GIFFORDS CENTER FOR
VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

Moving the Mission: Field Insights from the 2025 CVI Conference

ABOUT THE 2025 COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION CONFERENCE

The Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Conference is the nation's largest convening dedicated to advancing community-led, non-punitive responses to gun violence. Established to address a critical gap in the field, it creates space for those most impacted by violence to lead the conversation and shape the direction of national strategy. What began with just over 650 attendees in 2023 has grown to nearly 1,000 attendees in 2025, highlighting the field's accelerating growth and the need for cross-sector coordination, sustained investment, and integration into broader public safety agendas.

As programs face deep funding cuts and limited opportunities to gather, this convening plays a critical role in keeping the field connected and grounded in frontline realities. It offers space for those doing the work every day to speak honestly about what they are seeing, what's working, and what support they need to keep going. In a moment when the future of this work is under pressure, the path forward must be shaped by the people living it.

This report is a synthesis of what was shared across sessions, conversations, and reflections throughout the 2025 CVI Conference. It was created with two core goals:

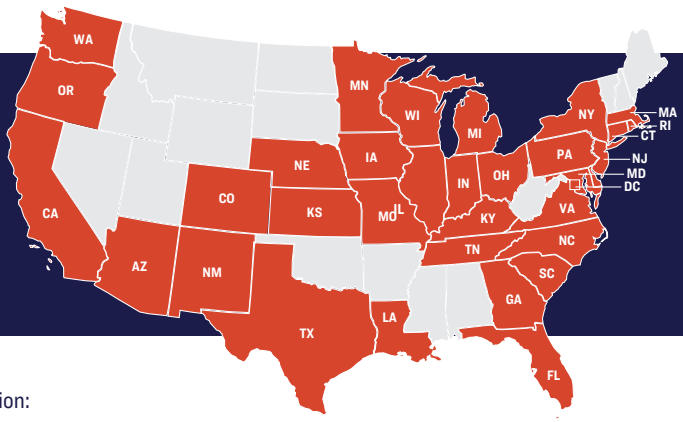
1. **To share tools, resources, and opportunities** that attendees identified to strengthen CVI efforts nationwide. This includes concrete practices, toolkits, training materials, and implementation strategies that can be applied, adapted, or scaled in local contexts.

2. **To reflect on the state of the field** by tracing the themes, questions, and tensions that emerged over the course of the convening.

By identifying what is gaining momentum, what gaps persist, and where alignment is still needed, this document helps us take inventory of where the field stands and what it will take to keep moving forward.

32 STATES AND DC, INCLUDING:

900+ ATTENDEES
350+ ORGANIZATIONS
190+ CITIES



Suggested citation:
Giffords Center for Violence Intervention (2025). "Moving the Mission: Field Insights from the 2025 CVI Conference." GIFFORDS.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

The 2025 CVI Conference brought together a broad range of leaders committed to community-driven safety. Participants included frontline interventionists, community advocates, researchers, technical assistance providers, funders, government officials, policy strategists, and law enforcement allies working in support of non-punitive approaches. **This mix of lived experience, institutional perspective, and on-the-ground insight created a dynamic space for honest dialogue, shared learning, and cross-sector collaboration.**

Many were first-time participants (63%), while others returned for their second (16%) or third (21%) year. Most respondents were already deeply engaged in CVI work, with 40% actively implementing programs and 31% were leading them. The mix of experience ranged from newcomers with less than two years in the field (28%) to veterans with 15+ years (25%), creating space for peer learning, mentorship, and fresh thinking.

Participants indicated they were primarily motivated to attend in order to:

- Network with others in the field
- Learn how different communities are approaching CVI implementation
- Strengthen their own professional skills and strategies

When asked about their top priorities for learning, participants pointed to:

- Community organizing strategies
- Healing-centered and trauma-informed care
- Street outreach models
- Funding and sustainability tools
- Data, evaluation, and impact frameworks

After the conference, participants were invited to reflect on their experience and share feedback on what resonated, what they learned, and how the space supported their work. Their responses point to a highly impactful gathering that offered relevant content, meaningful connections, and concrete takeaways for the field.

- **84%** of attendees found the conference content extremely or very relevant to their work.
- **90%** of participants said the conference met or exceeded their expectations.
- **90%** agreed or strongly agreed that they were exposed to new ideas and perspectives.
- **84%** considered the conference an extremely worthwhile investment of their time and money.
- **82%** said they are extremely or very likely to attend again.

