

Violence Interruption Supplemental Information

Conflict Mediation by the Numbers

- 52 General Conflict
- 6 Dynamic/Retaliatory Violence
- 4 Afterhours/Shooting Response
- 2 Social Media
- Other

Notable incidents/interruptions

Jan:

After several complaints and incidents at Polo's apartments, Team Nexus responded and met with the apartment management team and residents. VI James Darby was assigned for continued follow up and built relationships with residents and the young adults who had been causing the issues. It was discovered that the young people causing the disturbances were not residents of the Polos and were open to mentorship, constructive guidance, and referrals. Due to increased presence, visibility, and relationship building, disturbances and incidents at the complex have decreased and complex management have reported a reduction in complaints at the property.

Feb:

Team Nexus mediated multiple conflicts this month, including a physical fight that resulted in LE response. The aggressor threatened to shoot the victim multiple times before physically assaulting the victim. VIs were on scene and immediately intervened to mediate the situation, including shielding the victim from further physical harm. The aggressor left and did not return with the threatened firearm. Following law enforcement response, VI's helped the victim, who is homeless young adult, find a temporary place to stay. VI's continued to work with the victim over the next several days. The victim is now connected with AMI kids for continued follow up and services. No further incidents involving this group were reported.

March:

While at the Clarence R. Kelly Center, multiple juveniles drove up the center and contacted Coordinator Young for help. Both youth in the car were suffering from gun shot wounds. Coordinator Young and VI staff members took immediate action, called dispatch for law enforcement response, lockdown the building, secured everyone inside the center. During the investigation, it was discovered that the shooting was accidental.

Due to fear of getting in trouble, the youth went to the center knowing that Coordinator Young and the VI's were there and would help them.

Due to VI involvement, staff were able to get immediate assistance to the two youth and provide advocacy between the parties and law enforcement. The firearm involved was also surrendered to GPD following additional advocacy from VI staff and conducting community canvases encouraging anyone with information to come forward. The firearm would not have been recovered without Team Nexus' direct intervention and involvement. This was only possible due to the continued community-level response, outreach, visibility, and relationship building by VI staff.

In addition, VI efforts to help activate the Clarence R. Kelly Center have been successful. Duval and the areas around the Community Center have been disproportionately impacted by violence, prompting a need for response. Residents in the area are also highly distrustful of services, due to systemic barriers faced. With VI staff taking a vested interest in that area and building trust, Duval residents have been attending STEM on the Eastside consistently and individuals known to loiter outside the center leave during programming time while VI staff and STEM on the Eastside families are present. Due to the relationships being built through the program, participants and their families are confiding in VI staff about personal challenges and concerns. With these strengthened relationships VI have:

- Assisted a parent involved in a DV situation. With VI support the mother was referred to additional support services. VI's assisted the family in seeking new housing. This was eventually successful. The family has since relocated to a safe location away from their abuser. The children continue to attend STEM on the Eastside.
- Identified families struggling with food insecurity. VI's assisted families with securing food and groceries until the family received their monthly SNAP benefits.
- Some older participants are often helping their family with additional income and resources. Through VI intervention, these students are encouraged to attend STEM on the Eastside while VI staff help assist families with resource navigation. In particular, one participant was running errands for suspected gang members in exchange for a small payment of a few dollars. Nexus intervened and the participant is attending class regularly. Team Nexus checks in on the family regularly.

April/May:

Following several homicides, VI staff were able to provide immediate response and follow up to family members. VI staff offered resources navigation and crisis support and assessed for risk of retaliation, encouraging calm and offering solutions to honor the

victim. VI staff and the GV manager pulled together and donated to having a tree planted in honor of the young life lost. A certificate was presented to the family.

During a regular canvas at Sweetwater Square Apts. VI staff noticed neighborhood kids playing with fire. While moving toward the group, one of the youth set fire to a nearby tree. VI staff were able to call dispatch for immediate response. Due to the quick actions of VI staff, there was no significant damage or injuries. The families were contacted. VI's continue to do weekly canvases in Sweetwater Square (Village Green) Apartments. VI staff meet regularly with residents, mentor youth on the property, provide snacks, water and resources. VI's engage with youth about safe choices, education, job opportunities, and their individual dreams and interests. VI's have provided referrals to local services like Career Source, Housing, BOLD Program, and others.

June:

After a drive by shooting in Sweetwater Square Apartments, VI staff responded and conducted a community walk-through, reached out to residents, and listened to community concerns. Residents continued to share concerns about needing more resources in the area and more positive things for residents to do. VI's connected with the residents whose units were hit by gun fire with support and referrals to needed resources. VI's also worked with the community to stay abreast of any potential escalation or retaliation and meet with community members suspected of involvement and/or knowledge of what took place to encourage resolution. Law Enforcement was also heavily involved and investigated.

July/Aug:

During the outreach, VI became involved in a conflict between community members. One was visibly angry and continued expressing their frustration while the other individual remained inside and did not come outside to engage in the disagreement. Staff remained present, listened to their concerns, encouraged calm, and worked to prevent the situation from escalating into a face-to-face confrontation

Although the individual remained upset for some time, staff continued communicating with them and successfully helped tone the situation down without further escalation. The other party remained separated from the conflict, and the incident did not progress into a physical confrontation. This interaction demonstrated the importance of having Violence Interrupters present during emotionally charged situations, where creating space, listening, and encouraging individuals to disengage can help prevent a disagreement from developing into violence.

With School back in session, Violence Interrupters conducted community engagement in the Howard Bishop Library/Howard Bishop area. Staff responded to concerns and information regarding possible gang-related activity in the Howard Bishop area and

worked to maintain a peaceful presence, engage youth, connect with community partners, and provide support through violence-prevention conversations and resource sharing.

Staff engaged more than 40 youth during the visit and held several positive conversations focused on gun violence prevention, gang awareness, community safety, and making better decisions. Staff explained to youth that the purpose of being present in the area was to help keep the peace, prevent conflict, and support a safer community environment.

GPD was also present in the area, and staff worked in coordination with officers to help support a peaceful environment. GPD covered one area while Violence Interrupters covered another, allowing both teams to maintain visibility and increase safety throughout the location. This collaboration helped show a united effort focused on prevention, communication, and community support.

VI Staff completed a follow-up with a youth who has been receiving mentoring support. The youth had recently been involved in a school-related incident, and staff spoke with him about using better judgment, thinking before reacting, and understanding how his decisions can affect his future. The conversation focused on accountability, self-control, school behavior, and making choices that keep him out of trouble.

Closing:

With the investment from the Children's Trust, violence interrupters have been able provide a variety of services to our community that help promote safety and wellness in our neighborhoods, community centers, and schools. VIs use their skills in crisis intervention and de-escalation to mitigate encounters that have the potential to escalate into further violence. In cases where violence has already occurred, VI staff assist in preventing retaliation and escalation though leveraging their community relationships and networks and encouraging peaceful resolution. Staff are often in high-risk situations that require quick and clear decision making, knowledge of key community players, and trust and credibility within the community. Their efforts to promote community stabilization, increase resource navigation, provide firearm leads, offer mentorship and follow up with high-risk youth have helped contribute to the reduction of gun violence incidents in Gainesville.