Guidance for Offices of Violence Prevention: Supporting Communities During Federal Law Enforcement or Military Deployments

Scope and Use Disclaimer

This guidance is intended for offices of violence prevention (OVPs), similarly positioned agencies, and allied community violence prevention entities. It does not replace legal counsel, local policy, or emergency directives, nor does it authorize enforcement activity. This document outlines prevention- and intervention-centered roles, boundaries, and best practices for supporting community safety during periods of heightened federal enforcement or military presence.

Purpose

OVPs exist to reduce harm, prevent and intervene in violence, and support community well-being. Our role during moments of heightened enforcement is to center dignity, de-escalation, care, and prevention—not control.

Federal deployments of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions or National Guard presence have the potential to create acute fear, grief, misinformation, and elevated risk of interpersonal violence, particularly in communities already experiencing structural harm, trauma, or heightened law enforcement presence.

OVPs are not enforcement agencies. Our mandate is prevention, intervention, de-escalation, harm reduction, and building community trust. This guidance exists to help OVPs:

- Respond clearly, safely, and ethically
- Avoid role confusion or co-optation
- Coordinate without compromising trust
- Support communities while protecting staff
- Establish equitable mutual aid systems, including compensation parity

Core Principles for OVP Action

1. Violence prevention and intervention are relational, not authoritative
2. Coordination is not enforcement
3. Visibility does not equal effectiveness
4. Preparation reduces harm
5. Trust, once lost, is difficult to rebuild
6. Community safety labor must be compensated

Key Considerations and Guiding Questions for OVP Leadership

Before mobilizing any staff or community-based partners, OVP leaders should ask:

Strategic Readiness

- What specific risk are we responding to (retaliation, panic, misinformation, trauma)?
- Are we mobilizing because it is necessary, or because it is expected?
- Who in the community is most vulnerable to harm right now?

- How has the local administration partnered with the community to co-craft the narrative response to deployment, and with what frequency and through what mediums is that narrative being shared?
- What does appropriately sequenced inter-agency partnership and engagement look like?

Authority and Boundaries

- Do staff understand what authority they do and do not have?
- Are we being asked to perform enforcement-adjacent roles?
- How might our presence be perceived by undocumented residents, youth, or survivors?

Safety, Liability, and Sustainability

- Are staff trained for emotionally charged environments?
- Do we have clear entry, escalation, and exit protocols?
- Are compensation, overtime, and rest built into the plan?

Trust and Optics

- Would our clothing, vehicles, or language make us appear aligned with law enforcement?
- Are we reinforcing safety—or surveillance?

Introduction

DOs and DON'Ts for OVPs During Federal Deployments

DO

- Continue to center community violence interruption, mediation, and rumor control
- Continue to deploy trusted messengers with deep local credibility
- Coordinate quietly with community anchors (faith leaders, cultural organizations, healers)
- Share verified information and correct misinformation
- Connect residents to legal, mental health, and social supports
- Plan for delayed retaliation and secondary harm
- Rotate staff and build in rest and recovery
- Compensate all community responders equitably

DO NOT

- Do not change the scope of the OVP's or CBOs' work
- Do not act as crowd control or enforcement backup
- Do not wear tactical or law-enforcement-style uniforms or badges
- Do not collect or share identifying or immigration information
- Do not position staff between federal agents and civilians
- Do not deploy external partners without local authorization
- Do not rely on unpaid or "volunteer" labor during high-risk moments

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The guidance that follows reflects two distinct scenarios that require different leadership decisions. Not every federal deployment requires activation, redeployment, or expanded intervention. OVPs should first determine whether a local incident, escalation, or credible threat of violence has occurred before shifting operational posture.

