

2025 CONFERENCE ON VIOLENT CRIME

MAY 28–30, 2025

THE INN AT VIRGINIA TECH AND SKELTON CONFERENCE CENTER
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Criminal Justice Services

The Honorable Jackson H. Miller
Director

Tracy Louise Winn Banks, Esq.
Chief Deputy Director

1100 Bank Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-4000

May 28-30, 2025

Dear Conference Participant:

On behalf of Governor Glenn Youngkin and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), welcome to the *2025 Conference on Violent Crime*. The Commonwealth of Virginia benefits when law enforcement and criminal justice partners proactively come together to focus on public safety concerns.

This gathering is a cornerstone of support for our dedicated law enforcement partners, who are committed to fostering secure communities across the Commonwealth. DCJS is pleased to collaborate 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 excited to provide a forum that brings together experts in the field of law enforcement and criminal justice to delve into violent crime trends and explore current strategies to enhance public safety statewide.

Our intent for this conference is to provide you with additional knowledge and tools needed as you return to your respective workplaces and continue to implement policies, practices, and initiatives that increase public safety and improve the quality of life of our communities.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jackson H. Miller".

Jackson Miller
Director

A G E N D A

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM **Welcome and Opening Ceremony** — *Latham ABC*

Presentation of Colors

Virginia State Police Color Guard

National Anthem

Rachael Baxley

Opening Remarks

Director Jackson Miller, *Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

Colonel Matthew D. Hanley, *Virginia State Police*

Mike Costigan, *Office of the Virginia Attorney General*

Major Tony Haga, *Virginia Tech Police Department*

Chief Todd Brewster, *Blacksburg Police Department*

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM **Tren de Aragua** — *Latham ABC*

Palestra Group International

Once a Venezuelan prison gang, Tren de Aragua (TDA) has expanded its footprint across the United States and beyond, evolving into a transnational criminal enterprise. This keynote will explore how TDA has leveraged political unrest and migration to infiltrate new territories, engaging in a wide range of illicit activities—from human trafficking and prostitution to armed robbery, deed fraud, and narcotics trafficking. Unlike traditional street gangs, TDA exhibits a structure and operational strategy comparable to established organized crime syndicates, while simultaneously running front-facing legitimate businesses across several countries.

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM **Break**

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM **The Art of Perception: Seeing What Matters** — *Latham ABC*

Amy Herman, *The Art of Perception*

The Art of Perception provides law enforcement, intelligence, and military leaders the necessary tools to enhance perception and communication in assessment, surveillance, and critical response. In this highly participatory, fast-moving, and visual presentation of works of art, participants revisit both the application of their perception skills and the ability to communicate concisely and effectively in exchanges of critical information. Specifically designed to address the role of perception and observation among team members, the training also emphasizes the importance of pattern recognition in acclimating to both short-term and extended threats, as well as honing situational awareness. Painting, sculpture, and photography are also employed to dismantle biases and long-held assumptions that impede collective decision-making and best practices. The overarching objective of *The Art of Perception* is to provide attendees with a renewed sense of critical inquiry and self-perception that will be instrumental in problem-solving strategies and prospective tactical initiatives.

12:15 PM – 1:15 PM **Lunch** (*provided*) — *Latham ABC*

1:15 PM – 2:45 PM **Internet and Open-Source Investigations** — *Latham ABC*

Scott Kilpatrick, *Baltimore County Police Department, Maryland*

Digital data as evidence in investigations is well established and set to play a progressively more significant role in the future. A lack of understanding of the types of readily available digital data and what to do with it once you have acquired it can result in value-rich information being left undiscovered—information that can inevitably make or break cases. This presentation is designed to show how to legally utilize and exploit open-source intelligence.

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM **Break**

Continued

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1. Recognizing Child Torture – Response and Investigative Considerations — *Assembly Hall*

Melissa R. Stormer, *FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit*

Human service professionals—including those in law enforcement and child welfare—are highly skilled in identifying child maltreatment. However, many lack familiarity with child torture (CT) and the distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of maltreatment. As a result, aspects of torture may go unrecognized, with CT cases often classified as severe child abuse. This presentation will examine the defining elements of CT, contrast them with more widely recognized forms of child abuse, and address offender behaviors, investigative strategies, and the impacts on victims.

2. Domestic Violence/Domestic Homicide Investigations — *Latham DEF*

Michael J. Coker, *Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

This presentation explores some of the key components of an effective domestic violence homicide investigation. Using case studies, Mr. Coker will address topics such as risk assessments, police and prosecution collaboration, lessons learned, and best practices, and discuss available resources to enhance the investigation and prosecution of offenders.

