



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Violent Crime Coordinating Council Report to the Legislature

2025 Annual Report

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2025 Annual Report

This annual report details the activities of the Violent Crime Coordinating Council (VCCC), summarizes external reviews of multi-jurisdictional entities, highlights outcomes of violent crime reduction strategies, and reports on audits of criminal gang investigative data. It covers the period January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.

Background

VCCC's primary duty is to develop a strategy to reduce the harm caused to the public by gang and drug crimes in Minnesota. The council helps guide investigations and prosecutions of gang and drug crimes, especially violent crimes associated with gang activity. The council also provides direction and oversight to multi-jurisdictional Violent Crime Enforcement Teams (VCET) located throughout the state.

Established in 2010, VCCC works closely with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) and is responsible for:

- Developing a policy and procedure manual to guide gang and drug investigations (Guidelines Manual).
- Recommending an individual to serve as statewide gang and drug coordinator (Statewide Coordinator).
- Developing VCET grant eligibility criteria and an application review process.
- Recommending termination of funding for VCETs that fail to operate effectively.
- Developing an information sharing process to improve investigations and prosecutions of gang and drug offenses.
- Developing impartial policies that prohibit use of personal characteristics as the basis for law enforcement, prosecution or forfeiture actions.
- Adopting objective criteria and identifying characteristics to determine whether individuals are or may be members of gangs involved in criminal activity.

DPS' Office of Justice Programs (OJP) employs a grant manager to administer law enforcement grant funding. OJP also employs the Statewide Coordinator to provide training and technical assistance for VCETs. These positions also provide administrative support for the VCCC.

VCCC activities in 2025

Statewide coordinator

The statewide coordinator worked primarily in the field, attending VCET advisory board meetings, providing technical assistance to VCET commanders and administering training. He organized the 2025 annual training workshop for VCET commanders and coordinated a training on ethical leadership for VCET commanders and team leaders in St. Cloud.

The statewide coordinator serves on the board of the Minnesota State Association of Narcotics Investigators (MSANI) and attends meetings of the North Central High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). He is also DPS' representative on the state Mandatory Minimum Sentences Task Force.

2025 meetings

In 2025, the VCCC transitioned from six bi-monthly meetings to four quarterly meetings held in February, May, August and November. The annual joint meeting between the VCCC and VCET advisory board chairs was modified to an every-other-year schedule.

At the February meeting, Renville County Sheriff Scott Hable, previously serving as vice chair, was elected chair of the VCCC. Shakopee Police Chief Jeff Tate was elected vice chair. A complete membership list is included in Appendix A.

VCCC membership is established by statute and includes representatives from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Office of the Minnesota Attorney General, and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Membership also includes representatives from state councils serving Minnesota communities of color and Indigenous communities, the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, and Minnesota County Attorneys Association. Statutory membership further includes representatives from the state's four largest law enforcement agencies: Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Ramsey County, and St. Paul.

Non-voting ex officio members who regularly participated in meetings included representatives from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA), and the Minnesota National Guard Counter Drug Program.

Each VCCC meeting included updates from the Statewide Coordinator, grant manager, and partner agencies regarding enforcement trends, operational issues, training initiatives and statewide coordination efforts.

At the February meeting, Alliant Consulting presented an overview of the 2024 VCET Operational Review, including audit findings and recommendations for operational and process improvements.

At the August meeting, the BCA Special Agent in Charge presented on the Violent Crime Reduction Unit (VCRU), which was established through state legislative funding in 2022 to coordinate and disrupt violent crime activity in the metropolitan area. The unit includes 17 special agents and investigators from 12 partner agencies, along with intelligence analysts, victim and witness coordinators, forensic scientists, and a firearm-detection K-9 team. The VCRU reports its activities and outcomes separately through an annual legislative report.

The VCCC did not recommend any revisions to the Guidelines Manual or the 9-Point Gang Criteria during 2025.