"The community has the answers. We are just here to help with resources."

—MELVIN MCDUFFIE

HIGHEST RATED BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The Power of the Pause: Integrating CBI into CVI

This session gave participants a real-world look at how cognitive behavioral interventions (CBI) are being used to shift thinking and interrupt cycles of violence. James "JT" Timpson, Joanne Sainvilier, and Kelly Carroll broke down how Roca, Chicago CRED, and the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago bring CBI to life through frontline coaching, training, and daily practice.

Moving Forward with All Your Heart: Simple Techniques for Staying Present in the Work

Designed for those carrying stress and urgency in their bodies, this session delivered practical tools for healing on the go. Ismael Huerta guided participants through movement, breathwork, and pressure points they could use anytime and anywhere to reset and stay grounded.

Training to Heal: Promoting Emotional Wellness in CVI Professional Development

With CVI workers facing high stress and burnout, this session offered a model for how to center emotional wellness in workforce development. Maki Camacho, Helena Thomas, and Jaron Washington shared how the Metropolitan Peace Academy builds care into its structure through trauma-informed training and wellness supports that actually stick.

Anger Management as Violence Prevention: Real-World Strategies for Emotional Control and Crisis Response

This session dug into the link between trauma and emotional reactivity and what it takes to break the cycle. Jonas Royster, Cornelius Bowser, and Robert Wood of Shaphat Outreach shared tools for de-escalation, emotional regulation, and helping people shift from reaction to reflection in the heat of the moment.

Kinship in Practice: The Homeboy Industries Model

More than a reentry program, Homeboy Industries is a community rooted in belonging and second chances. In this session, Miguel Lugo and Jessica Sanchez walked through how services like tattoo removal, therapy, job training, and social enterprise all work together to support healing and dignity. Their approach made a clear case for what it means to lead with kinship.

HIGHEST RATED PLENARY SESSIONS

The Weight We Carry: Spotlighting Women Leaders in the Movement

This session honored the labor, resilience, and leadership of women who have long held CVI work on their shoulders. Timmeka Perkins, Dyann Barrientos, and Nichelle Sadler shared stories of navigating harm, holding space, and leading from lived experience. The conversation was a powerful call to recognize, protect, and invest in the women whose work too often goes unseen but is foundational to the field.

In Their Own Words: The Sacrifices and Struggles of CVI Workers

This session brought the heart of the field to the forefront. Sam Castro, Skipp Townsend, and Paul Carrillo spoke candidly about the daily discipline it takes to maintain peace, honor non-aggression agreements, and carry community through crisis. Their stories reminded the room that CVI is a lived practice grounded in love, shaped by sacrifice, and sustained through trust.

A Tipping Point: The Power and Potential of Cross-Sector Support for CVI

Focused on the future of funding, this session explored what it takes to sustain CVI work through both public and philanthropic investment. Nina Revoyr, Crystal Miller, Esther Franco-Payne, and moderator Mike McLively discussed strategies for moving resources in ways that reflect urgency, accountability, and community leadership. The session framed this moment as a chance to deepen alignment and build lasting infrastructure.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Attendees generated 118 discussion topics, reflecting a high level of engagement and a strong appetite for peer-to-peer learning. These conversations spanned a range of timely and essential issues in the CVI field, including:

- Core competencies every CVI professional should have
- How to better recognize and support the unique needs of women in the work
- Practical self-care strategies for frontline workers
- Using social media as a tool to reach and serve clients
- Addressing community safety in rural areas
- Recognizing the role of CVI in a broader public safety framework
- Establishing a professional understanding between CVI practitioners and law enforcement

CVI-PATH: CVI POLICY ANALYSIS AND TRACKING HUB

Bookmark our monthly tracker for the latest updates in CVI-related legislation!

"Working at a police department, I've had to learn my limits and understand that sometimes I'm not the right person to help, even if I really want to help! This work has NO room for egos."

—JULIA ORELLANA

LIFESAVING SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT: LIFE-LINE COLORADO

Life-Line Colorado is a community-based reentry and violence intervention organization that works to reduce substance use, gang involvement, and recidivism across Colorado. Using a trauma-informed, healing-centered approach, Life-Line mainly supports those returning from incarceration and youth at high risk of violence with relapse prevention, behavioral health counseling, mentorship, and life skills development.
The organization focuses on the structural and personal factors that drive harm, providing tailored support to help participants stabilize, heal, and reestablish a sense of direction and purpose.