3. The Art of Perception: Multiple Perspectives for Better Decisions — *Duck Pond*

Amy Herman, *The Art of Perception*

In a rapidly changing world, situational awareness and effective communication skills are crucial to a successful critical response. In this breakout session, *The Art of Perception* will build on the keynote presentation by using works of art to provide law enforcement and intelligence professionals the tools to incorporate multiple perspectives into their decision-making, both in exigent circumstances and long-term challenges. Considering a range of perceptions will maximize understanding of legal and intelligence scenarios and minimize cognitive biases. Interactive exercises will highlight how to overcome persistent gaps in visual intelligence and lay the foundation for a more objective, informed, and effective response to critical incidents.

4. Gang Awareness – *Solitude*

Mike Duke, *Virginia Department of Corrections*

This workshop will show the most prominent gangs in the Virginia Department of Corrections (VDOC). The presentation will cover the mentality, dress, language, gang colors, gang signs, and other identifying characteristics of gang membership.

5. Echoes of the Incident: Addressing the Realities of Critical Incident Aftermath — *Smithfield*

Adam Blevins, *Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program (VALEAP)*

Adam Blevins is a former Virginia State Trooper, licensed resident in counseling, and Operations Director for the Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program. This session blends clinical insight, lived experience, and cultural awareness. The real weight of a critical incident often shows up long after the scene is cleared. The emotional, psychological, and organizational echoes can ripple through individuals, teams, and entire agencies, sometimes for years. This workshop takes an honest, trauma-informed look at what it means to face the aftermath of a critical incident from every angle: the personal impact on first responders, the role of leadership in shaping recovery, and the subtle ways organizational culture can either support healing or deepen the wound. Attendees will explore the lingering effects of trauma and moral injury on responders, what peer support looks like when it works, how agencies unintentionally contribute to long-term damage, and how to stop it, the difference between “getting through it” and actually recovering, and real-world strategies for supporting personnel, rebuilding trust, and restoring operational wellness. Whether you’re on the front line or leading those who are, this session is about what comes next and how to make sure no one is left behind in the aftermath.

A G E N D A

THURSDAY, MAY 29

8:30 AM – 9:30 AM **Operation Ceasefire Virginia Update — Latham ABC**

Mark Fero, *Office of the Attorney General*

Ceasefire Virginia is a proven approach to address and reduce violent criminal activity among serious and repeat offenders. This initiative aims at reducing violent crime by maintaining strategic and effective partnerships with state and federal agencies, local law enforcement, and community leaders throughout the Commonwealth. Critical elements of Ceasefire Virginia include addressing the most significant drivers of violence, leveraging technology and analytics, developing and implementing enforcement strategies, and deterring others from engaging in violence through prosecution, public awareness, gang intervention, crime prevention, and community policing.

9:30 AM – 10:45 AM **Nihilistic Violent Extremism and Sadistic Online Exploitation — Latham ABC**

Melissa R. Stormer, *FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit*

The increase in nihilistic violent extremism online is an evolving concern in the threat assessment and threat management (TATM) space. In September 2023, the FBI made a public service announcement regarding violent extremist groups targeting and sextorting vulnerable youths online. This presentation will focus on violent extremist groups, their behaviors and goals, commonly noted offender characteristics, and victimology. It will provide a background on these groups and discuss their evolution over time. Lastly, a case study will be presented and offer threat assessment, threat management, and investigative considerations.

10:45 AM – 11:00 AM **Break**

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM **To Catch a Predator — Latham ABC**

Joshua Boyles, *City of Richmond Commonwealth Attorney's Office*

Sarah Helle, *City of Richmond Commonwealth Attorney's Office*

Ben Neifeld, *Richmond Police Department*

Lee Olds, *Virginia Commonwealth University Police Department*

Richmond's Fan Neighborhood sits just west of the City's center and is one of Richmond's most diverse neighborhoods. The Fan is home to many Virginia Commonwealth University students, young professionals, and families. From 2014 to 2018, a man named Justin Harvey made this community his preying ground, causing many people to feel uneasy. Harvey put fear into many young women, most between 19 and 24 years old, in the one place they should feel the safest: their homes. Both the Richmond Police Department and VCU Police Department worked tirelessly over this timeframe to identify a man who was reported to have committed numerous burglaries, assaults, and rapes. Eventually, in September 2018, detectives from both agencies and prosecutors from the Richmond Commonwealth Attorney's Office were able to work together to identify and arrest Harvey. Through the diligent work between these three agencies, Harvey was connected to 10 different cases. Come along as detectives and prosecutors detail how the use of technology, cell phone data, and physical evidence earned Harvey over 200 years in the Virginia Department of Corrections.

