



Ministerial Statement

By

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Minister of National Security

National Violence Reduction Strategy Update

September 12th, 2025

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House on the National Violence Reduction Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that this Strategy was debated in this Honourable House in December 2024, reflecting a shared commitment across government and community to address the root causes of violence. The Strategy is guided by three tiers of action: the Steering Committee that provides leadership and oversight, the Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement Team that focuses on targeted interventions and enforcement, and the Inter-Agency Community Response Team that delivers prevention and support services on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, the National Violence Reduction Steering Committee, comprised of Permanent Secretaries from across Government, provides the highest level of coordination and accountability. It ensures that Ministries are aligned, resources are strategically allocated, and that progress against the eight goals is rigorously monitored. Importantly, the

Steering Committee is now managing a framework of SMART goals, with clear and measurable objectives dedicated to each Ministry and agency.

Mr. Speaker, the National Violence Reduction Strategy is an overarching national framework that brings together multiple agencies and ministries under the leadership of the Ministry of National Security. This framework is structured around short-, medium-, and long-term goals. The short-term goals have been achieved by establishing the governance architecture - the Steering Committee, the Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement Team, and the Inter-Agency Community Response. The medium-term goals focus on scaling up and enhancing programmes, some of which were already underway. The long-term goals speak to the deeper mission of addressing the root causes of violence - transforming perceptions, reshaping behaviours, and shifting cultural norms so that peace and opportunity become the standard for our communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement Team (IGET), is now evolving into a more balanced mechanism that also integrates preventative approaches. By bringing together Police, Corrections, Probation, Education, Child and Family Services, and other partners, IGET now functions as a multi-agency prevention tool and aids the development of early intervention plans that prevent young people from entering cycles of violence.

Mr. Speaker, the Inter-Agency Community Response (IGCR) will operate at the grassroots level. Its mandate is to strengthen prevention and community resilience by working directly with neighbourhoods, community organisations, faith-groups, families, community leaders and the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, community mobilization is the heart of prevention. The Ministry has invested \$397,434 in sports organisations across the island, including Baileys Bay Cricket Club, Bermuda Brazilian Football School, Bermuda Cricket Board of Control, Boulevard Community Club, North Village Community Club, Western Stars Sports Club, Cleveland County Cricket Club, Darock Elite Academy, Devonshire Colts Club, Flatts Victoria Recreation Club, St David's County Cricket Club, and Fraystar Cricket Institute. In the coming year, the Ministry of National Security will offer restorative justice training to sports club coaches, staff and stakeholders. These clubs are key partners in creating safe and structured environments for young people, offering mentorship, positive identity reinforcement, and conflict mediation during critical after-school and weekend hours. Clubs were required to show not only the need for facility improvements, but also their capacity to deliver structured youth programmes that reinforce discipline, teamwork, and conflict resolution.

Mr. Speaker, some of the most intensive work we do is with those at the highest risk. That is why Counselling and Social Service Support Grants were established, requiring applicants to provide evidence of direct work

with at-risk youth, offer violence prevention and mediation, and commit to regular monitoring. Strong families are essential for preventing violence. The Ministry has provided \$135,000 to community organisations that deliver wraparound support and trauma-informed care, counselling, and support for families in crisis including The Family Centre, and Transitional Community Services. These partners offer critical support during times of crisis and play a central role in recovery and resilience. Additionally, the Gang Violence Reduction Team's Coordinated Crisis Response Team, continues to meet with families after violent incidents to provide immediate support, restore calm, and prevent retaliation.

In addition, **Mr. Speaker**, \$25,000 has been allocated to Crime Stoppers Bermuda to enhance anonymous reporting. This investment reflects our commitment to encouraging public participation and empowering residents to share information that helps keep our communities safer. We recently reached an agreement with Crimestoppers wherein we pledged to provide funding up to \$50,000 for information that leads to an arrest and charge for serious violent crime.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team has worked closely with 60 public high school students and engaged middle and primary school students through the "I AM" Programme, providing alternatives for those who are excluded from traditional schooling. To further invest in young people's growth, \$60,000 has been dedicated to youth

mentorship and leadership development programmes, including Future Leaders Bermuda, WeSpeak Bermuda, and Women's Resource Centre. The Ministry has also advanced the work of the Strategy through community grants dedicated to youth development programmes. These grants support organisations delivering mentorship, leadership training, and wraparound services to young people most at risk. In June, the "Truth Be Told: Youth Rise Against the Violence" summit brought together more than 70 students and 200 attendees, showcasing powerful youth-led campaigns addressing mental health, snitch culture, and gang violence.

Mr. Speaker, education and employment are key to breaking cycles of violence. Over \$84,000 has been awarded to the Adult Education School and CARE Learning Centre to provide GED preparation, digital literacy, and re-engagement programmes for young people identified by our caseworkers in need of such support. Through the Redemption Programme, fifteen individuals who actively engaged in the 20-week program have remained free of reoffending, a powerful sign of progress. The Gang Violence Reduction Team also carried out prison visits to prepare individuals for release, with "through-the-gate" care packages under development to smooth the transition. Several clients have already secured placements at a local hotel and in the trades programs, media companies, government departments and or enrolled in training programmes, including the Bacardi Bartending Programme and other certifications programs

Mr. Speaker, prevention is most effective when all sectors are working together. The Gang Violence Reduction Team has attended dozens of inter-agency case management meetings with schools, the Department of Child and Family Services, justice partners, and Workforce Development. The Empowering Futures Initiative now supports 15 participants on paths that include GED programmes, Bermuda College courses, and apprenticeships. This work is supported by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that holds all partners accountable and ensures that resources are used effectively.