CHAMPIONS FOR PEACE

Know a peacemaker who deserves some shine?
Nominate them for a chance to be recognized as one of our **Champions for Peace!**

HOT TOPIC:
Building Professional Understanding between Law Enforcement and CVI Practitioners

A major theme at the conference was the need to define professional understanding between law enforcement and CVI practitioners. This term refers to a structured, trust-based working relationship where both groups operate independently but in parallel, with clearly defined roles and firm boundaries. The goal is to protect the safety of staff, maintain community trust, and preserve the integrity of the work.

The plenary session "Not Just an Alternative: How CVI Strengthens Public Safety" offered a case study from Los Angeles, featuring leaders from the LAPD, the Mayor's Office of Community Safety, and the Urban Peace Institute. Panelists described how the GRYD model formalized engagement between law enforcement and outreach workers over the course of 15 years. This approach contributed to measurable reductions in shootings and homicides while preserving the safety and credibility of CVI staff.

> **In Los Angeles, "professional understanding" is a term used in community violence intervention (CVI) to describe engagement between law enforcement and CVI practitioners. It highlights the importance of maintaining independent, parallel roles in the shared effort to reduce violence, save lives, and ensure public safety.**
>
> **Establishing and upholding this understanding is essential to preserving operational boundaries—commonly referred to as "firewalls"—between street outreach and law enforcement, in order to protect the safety and integrity of outreach work and sustain community trust.[1]**

This is not a partnership or joint strategy. CVI workers do not act as intermediaries for police, and they do not share client information. Law enforcement does not interfere in outreach activity or attempt to direct it.

The model used in Los Angeles is just one example. What professional understanding looks like will vary by city and is shaped by local dynamics and history, yet the need for it is consistent. Without firm boundaries, CVI work can be distorted, misused, or mistaken for an extension of law enforcement, leaving vulnerable communities without access to the resources they need.

At the same time, independence is not a shield from accountability. CVI practitioners must meet occupational standards given the high-stakes nature of their work, but that accountability must come from within the field and the communities they work in, not from enforcement actors. **Put simply, CVI and law enforcement serve different purposes and communities are safest when those lines are not blurred.**

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE FIELD:

1. **Is professional understanding clearly defined in your city?**
2. **Are the boundaries between outreach and enforcement respected and documented?**
3. **Who is involved in creating and enforcing those boundaries?**
4. **What consequences exist when those boundaries are crossed?**

As the field grows, establishing a professional understanding among public safety actors is one of the clearest ways to protect what makes CVI effective. It keeps the work grounded in community, aligned with its purpose, and safe for both practitioners and the people they serve.

1 "Professional Understanding" is a term coined by Los Angeles intervention worker, Andre Christian (Watts Life United/UPI), for the purpose of making a clear distinction between the role of law enforcement and the role of violence intervention workers.

IDENTIFIED GAPS & OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CVI FIELD

Limited Capacity & Shared Frameworks for State CVI Coalitions

GAP

Despite growing momentum for CVI at the state level, many coalitions still face challenges around capacity, alignment, and strategic partnership building. Conference participants noted the need for clearer frameworks that center survivor leadership, integrate restorative justice principles, and support intentional collaboration across sectors. There is also a lack of guidance on how to engage philanthropy and the business sector in ways that reinforce, rather than compromise, community-led goals.

OPPORTUNITY

Attendees expressed strong interest in expanding cross-movement learning and accessing practical coalition-building models that prioritize accountability, healing, and power sharing. The State CVI Coalition Alliance, hosted by GIFFORDS Center for Violence Intervention, was named as a key space to support this growth. It brings together state agencies and organizers to build shared strategy, learn from parallel movements, and strengthen coalition infrastructure nationwide.

Unclear Role of Behavioral Health Providers in CVI Ecosystems

GAP

While "trauma-informed services" are widely cited as essential to CVI, there is often little clarity on what that means in practice or who is responsible for providing them. Participants raised critical questions about which behavioral health providers are involved in CVI efforts, what approaches they use, and how their work is operationalized within a community-led public safety strategy. In many settings, behavioral health services remain disconnected from the core intervention infrastructure, with limited coordination, unclear standards, and inconsistent cultural alignment.

OPPORTUNITY

Attendees emphasized the need for clearer, practice-oriented guidance on how behavioral health providers can support CVI efforts without reinforcing clinical or carceral dynamics. Following the conference, GIFFORDS Center for Violence Intervention partnered with Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra and Kelly Carroll to convene a small network of social service providers for a focused discussion on these issues. The session surfaced priority areas for future collaboration, including the development of shared frameworks for trauma support, cross-disciplinary training opportunities, and field-informed standards for integrating behavioral health into CVI ecosystems.