12:15 PM – 1:15 PM **Lunch (provided) — Latham ABC**

1:15 PM – 2:45 PM **First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs: A Case Study on the Link Between Domestic Violence and Mass Attacks — Latham ABC**

Josh Ryan, *U.S. Secret Service*

Released on April 23, 2025, this behavioral case study examines the background and behavioral history of a gunman who killed 26 people and wounded 22 others in an attack at a church in Texas. In this presentation, the presenter will discuss the attacker's long history of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual violence perpetrated against friends, family members, and others.

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM **Break**

Continued

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1. Social Media Investigations — Assembly Hall

Scott Kilpatrick, *Baltimore County Police Department, Maryland*

Attendees will learn what digital data is available, why the specific data is valuable, what data to seek based on case particulars, and how to write court orders and/or search warrants to obtain the data successfully. The class will discuss how to correctly manage the data received for posterity and discovery requirements and how to exploit the data received for actionable leads and intelligence. Attendees will leave equipped with knowledge and skills, positioning them to better leverage this data in investigations.

2. The Boyfriend Trafficker — Latham DEF

McKayla Burnett, *Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

Kathryn Freeman, *Virginia State Police*

Human trafficking doesn't always start with force—it often begins with romance. Traffickers posing as loving partners use psychological manipulation to lure their victims into exploitation. This session will dive into Virginia's human trafficking laws, explore the grooming and recruitment tactics used by traffickers, and uncover the methods of control that keep victims trapped. We will also examine the trauma victims endure and why compliance is often mistaken for choice. Agent Freeman will provide a case study to show how the illusion of love is often enough to keep a victim compliant and prevent them from leaving the trafficking situation.

3. 30 Boyz – Neighborhood Rap to Murder — Duck Pond

Michael Kiniry, *Richmond Police Department*

Brian Kelly, *Henrico County Police Department*

This workshop is an in-depth case study of the 30 Boyz Gang. This neighborhood-based street gang started its own rap label, which ultimately contributed to multiple shootings and murders. Attendees will hear about the alliances of the 30 Boyz Street Gang, its use of social media, and how the activities of their rap label resulted in several homicides. Lessons learned in building a successful prosecution, utilization of jail calls, and joint jurisdiction investigations will be discussed.

4. The Impact of Mass Violence on Individuals and the Community — Solitude

Dawn Bush, *Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

Julia Fuller-Wilson, *Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

Mass violence events are far more frequent and far more deadly than they have been in previous years. The increase in violence and its substantial media coverage can lead to negative and sometimes long-lasting effects on the survivors and the community at large. In this workshop, we will discuss the psychological, emotional, and practical impacts of mass violence events. We will discuss the risks for long-term trauma and the protective factors that are crucial to personal and community healing and resilience. Finally, we will define and discuss the importance of trauma-informed care and identify local, state, and federal resources that can assist following a traumatic event in your community.

5. DCJS Ceasefire Grantee Check-in — Smithfield

Greg Hopkins, *Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

The goal of the workshop is to build a collaborative and comprehensive networking opportunity for our grantees to engage with peers on current and ongoing local initiatives in addressing violent crime. It is our intent to highlight programs that are implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention and enforcement programs based on partnerships among community residents, local government agencies, community-based organizations, and law enforcement.

A G E N D A

FRIDAY, MAY 30

8:30 AM – 12:30 PM **Verbal De-Escalation Training: Surviving Verbal Conflict®** — *Latham ABC*

Harry Dolan, *Dolan Consulting Group*

Today's increased service demands and the scrutiny placed upon public safety professionals have resulted in a growing need to master verbal conflict management skills. When negative verbal encounters escalate to the point where physical intervention is used, criticism often results when it is later discovered that there is little evidence of verbal de-escalation techniques employed by officers. This is particularly true when incident video and audio reviews are utilized. In some cases, it has become clear that the verbal actions of the public safety responders served to escalate the situation. Administrators are now asking, "Is this an area where the training tape has run out? Have we adequately trained our personnel to successfully manage and respond to verbal confrontations in a professional manner?" Verbal de-escalation training provides public safety professionals with time-tested communication skills proven to help de-escalate volatile situations, safeguard fellow officers' emotional and professional well-being, and significantly enhance the agency's professional image.