SCENARIO A Initial Federal Deployment WITHOUT Local Incident or Escalation OVP Posture: Restraint, Readiness, Continuity • Maintain normal community violence intervention (CVI) operations • Do not activate surge response • Monitor community sentiment • Prepare quietly THIS IS NOT: • Inaction • Disengagement • Surveillance Proceed using Standing Guardrails Checklist	SCENARIO B Post-Incident or Escalation Stabilization OVP Posture: Time-Limited Activation, Stabilization, Prevention • Implement stabilization strategies • Activated roles must be authorized & compensated • Provide mental health supports • Plan for return to standard operations KEY RULE: Stabilization is temporary, not a new normal Proceed using Scenario B Checklist & After-Action Steps
APPLIES IN BOTH SCENARIOS • OVPs are not enforcement agencies • Coordination ≠ enforcement • CVI scope stays focused • Community labor must be compensated • Anticipate emotional and behavioral health impacts	

Scenario A: Initial Federal Deployment Without Local Incident or Escalation

When federal agencies are initially deployed into a city without an activating incident, violence, or escalation, OVPs should resist pressure to operationalize beyond their core mandate. In these moments, the most effective prevention strategy may be restraint, readiness, and continuity.

OVPs should:

- Maintain normal CVI operations without expansion or redeployment
- Avoid activating surge or emergency response structures prematurely
- Reinforce that CVI partners continue doing what they do best: outreach, mediation, and support
- Monitor community sentiment through existing relationships rather than new monitoring mechanisms
- Prepare contingency plans quietly without signaling crisis

Visibility or activation in the absence of incident may unintentionally heighten fear, signal instability, or reposition prevention partners as enforcement adjacent. Readiness does not require presence.

This posture reflects intentional restraint—not inaction—and should be understood as a prevention strategy.

Scenario B: Post-Incident or Post-Escalation Stabilization

This section applies only when a local incident, escalation, or credible threat of violence has occurred.

When a federal deployment follows a local incident, escalation, or credible threat of violence, OVPs may enter a stabilization phase focused on preventing retaliation and longer-term harm.

During this phase:

- CVI organizations may temporarily adjust tactics while maintaining core scope and principles
- Any expansion of activity must be time-bound, compensated, and clearly authorized
- OVPs should set explicit expectations for returning to standard operations

As conditions stabilize, OVPs should intentionally guide CVI partners back to their primary functions and resist permanent role expansion. Stabilization is a phase. It should not become the jurisdiction's new operating model.

Approach

Alignment with Existing Coordinated Neighborhood Stabilization Response (CNSR) Protocols

OVPs should anchor any response to federal deployments within existing neighborhood stabilization, coordinated response, or violence reduction protocols. OVPs without pre-existing documented CNSR protocols can engage NOVPN for assistance.

Leveraging established frameworks:

- Reduces confusion
- Reinforces role clarity
- Prevents parallel or duplicative systems
- Builds on trusted processes already known to partners

Federal deployment response should not replace or override existing stabilization strategies but should be sequenced within them.

External Actors and Community Context Awareness

OVPs should be aware that federal deployments may draw individuals who are not residents of the jurisdiction and may not be familiar with local CVI ecosystems.

These individuals may include:

- Visitors seeking to observe or document events
- People unfamiliar with local norms or relationships
- Individuals intentionally seeking to escalate or agitate tensions

OVP response should focus on:

- Supporting local CVI partners who understand community dynamics
- Reinforcing trusted local leadership
- Avoiding reactionary responses to external provocation

Awareness of the potential for external actors should not translate into surveillance or enforcement activity.

Leadership, Care, and Internal Stabilization

OVP directors play a critical role in holding space for both internal teams and community-based partners during and after federal deployments. OVP staff and CVI partners may share the same fears, identities, and lived experiences as impacted communities. Directors should:

- Acknowledge emotional impact openly
- Normalize fatigue, fear, and frustration
- Create space for reflection without performance pressure
- Model calm, grounded leadership

Holding space is not ancillary to the work—it is part of sustaining the prevention workforce.

Coordination

Roles and Responsibilities When Coordinating With Law Enforcement

A critical distinction: Coordination is not collaboration. OVPs may coordinate for safety but must not operationalize enforcement goals.