VCET funding

OJP administered 21 multijurisdictional VCET grants statewide during the 2024-2025 grant period. VCET grantees, commanders and advisory board chairs are listed in Appendix B.

Throughout the grant cycle, grantees submitted quarterly reports detailing arrests, seizures, operational activities, program income and expenditures. Grantees also submitted quarterly financial status reports for reimbursement of approved expenses. OJP oversight activities included an initial risk assessment, two monitoring visits, a financial reconciliation of quarterly expenditures and a closeout performance evaluation for each grant.

All VCET grantees are required to attend the annual VCET Commanders Training at Camp Ripley to review grant requirements, operational procedures and emerging enforcement issues. The 2025 training included presentations from:

- Minnesota National Guard Counter Drug Program
- HIDTA Threat Assessment
- Ramey County Attorney's Office, Officer Involved Shootings
- U.S. Attorney's Office, Criminal Division
- Minnesota State Association of Narcotics Investigators
- Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center (MOCIC)
- BCA Operational Planning
- Minnesota Attorney General's Legal Update
- BCA Force Investigation Unit

In 2025, OJP also administered a competitive application process that resulted in the award of 22 multi-jurisdictional VCET grants for the 2026-2027 grant period using state and federal Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funds.

As part of the application process, the VCCC approved revised eligibility criteria recognizing Tribal law enforcement agencies as qualifying partners within the multi-county requirement for greater Minnesota task forces.

A new VCET grant awarded to the Crow Wing County Sheriff's Office established the Lakes Area Drug Investigative Division (LADID), a partnership that includes the Mille Lacs Band Tribal Police and the cities of Baxter and Brainerd.

An increase in grant administration costs reduced the amount of funding available for direct VCET grants. To offset these reductions, OJP allocated additional federal JAG funding to support the 2026-2027 grant awards. Despite the supplemental funding, all continuing VCET grants experienced a modest decrease in overall funding levels.

VCET audits

In 2025, the statewide coordinator, in partnership with VCET commanders, conducted comprehensive peer review site visits at all VCET locations statewide. Each commander was required to participate in the review of another VCET, and participants consistently reported that the peer review process provided valuable operational insights and best practices applicable to their own task forces.

During the reviews, approximately 130 confidential informant (CI) and investigative case files were examined. Reviewers identified a small number of CI files that were missing required documentation, including photographs, driver's license information and records of investigator contact with confidential informants.

Review teams also examined approximately 100 asset seizure files involving cash and firearms. Reviewers noted that all VCETs maintained effective systems for documenting property seizures, tracking forfeiture cases and distributing forfeiture proceeds to the state, county attorneys and participating law enforcement agencies.

Following the reviews, the statewide coordinator conducted follow-up spot checks with all VCETs identified as having incomplete documentation and verified that corrective actions had been completed. All current grantees were subsequently determined eligible to participate in the competitive 2026-2027 grant process.

VCET Activities and Outcomes

The VCET grants report to OJP quarterly on investigative activities, arrests, and seizures of narcotics and firearms. They also highlight multijurisdictional cases, note challenges encountered, and report on program income.

In 2025, VCETs initiated 3,937 investigations across the state, 220 consent searches, and 3,238 search warrants. (VCETs only track the type of investigation after an arrest is made.) They reported 1,771 drug arrests and 1,367 non-drug arrests. Sixty-one percent of the drug arrests involved methamphetamine and resulted in the seizure of 1,492,074 grams. VCETs also seized 144,709 fentanyl pills and 55,531 grams of fentanyl powder. Many of the non-drug arrests were initiated through narcotics investigations and included arrests for Part 1 and Part 2 offenses, and outstanding warrants including violations of probation/supervised release. VCETS seized 1,197 firearms during the reporting period.

Violent Crime Reduction Unit

In 2023, the legislature appropriated additional funds for the BCA to form a Violent Crime Reduction Unit (VCRU). Funds support the forensic laboratory, criminal information/operation, enforcement, and partnerships.

