

Antelope Valley Violence Prevention Coalition

Building a Regional Movement for Safety & Healing





“Out here, in cities like Lancaster, violent crime rates are roughly twice the national average,” says Adel Domingo, Program Manager at [Antelope Valley Partners for Health \(AVPH\)](#). With ten years of experience in program management, community organizing, and advocacy, Domingo is deeply familiar with the daily challenges facing Antelope Valley residents.

Rather than offering a single program, Domingo and the AVPH team have led the creation of a comprehensive regional violence-prevention coalition: the community-driven **Antelope Valley Violence Prevention Coalition**. Through the coalition, survivors and residents are connected to a network of supports, ranging from hospital-based interventions and wound care kits to healing arts workshops and school-based “Kindness Heals” campaigns.

Each effort—practical and designed in partnership with the people most affected by violence—brings prevention into everyday life.

The Antelope Valley’s Violence Crisis

Spanning 2,800 square miles of high desert in north Los Angeles County, the Antelope Valley’s wide-open spaces and relatively affordable housing have long been attractive to families. At the same time, geographic isolation and limited public transportation have left many residents without access to essential health care and social services in a region where violence presents persistent challenges.

Historical racial segregation, strained policing relationships, and poverty¹ intersect with high rates of substance use and neglect,² leaving youth vulnerable to community violence. These conditions have contributed to disproportionate rates of gun violence³ and high-profile child abuse cases, some of which have been featured in national documentaries.⁴ As cycles of violence reinforce these patterns, youth face too few opportunities for stability. Survivors, meanwhile, struggle to navigate the systems of care needed for long-term recovery and safety.

“It can be a boring place to live, especially if you are young,” acknowledged Andy Estrada, a life-long resident and Case Manager with AVPH. “When you combine that lack of activity with systemic gaps, a lot of youth fall through the cracks.”



“This reality has forced us to think beyond traditional responses. Survivors need safety tools, healing supports, and trusted people showing up where violence actually happens, so we knew we had to build something different.”

– Adel Domingo, Program Manager, AVPH

In November 2021, a landscape analysis conducted by Los Angeles County, as part of its Regional Violence Prevention Coalition initiative, examined Antelope Valley’s challenges more closely. The findings reflected the lived experience and observations of many residents and providers:

- **Lancaster and Palmdale account for about 25% of all domestic violence calls** in Los Angeles County,² despite representing only about 3.4% of the county’s population.⁵
- Parole officers reported individuals **waiting up to seven months for a mental health appointment.**²
- **Nearly half of households with firearms reported storing them unsafely**—either loaded or unlocked.²
- The three most common forms of violence in the Antelope Valley were **domestic violence/assault, child abuse, and suicide.**²
- Within three years of release, **two out of three people were rearrested and more than half reincarcerated.**²

These findings set in motion a regional response to confront the causes of violence head-on and build stronger pathways to recovery and safety.



A Trusted Partner Steps in to Lead

AVPH is a community-based organization dedicated to educating, strengthening, and advocating for the community through services and partnerships. For more than two decades, the organization has helped residents navigate poverty and inequities, building the trust and track record needed to rally stakeholders around a collective violence prevention response.

While the county’s landscape analysis highlighted the scale of the problem, AVPH—knowing they needed to listen locally to better understand how violence and trauma were shaping daily life—launched its own community needs assessment. Drawing on local data, asset mapping, and interviews with service providers, school counselors, and residents, the assessment pointed to three critical needs:

- **Youth needed more places to turn** – opportunities and supports that lessen their vulnerability to violence and help them recover from its effects.
- **Providers wanted to work together** – many reported that they felt siloed in their work and longed for ways to coordinate responses and share resources.
- **Residents wanted to contribute to the solution** – people spoke of their desire to help address violence and trauma but said they often didn’t know how to begin.

Taken together, these insights gave AVPH a clearer roadmap: build structural supports for young people, create spaces for providers to collaborate, and open real pathways for community members to engage. This became the foundation for AVPH’s next step—coalescing partners around a coordinated strategy.





Building the Coalition and Setting Priorities

“We didn’t realize how many altruistic people were ready to help until the coalition formed,” recalls Domingo, who watched a handful of invitations quickly grow into a full room.