12:30 PM

Main Conference Concludes

R E S O U R C E S

Conference Page

www.dcjs.virginia.gov/training-events/2025-conference-violent-crime



Training Page

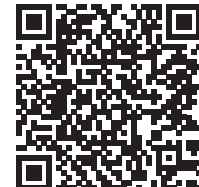
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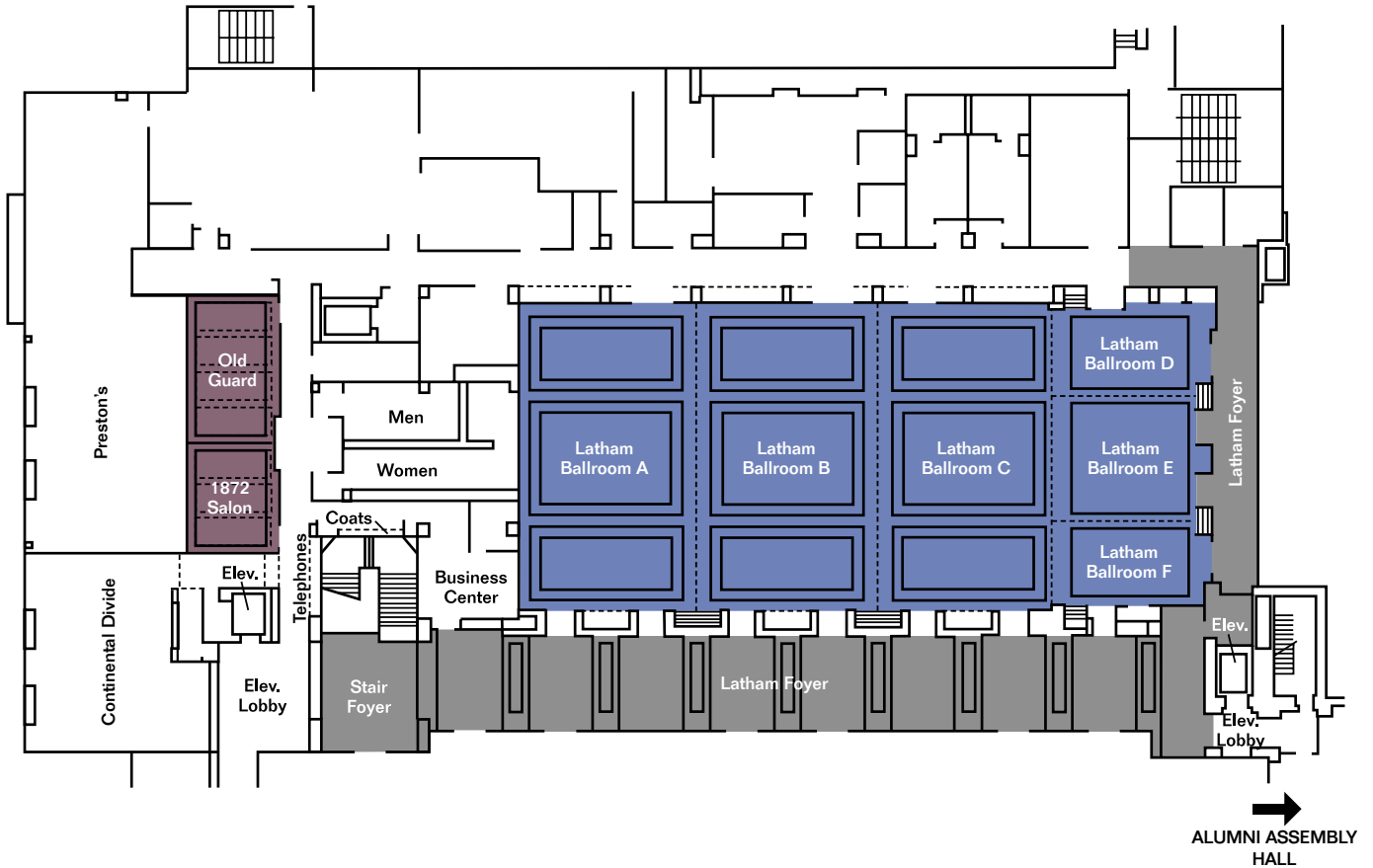
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Please note: Photos and/or videos from this event may appear on the DCJS website, social media sites, and in other agency materials.

CONFERENCE CENTER MAP

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