Appropriate OVP Roles

- Sharing high-level safety concerns (not intelligence)
- Coordinating timing and geography to reduce conflict overlap
- Requesting space for prevention and intervention work outside enforcement zones
- Advocating for non-provocative posture during sensitive moments

Inappropriate OVP Roles

- Providing crowd intelligence or individual identification
- Acting as intermediaries for federal enforcement
- Participating in enforcement briefings or operations
- Joint branding, uniforms, or public messaging

Safeguards

- Designate a single OVP liaison
- Document intra-agency and community-based coordination clearly
- Maintain written statements of independence
- Establish refusal protocols when requests exceed OVP authority

Inter-Agency Coordination Beyond Law Enforcement

OVPs should coordinate with all relevant government and community agencies and organizations during periods of federal deployment, recognizing that community safety is influenced by multiple systems beyond law enforcement. Appropriate inter-agency coordination may include public health departments, behavioral health agencies, housing and homelessness services, emergency management, school districts, and immigrant-serving agencies.

In these settings, the OVP's role is to:

- Align prevention and intervention efforts without duplicating services
- Clarify roles and sequencing across agencies
- Elevate community-identified risks and needs
- Ensure prevention and intervention considerations are included in broader response planning

Coordination should be structured, time-limited, and documented, with the OVP maintaining independence and avoiding assumption of responsibilities that fall outside its prevention and intervention mandate.

Engagement with Elected and Appointed Officials

Periods of federal deployment often prompt heightened engagement from mayors, councilmembers, executives, and other elected or appointed officials. While these leaders play an important role in governance and public communication, OVPs must maintain clear boundaries around operational decision-making.

OVP engagement with elected and appointed officials should be guided by the following guardrails:

Appropriate OVP Engagement

- Providing high-level situational awareness focused on community safety and prevention
- Elevating community-identified risks, needs, and concerns
- Explaining the role, scope, and limitations of violence prevention and intervention efforts
- Recommending prevention-centered resource investments (e.g., mental health supports, surge funding)

Inappropriate OVP Engagement

- Accepting direction that expands OVP or CVI roles into enforcement, monitoring, or crowd control
- Being used to validate enforcement decisions or tactics
- Sharing operational details that could compromise staff, partners, or community trust

OVPs should establish a clear briefing protocol that identifies:

- Who speaks on behalf of the OVP
- What information can be shared
- What decisions remain outside political direction

These guardrails protect both the integrity of violence prevention work and the credibility of elected leaders.

Mutual Aid Between OVPs: A Prevention-Centered Model

OVP mutual aid allows jurisdictions to support one another during moments of elevated risk—without uninvited/unrequested deployment, enforcement alignment, or unpaid labor. This is one of the reasons why regional relationships are critically important.

Guiding Standards

- Voluntary
- Invitation-based
- Locally led
- Time-bound
- Compensated

When to Request Mutual Aid

- Local capacity is overwhelmed
- Sustained presence is required
- Cultural or language expertise is needed
- Community trauma exceeds local support systems

Preparing Before Making a Request

- Request Mutual Aid Request Template from NOVPN
- Define scope, duration, and roles
- Prepare local context and safety briefing
- Identify supervision and decision authority
- Confirm compensation, travel, lodging, and per diem
- Establish clear exit and after-action expectations

Logistics

Compensation, Labor Equity, and Sustainability

Law enforcement responders receive overtime, hazard pay, and mutual aid reimbursement. Community-based responders face comparable risk and emotional exposure—and must be compensated accordingly.

Core Principle: If community-based responders are asked to show up in moments of elevated risk, they must be compensated just as first responders are.

OVP Responsibilities

- Budget for surge and crisis response in advance
- Pay staff and partners for preparation, deployment, and recovery time
- Reimburse transportation, childcare, meals, and lodging
- Avoid reliance on unpaid volunteer labor during crises
- Document labor and exposure to support future funding advocacy

Communication Systems (Without Surveillance)

Communication is critical during moments of heightened uncertainty. OVP communication systems should support coordination and prevention while protecting privacy, avoiding intelligence-gathering, and maintaining community trust.

Internal Coordination

- Request addition to National OVP alert channel (situational awareness)
- Regional WhatsApp / Signal / GroupMe groups (coordination only)
- Local field channels (restricted and moderated)

Guardrails

- No names, addresses, or identifying details
- Clear moderation protocols
- Time-limited activation
- Active misinformation correction

Staffing, Identity, and Visibility

Appearance alone can determine whether someone feels supported—or endangered.