AVPH’s Executive Director Michelle Fluke helped kick off the effort when she handed her contact list to staff members and told them to “go for it.” With her backing, AVPH staff personally reached out to partners across the Valley. Early meetings drew more than 40 participants, from community-based organizations and service providers to youth leaders and residents. By January 2022, they had launched the Antelope Valley Violence Prevention Coalition (AV VPC) with a mission to access to violence prevention resources.

From the outset, the coalition emphasized practical ways for community members to get involved by:

- **Training residents and providers** to write public comments and op-eds, organize community events, and develop advocacy campaigns
- **Collecting and sharing data** to strengthen credibility with decision-makers and track impact
- **Hosting youth listening sessions** to better understand the experiences of young people affected by violence
- **Recruiting youth ambassadors**, including beauty pageant winners, whose visibility and credibility made them effective messengers, and training them to deliver public comments
- **Normalizing shared decision-making**, laying the groundwork for a steering committee to provide long-term leadership

In 2022—the coalition’s first full year—AV VPC concentrated on domestic violence, child abuse, and suicide prevention. By 2023, amid increasing gun violence concerns, firearm safety also became an urgent priority. However, due to mistrust of health and social care systems, persistent gaps in services, and political divisions, many residents were reluctant to engage with public health staff or events on community issues, including violence prevention.

To address this apprehension, the coalition chose to work through people and institutions already embedded locally and aligned with community values. It partnered with the sheriff’s department to host workshops, train residents in safe storage, and distribute locks and boxes as part of a broader effort to make firearm safety accessible and practical.

“We were thoughtful about how firearm safety would be introduced,” Estrada said. “In this region, hands-on approaches tend to resonate. Trust couldn’t be built through messaging alone, so we focused on showing up consistently and offering concrete tools people could use to keep their families safe.”



Becoming an Accountable Community for Health

In July 2023, AVPH, serving as the backbone organization for AV VPC, received \$400,000 in grant funding through the [California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative](#) (CACHI). This investment enabled AVPH to coordinate and expand AV VPC's violence prevention initiatives while also adopting CACHI's framework to formalize resident involvement in the coalition's governance and build long-term systems change through the [Accountable Communities for Health](#) (ACH) model.

An ACH is a cross-sector partnership that brings together health care, public health, community organizations, and residents to co-develop strategies and collaboratively advance health and equity. ACHs are designed not only to generate and implement solutions, but also to create governance structures through which residents can take on formal roles in shaping decisions and ensuring accountability.

For AV VPC, becoming an ACH with the CACHI grant marked a structural pivot: the coalition reframed as the **Antelope Valley – Violence Prevention ACH (AVP-ACH)**, aligning with the statewide CACHI network and signaling its commitment to violence prevention as a public health priority. The ACH model also gave the coalition new pathways to deepen resident engagement. Survivors, youth, and community leaders would no longer simply participate in programs; instead, they'd step into advisory and governance roles, help set priorities, and guide strategy.

With CACHI's support, AVP-ACH strengthened its infrastructure and expanded its portfolio of trauma-informed, community-centered initiatives that respond to both immediate needs and long-term healing.

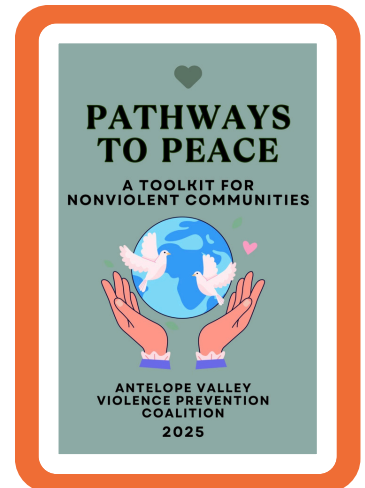
Antelope Valley – Violence Prevention ACH Initiatives

The following initiatives represent more than a list of programs. They amount to an innovative way of transforming services, reshaping community conversations about violence, and embedding an interdisciplinary approach at the heart of trauma response.

- **Hospital Violence Intervention Program (HVIP)** – At Antelope Valley Medical Center, a trauma-informed case manager meets survivors at their bedsides, connecting them to housing, food, therapy, and legal aid resources. (HVIP is not yet a permanent hospital service but a grant-funded program.)