In 2025, the VCRU added four special agents to its roster, along with two violent crime victim coordinators who work collaboratively with partner agencies to provide resources to violent crime victims. During the reporting period, the VCRU was instrumental in the seizure of 428 illegal firearms and made over 440 arrests. The VCRU initiated 280 investigations in 2025. Of the 280 cases:

- 56 were related to first- or second-degree assault cases.
- 39 were related to drug investigations tied to gangs or cartels and possession or trafficking of firearms.
- 64 were related to fugitives wanted for violent assaults or illegal possession of firearms.
- 121 were related to firearms trafficking or illegal possession or transportation of firearms.

BCA Criminal Gang Investigative Data System Audit

The BCA conducts periodic, random audits of data maintained within the Minnesota Gang Pointer File to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and data accuracy. Subject records are reviewed to determine whether individuals have qualifying gross misdemeanor or felony convictions within the required three-year review period.

The most recent audit was conducted between September 2024 and September 2025 and included data submitted by:

- Cass County Sheriff's Office

- Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Office
- Koochiching County Sheriff's Department
- Metro Gang Strike Force (subjects transferred to BCA Investigations)
- Willmar Police Department

As part of the audit, the BCA reviewed 27 criminal history records that fell within the required three-year audit period. Of those records, seven subjects did not have additional qualifying criminal convictions and were subsequently removed from the Minnesota Gang Pointer File in accordance with statutory requirements.

As of September 2, 2025, the Gang Pointer File contained 20 active subjects.

VCCC activities in 2026

The VCCC will continue meeting on a quarterly basis in 2026, including a joint meeting in February with VCET advisory board chairs and commanders. Newer VCETs, including Aitkin, Itasca and Mille Lacs (AIM), the Lakes Area Drug Investigative Division (LADID) and West Hennepin VCET, will be invited to present updates on their operations, partnerships and regional enforcement initiatives.

OJP will continue administering VCET grants, coordinating training opportunities, and providing technical assistance to support effective task force operations statewide. Planned activities for 2026 include a spring VCET commanders' meeting, a contracted procedural review of VCET operations and a December leadership training for VCET commanders and team leaders.

The BCA will continue management and oversight of the Gang Pointer File to support statewide criminal intelligence sharing, compliance with statutory requirements and coordination among local, state, Tribal and federal law enforcement partners.

Appendix A: 2025 VCCC members

NAME	AGENCY	STATUTORY REPRESENTATION
Mike Martin, undersheriff (chair)	Ramsey County Sheriff's Office	Ramsey County Sheriff's Office
Scott Hable, sheriff (vice chair)	Renville County Sheriff's Office	Minnesota Sheriff's Association (greater Minnesota)
Drew Evans, superintendent	Bureau of Criminal Apprehension	Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Allen Slaughter, assistant U.S. attorney	District of Minnesota	United States Attorney's Office
David Voigt, assistant attorney general	Office of the Minnesota Attorney General	Office of the Minnesota Attorney General
Jeff Stiff, deputy chief	St. Paul Police Department	St. Paul Police Department
Emily Olson, commander	Minneapolis Police Department	Minneapolis Police Department
Jeff Tate, chief	Shakopee Police Department	Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (metro)
Dan Starry, sheriff	Washington County Sheriff's Office	Minnesota Sheriff's Association (metro)
Rick Palaia, major	Hennepin County Sheriff's Office	Hennepin County Sheriff's Office
Matt Grochow, chief	St. Peter Police Department	Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (greater Minnesota)
John Melvin, director	Office of Special Investigations	Minnesota Department of Corrections
Hao Nguyen, assistant county attorney	Ramsey County Attorney's Office	Minnesota County Attorneys Association (metro prosecutor)
Shane Baker, county attorney	Kandiyohi County Attorney's Office	Minnesota County Attorneys Association (greater Minnesota prosecutor)
David Hester, chief	Lower Sioux Indian Community	Tribal police representative
Sonia Reyes, executive director	Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs	Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
Sia Her, executive director	Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans	Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans

NAME	AGENCY	STATUTORY REPRESENTATION
Linda Sloan, executive director	Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage	Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage
Derrick Naumann, deputy chief	Mille Lacs Tribal Police	Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
John Gross, assistant attorney general	Office of the Attorney General	Legal counsel
Lukas Wright, major	Minnesota National Guard, Counter Drug Program	Ex-officio member
Rafael Mattei, assistant special agent in charge	Drug Enforcement Administration	Ex-officio member
Kent Bailey, deputy director (Minnesota)	High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area	Ex-officio member

Appendix B: 2025 VCET contacts

VCET	COMMANDER	FISCAL AGENCY	ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR
AIM Task Force	Sgt. Greg Payment	Aitkin County Sheriff's Office	Aitkin County Sheriff Dan Guida
Anoka-Hennepin Task Force	Lt. Derek Schuldt	Anoka County Sheriff's Office	Rogers Police Chief Dan Wills
Brown-Lyon-Renville-Redwood Task Force	Cmdr. Joel Bill	New Ulm Police Department	Lyon County Sheriff Eric Wallen
Buffalo Ridge Task Force	Cmdr. Christopher Lewis	Pipestone County Sheriff's Office	Pipestone County Chief Deputy Mike Hamann
Cannon River Drug & Violent Crimes Task Force	Cmdr. Scott O'Brien	Rice County Sheriff's Office	Faribault Police Chief John Sherwin
CEE-VI Task Force	Sgt. Ross Ardoff	Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Office	Meeker County Sheriff Brian Cruze
Central Minnesota Violent Offender Task Force	Lt. Luke Dingmann	Central Minnesota MCIU	Benton County Sheriff Troy Heck
Dakota County Task Force	Capt. Joshua Fahey	City of Eagan	Apple Valley Deputy Chief Greg Dahlstrom
East Central Drug Task Force	Cmdr. Zach Griffin	Pine County Sheriff's Office	Kanabec County Sheriff Brian Smith
Hennepin County Violent Offender Task Force	Lt. Steve Lorentz	Hennepin County Sheriff's Office	Major Rick Palaia
Lake Superior Drug and Gang Task Force	Lt. Jason Tanski	Duluth Police Department	Duluth Deputy Chief Nick Lukovsky
Minnesota River Valley Task Force	Lt. Chad Ruch	Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office	Blue Earth County Sheriff Jeff Wersal
Paul Bunyan Drug and Gang Task Force	Sgt. Dave Hart	Beltrami County Sheriff's Office	Bemidji Police Chief Mike Mastin
Pine to Prairie Task Force	Sgt. Aeiiso Schrage	Crookston Police Department	East Grand Forks Police Chief Mike Hedlund

VCET	COMMANDER	FISCAL AGENCY	ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR
Ramsey County Violent Crime Enforcement Team	Cmdr. Rick Clark	Ramsey County Sheriff's Office	Ramsey County Undersheriff Mike Martin
South Central Drug Investigative Unit	Sgt. Ben Johnson	Owatonna Police Department	Albert Lea Police Chief J.D. Carlson
Southeast Minnesota Gang and Drug Task Force	Capt. Tim Parkin	Olmsted County Sheriff's Office	Wabasha County Sheriff Rodney Bartsh
Southwest Metro Task Force	Sgt. Mike Penning	Shakopee Police Department	Carver County Sheriff Jason Kamerud
Washington County Task Force	Sgt. Chris Howard	Washington County Sheriff's Office	Washington County Sheriff Dan Starry
West Central MN VCET	Sgt. Brandon Cruse	Douglas County Sheriff's Office	Douglas County Sheriff Troy Wolbersen
West Hennepin Task Force	Lt. Sean Sweeney	Hennepin County Sheriff's Office	Major Rick Palaia