- Neutral, non-tactical clothing
- Community-based or OVP branding only
- No language implying authority or enforcement
- Discreet internal visual identifiers if needed

Media Engagement and Inquiry Protocols

Federal deployments often attract intense media attention. While transparency is important, unmanaged media engagement can unintentionally increase risk, fuel misinformation, or compromise community trust. OVPs should establish clear media inquiry protocols before, during, and after deployment-related activity.

Recommended Protocols

- Designate a limited number of trained spokespeople
- Provide media guidance to CVI partners clarifying who should and should not speak publicly
- Use consistent language that centers prevention, care, and community safety
- Avoid operational details, real-time locations, or staff movements

Guidance for Community-Based Partners

- CVI CBOs should not be expected to respond to media inquiries during active or emotionally charged moments
- OVPs should shield outreach workers and interrupters from press engagement unless explicitly prepared and supported
- Media requests directed to CBOs should be routed through the OVP or a designated communications lead when appropriate

Core Principle: Media engagement should reduce harm—not increase visibility at the expense of safety. Clear protocols protect community members, frontline workers, and the integrity of prevention work.

After-Action Responsibilities

- Staff debrief and wellness support
- Community feedback and reflection
- Documentation of lessons learned
- Policy and protocol updates
- Continued mediation and rumor control

Community Engagement and Support

Community Education and Rights-Based Communication

Outreach-focused community-based organizations (CBOs) are well positioned to communicate know-your-rights information and constitutional boundaries related to ICE and National Guard presence.

OVPs may support CBOs in:

- Distributing verified know-your-rights materials
- Sharing high-level information on what federal agents can and cannot constitutionally do
- Delivering information in trusted languages, formats, and spaces

OVPs should ensure materials are:

- Developed or vetted by legal experts
- Non-speculative and non-directive
- Clearly distinguished from legal advice

Outreach efforts should prioritize clarity, calm, and accuracy.

Supporting Immigrant and Immigrant-Presenting Staff and Participants

Periods of heightened federal enforcement activity can create acute fear and uncertainty not only for community members, but also for OVP staff, CVI practitioners, and program participants—particularly those who are immigrants, undocumented, or perceived as such. Although OVPs are not directly involved in enforcement activity, the presence of federal agencies may alter how people experience safety, visibility, and risk.

OVPs should approach these moments with a workforce and participant protection lens grounded in prevention, dignity, and care, recognizing that intimidation, fear, or perceived targeting may occur outside of formal enforcement actions.

Core Principles:

- **OVPs and CVI organizations are not law enforcement and do not collect, track, or share immigration information**
- **Staff and participants should never be asked about immigration status**
- **Fear and perceived risk should be treated as real and actionable, even in the absence of formal enforcement activity**
- **Protecting staff and participants is a core prevention function, not a secondary concern**

Situational Safety, Visibility, and Movement

OVPs should anticipate that proximity to federal enforcement activity, including but not limited to being observed near worksites, followed after meetings, or encountered in public space, may heighten fear and perceived risk for immigrant and immigrant-presenting staff and partners.

In these moments, leaders may need to make immediate, human-centered decisions that prioritize safety over protocol or convenience. This means responding to fear or risk in real time, even when doing so disrupts plans, schedules, or standard routines.

Appropriate supports may include:

- Ensuring staff and partners do not leave meetings, worksites, or public buildings alone when fear or risk is present
- Offering accompaniment to vehicles, transit, or other destinations
- Adjusting who walks, drives, or rides together based on perceived or actual targeting or visibility
- Allowing flexibility in departure timing, routes, or work location, including temporary remote or alternate work arrangements
- Pausing, delaying, or modifying planned activities when staff feel unsafe
- Reducing unnecessary public visibility during active enforcement periods

These actions are preventive and trauma informed. They are not security measures or enforcement responses. They do not require proof, documentation, or legal analysis. A staff member's expressed fear or discomfort is sufficient to justify protective action.