Limited Integration of Latino Communities in CVI Strategy & Decision-Making

GAP

Despite being deeply impacted by community violence in many regions, Latino communities are often underrepresented in the design, implementation, and leadership of CVI strategies. Participants noted that while Latino residents frequently engage in direct service or prevention work, they are less visible at decision-making tables where priorities, funding, and evaluation frameworks are set. This lack of intentional inclusion has contributed to language barriers, cultural misalignment, and missed opportunities to build community trust and safety across diverse neighborhoods.

OPPORTUNITY

Attendees called for more deliberate engagement of Latino leaders, organizations, and community members in shaping CVI strategies at all levels, from program design to policy advocacy. They called for deeper investment in Latino-led CVI efforts, improving language access across the field, and ensuring that convenings, trainings, and funding processes reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of impacted communities. There was strong interest in developing infrastructure that not only includes Latino voices, but positions them as co-strategists in building community safety.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY-LED MEAN TO YOU?

Throughout the event, we heard a common call to keep community leadership at the center. To better capture what that looks like in action, we asked: What does community-led mean to you? The responses offered powerful reminders of the values and commitments that should guide this work.

PRESENTER SLIDES

The following slides were provided by presenters who gave consent to share their materials following the conference. They reflect a range of insights, strategies, and tools discussed during their sessions. **Scan the QR code to access the full folder of shared slides and explore additional resources from the convening.**

qrco.de/bg9MCw

CVI CONFERENCE GLOSSARY (A–Z)

Community Violence Intervention (CVI): A set of non-punitive, community-led strategies designed to interrupt the transmission of violence by engaging those at highest risk through the provision of individually tailored support services.

Co-Production of Safety: A principle that safety is not something done to communities by institutions, but created with them by investing in relationships, power-sharing, and mutual accountability.

Credible Messenger: A person with lived experience, often formerly incarcerated or directly impacted by violence, who uses their story and relationships to mentor, mediate conflict, and build trust in communities.

Cultural Responsiveness: The practice of aligning programs and services with the values, traditions, and lived experiences of the communities they serve.

CVI Ecosystem: The network of community-based organizations, public agencies, funders, researchers, and advocates working together to build sustainable, community-rooted safety infrastructure.

Funding Cliff: Refers to the risk that CVI programs face when temporary grants end without sustainable, long-term funding in place. Often in reference to American Rescue Plan (ARPA) dollars.

Harm Reduction: An approach that aims to reduce the impacts of violent behavior by working directly with people involved in conflict to offer safer options, stabilize situations, and avoid escalation.

Healing Circle: A facilitated space for dialogue, reflection, and community-building. Often rooted in Indigenous or restorative traditions, circles are used in CVI for conflict resolution, grief processing, and strengthening relationships.

Homegrown Peacemakers: Individuals with deep roots or lived experience in the communities they serve, whose legitimacy comes from being known, trusted, and accountable to their neighbors. They understand the local dynamics because they've lived them, and they use that credibility to interrupt violence, mediate conflict, and support healing.

Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program (HVIP): Programs that connect survivors of violence to services at the point of care (often in an emergency room or trauma center) to interrupt cycles of retaliation and promote recovery.

Professionalization: Efforts to build standards, supports, and recognition for the CVI workforce, including training, fair pay, credentialing, and long-term career pathways.

Public Health Approach: Treats violence as a disease that can be prevented through evidence-based, community-centered interventions. Prioritizes prevention, data, and multi-sector collaboration.

Street Outreach: A core component of CVI, this involves credible messengers and homegrown peacemakers actively engaging people in their own neighborhoods to de-escalate conflict, identify needs, and prevent violence before it happens.

Survivor-Led: Reflects leadership and advocacy by those who have directly experienced violence or loss, ensuring policies and practices are shaped by those most impacted.

Technical Assistance (TA): Specialized support—such as training, capacity-building, or coaching—offered to organizations to strengthen their CVI efforts.

Trauma-Informed: An approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and creates spaces that prioritize physical, emotional, and psychological safety. CVI programs are often trauma-informed to avoid re-traumatization and support healing.

Glossary definitions are based on usage and discussion at the 2025 CVI Conference and adapted from a range of multidisciplinary sources to reflect CVI field-specific application.