Mr. Speaker, these grants are structured investments with accountability built in at every stage.

The process is as follows:

1. Programmes submit detailed Grant Applications with budgets and sustainability plans.
2. Applications are reviewed against criteria tied to NVRS goals.
3. Awardees participate in orientation sessions where expectations are set.
4. Programmes are required to submit Quakerly progress reports.
5. At the end of the funding period, a formal evaluation measures outcomes against agreed metrics.

And throughout this process, the GVRT is on the ground, visiting programmes, reviewing progress, and connecting directly with the young people and families served.

Mr. Speaker, this year, we will host community roundtables to hear directly from residents, frontline workers, and families about violence, service gaps, and solutions. The “Mental Health Matters” campaign amplifies these voices, telling real stories of resilience and recovery through photography, spoken word, and storytelling.

Mr. Speaker, some of our most important work is with those at the highest risk of harm. Fifteen individuals received intensive wraparound support in June, including mentorship, advocacy, and family safety planning. The Gang Violence Reduction Team is present in court every day, linking individuals to services and supervising community service placements that hold individuals accountable while offering guidance. They respond quickly to incidents in schools and neighbourhoods, using mediation and restorative conferencing to prevent escalation.

Mr. Speaker, when this House endorsed the National Violence Reduction Strategy, Honourable Members were assured that it was not a slogan or a wish list. The Strategy outlines more than eighty targeted actions, each tied to the eight strategic goals of the NVRS, and each designed to deliver measurable impact.

These actions reflect a whole-of-government response, with the Ministry of National Security working alongside the Ministries of Health, Education, Justice, Youth and Social Development, Tourism, Culture and Sport, and Economy and Labour. Together, these partners carry responsibility for different elements of the plan, ensuring coordination across prevention, enforcement, rehabilitation, and cultural change.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security, working in partnership with the Police and the GVRT, is tasked with designing and delivering an annual evidence-based violence prevention workshop for community leaders, educators, coaches, and youth workers. These workshops will focus on emerging trends in gang involvement, innovative intervention strategies, and the most effective practices in preventing youth violence, drawing on both local data and international best practice.

Free access is also to be provided to the Mental Health First Aid certification course for educators, youth workers, and community leaders. This will ensure that those who work closest with our young people are equipped with culturally competent, trauma-informed skills to identify challenges, intervene early, and connect individuals to appropriate support. In addition, at least sixty community mediators and facilitators – including youth workers, faith leaders, and residents – will be trained through certified restorative practice programmes, helping to build community-level capacity to resolve conflict peacefully.

Mr. Speaker, the Strategy further provides for post-incident mental health and trauma counselling, ensuring that families and communities have timely access to the support they need after violent incidents. A national audit of mental health and substance abuse services is to be completed, identifying gaps in service and barriers to access, with this information made easily available through the Stop the Violence website. Building on this, a youth-focused mental health anti-stigma campaign will be developed, featuring community ambassadors with lived experience to shift public perceptions and promote resilience.

On the employment and reintegration front, the Strategy calls for the expansion of the GVRT's Redemption Initiative and its Work Placement and Mentoring Initiative, with additional staff and resources dedicated to connecting high-risk individuals to meaningful employment and vocational training. Partnerships with local GED providers will be expanded to enable more learning support for those who need it. The plan also provides for psychosocial events focused on men and their children, strengthening family bonds and promoting mental health awareness.

Finally, the Strategy recognises that long-term change requires cultural transformation. A national suite of print and digital materials will be created to explain the types of violence, early warning signs, prevention strategies, and available support services, all designed to be culturally relevant and accessible.

Mr. Speaker, robust monitoring and evaluation is the foundation of any effective strategy, and the National Violence Reduction Strategy was built with this in mind. We recognise the expectation of this Honourable House and the public to see clear evidence of progress and acknowledge calls for greater transparency in data. The Ministry is redesigning how outcomes are collected, analysed, and shared, moving from ad hoc reporting to a structured, transparent system that tracks progress against the Strategy's eight goals and ministry-specific SMART objectives.

Mr. Speaker, the National Violence Reduction Strategy is not a slogan. It is a movement to heal our communities, strengthen families, and give young people opportunities for a better future. Every grant awarded and every intervention delivered represents an investment in a safer Bermuda.

Mr Speaker, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Gang Violence Reduction Team, community organisations, educators, families, and residents who are leading this change every day. Your efforts, often unseen, are the backbone of this strategy and a lifeline for many.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to listen, to engage, and to invite everyone in Bermuda to take part in building a safer, stronger country. This Honourable House can be assured that the Ministry of National Security remains deeply committed to this mission, and I welcome ongoing dialogue with Members and the public as we move forward.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**