Responding to Reports of Following or Intimidation

If staff or partners report being followed, observed, or otherwise made to feel unsafe by law enforcement or federal agencies:

- The concern should be taken seriously without requiring verification
- The focus should remain on safety, stabilization, and support—not investigation
- OVP leadership should coordinate with appropriate internal partners (e.g., HR or legal counsel) for supportive next steps
- Staff should not be asked to document, track, or confront enforcement activity

Leadership Responsibility

OVP directors and senior leaders play a critical role in setting the tone for how these situations are handled. Leaders should:

- Validate fear and uncertainty without minimizing or dramatizing it
- Model protective, values-consistent decision-making
- Remove pressure on staff to assess risk alone
- Reinforce that flexibility and care are appropriate responses

When staff feel unsafe or exposed, the risk of disengagement, secondary harm, and erosion of trust increases. Grounded, human-centered leadership helps sustain the prevention workforce and the integrity of the work.

Emotional and Behavioral Health Impacts

Federal deployments may activate fear, anger, grief, hypervigilance, and retraumatization—even in the absence of direct enforcement action. OVPs should anticipate emotional and behavioral health needs as part of their prevention strategy and consider deploying or coordinating:

- On-the-ground mental health professionals
- Culturally responsive clinicians or healers
- Crisis counselors and peer support workers
- Referrals to longer-term behavioral health services

Addressing emotional response early can reduce the likelihood of interpersonal conflict, retaliation, and longer-term harm.

Closing Statement

This guidance affirms that prevention leadership requires discernment as much as action. Not every federal or military deployment requires an OVP or CBO activation, and not every moment calls for visibility. Sometimes the most responsible choice is restraint, continuity, and readiness; at other times, it is time-limited stabilization grounded in trust, care, and clear boundaries. Both approaches are valid when applied intentionally and in alignment with community needs.

As OVPs navigate these moments, our credibility rests on role clarity, respect for community labor, and fidelity to the principles that distinguish violence prevention from enforcement. By holding these boundaries while caring for our teams, our partners, and our communities, we strengthen not only immediate safety, but the long-term legitimacy of prevention as a cornerstone of public well-being.

This document is offered as a shared reference point, not a static rulebook. NOVPN will continue to learn alongside members, update guidance as conditions evolve, and support OVP leaders in exercising the judgment, care, and courage these moments demand.

Appendix A: Sample One-Page Public Explainer for Communities, to be Branded with Local OVP Logos and Updated to Ensure Geographic and Cultural Relevance

What Offices of Violence Prevention Do During Federal Deployments

When federal agencies like ICE or the National Guard are present in a community, many people feel fear, confusion, or uncertainty—especially in communities that have experienced harm or over-policing. Offices of violence prevention (OVPs) exist to keep people safe by preventing harm, not by enforcing laws.

What OVPs ARE

- We are community-based safety partners
- We are focused on de-escalation and violence prevention and intervention
- We are grounded in trust and local relationships
- We are separate from police, ICE, and the military

What OVPs Are NOT

- We are not law enforcement
- We do not conduct raids or enforcement actions
- We do not ask about immigration status
- We do not share personal information with federal agencies

What OVPs May Do

- Help calm tensions and prevent retaliation
- Share accurate, verified information
- Connect people to legal, mental health, and other community resources
- Support individuals and families experiencing fear or trauma

Respecting Community Labor

Community safety work is real work. Just like police or emergency responders, community-based responders deserve to be paid for their time, labor, and risk. OVPs believe safety should never rely on unpaid or exploited labor.

What You Can Expect From Us

- Respect for your dignity and privacy
- No enforcement activity
- No judgment or surveillance
- Support grounded in care

Safety does not come only from enforcement. It comes from care, connection, and prevention. Offices of violence prevention are here to help communities stay grounded, supported, and safe—especially during difficult moments.

Appendix B: OVP Deployment Readiness and Response Checklist

How to Use This Checklist
This checklist is designed to support OVP leadership decision-making across two distinct scenarios:

Scenario A: Initial Federal Deployment Without Local Incident or Escalation
In this scenario, the checklist should be used to confirm readiness, reinforce role clarity, and maintain continuity of existing CVI work. Sections related to active deployment response should not be activated.

