural justice, building community trust, and strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color.**

The Oakland/Richmond

site is also looking forward to training opportunities in the areas of **fair and impartial policing,** as well as **customized training for gang investigators** developed by the National Gang Center and hosted by the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office.

In addition, the Richmond Police Department and the Oakland Police Department will leverage VRN's resources to explore the **evaluation of department programs** in the coming months.

“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



Site Highlights

Wilmington, Delaware

Since the launch of VRN, Wilmington stakeholders have embraced the opportunity to increase collaboration by **establishing monthly meetings** that include representatives from the city of Wilmington, the governor's office, the New Castle Police Department, probation and parole, and the United States Attorney's Office, along with the FBI, DEA, ATF, USMS, and other local and federal officials. New Castle County was added as a HIDTA area by the Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA to give Wilmington access to available resources.

While Wilmington has seen an overall decrease in crime and violent crime, homicide rates have held steady, and this has become an area of focus for VRN resources. For example, during the quarter, Wilmington Police Department representatives participated in the **Milwaukee Homicide Review Training** conducted by Dr. Mallory O'Brien. **They subsequently established a homicide squad**, which is a partnership among the Wilmington Police Department, the state prosecutor, and ATF.

A few of the VRN requests fulfilled for Wilmington this quarter include:

- **An assessment of Wilmington's crime data** was provided by Mr. Chad Kenney of Cincinnati's Office of Performance and Data Analytics, and a subsequent two-day **GunStat training** was held in December, to prepare for the launch of GunStat in January.
- **FBI DIVRT training** was delivered in November.
- **A site visit technology review** was completed in October by Mr. Mike Roosa, BJA Senior Policy Advisor. Lieutenant Sam Hood of the Baltimore Police Department will conduct

a follow-up visit in Wilmington **to assess CCTV cameras**.

- **A grant strategies site visit and summary report** were provided by Ms. Joan Brody, and she is continuing to work with the Wilmington Police Department, the city of Wilmington, and the New Castle County Prosecutor's Office.

Enthusied by VRN, Wilmington is developing a **more comprehensive violence reduction strategy**, **implementing performance metrics**, and **continuing to strengthen the internal structure of the Wilmington Police Department**.

With Wilmington less than an hour away from VRN partners in New Jersey, the two sites have a **unique opportunity for peer-to-peer network interaction**.

“The structure of the network has encouraged and strengthened cooperative efforts that were already under way in Wilmington.”

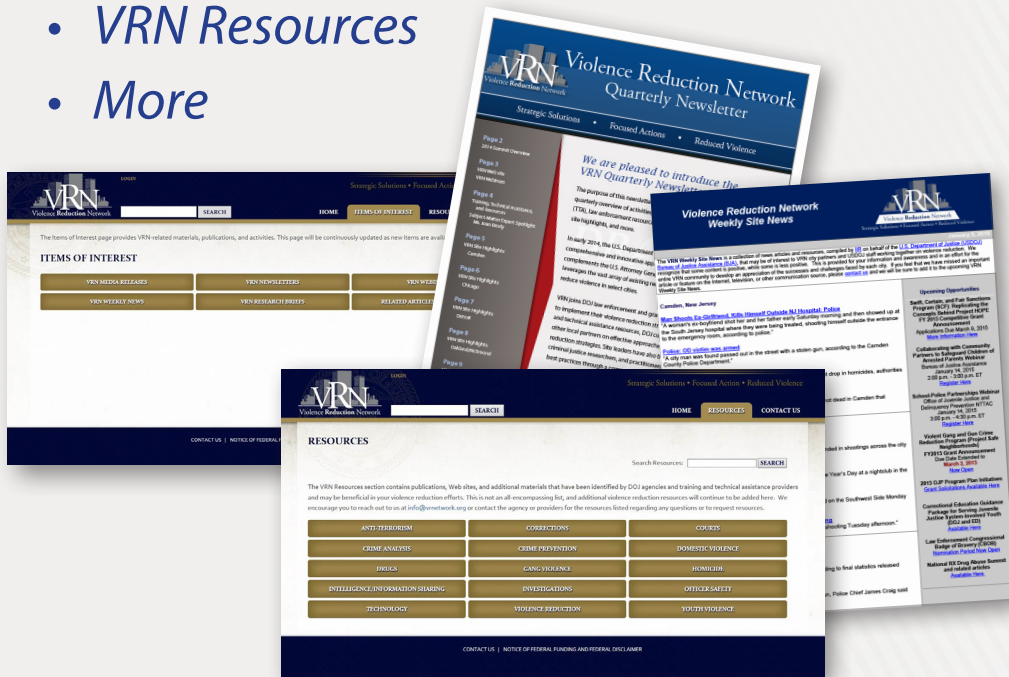
—Strategic Site Liaison John Skinner

In fact, members of the Wilmington site conducted a site visit to Camden in November, where they met and discussed **successful police and prosecution strategies**. Wilmington also has plans to visit the **El Paso Intelligence Center** to learn about **analytic resources they can offer**, work with Dr. Jerry Ratcliffe on a staffing analysis, and engage in a homicide assessment and training. Wilmington is a great example of the benefits of peer exchange and the many networking opportunities available through VRN.



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