Scenario B: Post-Incident or Post-Escalation Response
In this scenario, the checklist supports time-limited activation, stabilization, and prevention of retaliation or further harm.

Not all sections of this checklist apply in every situation. OVPs should intentionally determine which scenario is present before proceeding.

Pre-Deployment Readiness (Applies to All Scenarios)

Leadership and Governance
☐ Confirm OVP role, scope, and non-enforcement boundaries
☐ Identify a single OVP incident lead and backup
☐ Review refusal protocols for enforcement-adjacent requests
☐ Confirm briefing protocol for elected and appointed officials

Staffing and Capacity
☐ Identify which staff are appropriate to deploy (and which are not)
☐ Confirm staff training for de-escalation and emotionally charged environments
☐ Assess language, cultural, and neighborhood coverage gaps
☐ Plan staffing rotations and maximum shift lengths

Community and CBO Coordination
☐ Notify key CVI partners of potential deployment context
☐ Reaffirm CVI scope of work (no monitoring, no enforcement support)
☐ Identify trusted messengers and community anchors
☐ Confirm authorization process for any external/mutual aid support

Compensation and Logistics
☐ Confirm surge funding availability
☐ Pre-approve overtime, stipends, or deployment pay
☐ Confirm reimbursement process (travel, meals, childcare, lodging)
☐ Ensure no reliance on unpaid volunteer labor

Active Deployment Response (Scenario B Only)

Safety and Prevention Operations
☐ Deploy violence interruption and mediation strategically—not visibly
☐ Prioritize rumor control and misinformation correction
☐ Avoid enforcement zones and crowd control activity
☐ Monitor emotional escalation and delayed risk indicators

Coordination and Communication

☐ Activate appropriate internal communication channels
☐ Apply guardrails (no names, no locations, no identifying details)
☐ Designate a single point of inter-agency coordination
☐ Maintain documentation of decisions and coordination

Community Education and Support

☐ Distribute vetted know-your-rights materials via outreach CBOs
☐ Share high-level constitutional information (what agencies can/cannot do)
☐ Connect residents to legal, behavioral health, and social supports
☐ Ensure materials are accessible (language, literacy, format)

Mental and Emotional Health Supports

☐ Deploy or coordinate on-the-ground mental health support
☐ Engage culturally responsive clinicians or healers where possible
☐ Monitor staff and CBO partner emotional strain in real time

Leadership and Workforce Care (During Deployment)

OVP Director Responsibilities

☐ Acknowledge emotional impact on staff and partners
☐ Model calm, grounded leadership
☐ Create space for check-ins without performance pressure
☐ Shield staff and CBOs from unnecessary political or media exposure

CBO Partner Support

☐ Reinforce that CVI scope has not changed
☐ Protect partners from enforcement or media pressure
☐ Ensure partners are compensated promptly and fairly
☐ Clarify that disengagement for safety is acceptable

Post-Deployment Stabilization (Scenario A and B, as Applicable)

If There Was No Violence or Escalation

☐ Reaffirm continuity of CVI work—no scope expansion
☐ Return to regular outreach, mediation, and other CVI support activities
☐ Avoid redefining "success" as surveillance or deterrence
☐ Close any temporary coordination structures intentionally

If Emotional Impact Persists

☐ Continue mental health and healing supports
☐ Monitor delayed retaliation or conflict risk
☐ Maintain rumor control and trusted communication

After-Action Review and Learning

Internal Review

☐ Conduct staff debriefs (including emotional processing)
☐ Document what worked and what needs to change going forward (plus/delta)
☐ Capture resource gaps and funding implications

Partner and Community Feedback

☐ Invite CVI and community partner reflection
☐ Document community-identified needs or concerns
☐ Incorporate feedback into protocol updates

Institutional Follow-Up

☐ Update internal guidance or MOUs as needed
☐ Share lessons learned with NOVPN (as appropriate)
☐ Advocate for sustained funding and compensation parity

How This Appendix Is Intended to Be Used

✔ As a pre-deployment readiness check
✔ As a real-time reference during active moments
✔ As a debrief and learning tool
✘ Not as a script or enforcement plan
✘ Not as a public document