HVIP includes:

- **Pathway to Peace Toolkit** – With 3,500 copies distributed in English and Spanish, the toolkit offers survivors a blueprint for navigating complex systems—from legal support and trauma recovery to housing and wound care—while also serving as a tool for tracking usage and updating resources.
- **Healing Arts Workshops** – In partnership with a local domestic violence shelter, workshops led by certified art therapists create trauma-informed spaces for expression and recovery.
- **Heal Quest** – Offers survivors coming into the emergency room a path to resilience, including individual and family therapy, transportation to services, and wound care kits.
- **Wound Care Kits** – Distributed to survivors leaving the emergency room, kits include bandages, trauma dressings, ointments, and basic supplies to support immediate healing at home.
- **Gun Safety & A.S.K. Campaign** – In collaboration with the sheriff’s department and other local partners, the campaign distributes firearm locks, hosts safety workshops, and promotes safe storage through A.S.K.: “**A**wareness. **S**hare It. **K**eeP it locked and unloaded.”
- **School Collaborations** – With Wilsona School District, “Kindness Heals” art and talent showcases and community forums promote safe relationships, bullying prevention, and community awareness.
- **Stop the Hate Campaign** – Provides victims of hate crimes and incidents with reporting assistance, connections to legal support, and healing events that promote safety and belonging.



Estrada, who works with HVIP clients as a case manager, highlights the impact of AVP-ACH's work: "When someone comes into the ER with a gunshot or stab wound, we meet them at their bedside, if possible, and walk with them through what's next—housing, food, mental health, legal support. Survivors are no longer discharged into silence, but met with care, planning, and meaningful follow-up."

Participants in the ACH describe it as a hub that connects people to the resources they need in practical and immediate ways. "Creating central tools survivors can actually use was a huge breakthrough," notes project coordinator Jonuel Manglicmot. "They're blueprints that demystify the system, and they're built for our community."

"When we go to schools now, students recognize us. They'll say, 'That's the lady from that program.' It shows that just showing up, over and over, is what builds trust."

– Topanga Ronan, AVPH Data Specialist

Lessons Learned

For health systems, coalition leaders, and communities seeking to advance community health, AVP-ACH offers the following lessons:

- **Building Trust Is Essential** – Especially in regions where mistrust of health systems is common, coalitions must invest time in building relationships, showing up consistently, and demonstrating they can be counted on.
- **Data Opens Doors, but Local Listening Sets Direction** – Regional data can capture the scale of a problem and catalyze action, but pairing it with community assessments ensures strategies reflect lived realities and local priorities.
- **Meet Communities Where They Are** – Effective prevention campaigns often require trusted messengers to serve as credible bridges between community health efforts and residents.
- **Healing and Prevention Are Interdependent** – Effective violence prevention must account for trauma. Communities that treat healing supports as central are better able to interrupt cycles of harm and build long-term safety.
- **Practical Tools Demystify Systems** – When survivors can see clear pathways through housing, legal aid, and recovery services, they are more likely to engage and sustain progress.
- **Advocacy and Capacity-Building Build Community Power** – Training residents in advocacy skills turns community engagement into community power. These skills help ensure violence-prevention efforts outlast individual programs or grants.
- **Governance Enables Systems Change** – Durable change requires developing structures where community members can share power, set priorities, and guide decision-making.

Together, these lessons highlight how coalitions can weave trust, data, healing, and governance into a comprehensive approach to lasting community safety.



The Road Ahead: Scaling Healing and Prevention

Today, AVVP-ACH is working to integrate trauma response, prevention, and healing initiatives across systems. Its current priorities include embedding HVIP as a permanent hospital service and partnering with other ACHs in the CACHI network to build a community-driven health and prevention movement across Southern California.

To sustain and grow this work, the coalition is also formalizing new governance structures to embed resident voice in decision-making. An advisory committee will provide input on how AVVP-ACH continues to address gaps in mental health, transportation, and wound care, while a steering committee and participatory framework will support equity and continuity within the ACH. Formation of a youth advisory council is also being discussed to ensure young people contribute to leadership and directly inform how Antelope Valley youth can be supported.

Charting a path toward equity and safety that others can join, Antelope Valley – Violence Prevention ACH is shifting the culture of violence prevention and building the infrastructure for residents to lead.

“The core of our work is healing, and because of this, we have started providing that in ways we never could before.”

– Adel Domingo, Program Manager, AVPH



Sources

- 1 ACLU SoCal & Covington & Burling LLP. *Mapping Racially Biased Policing in the Antelope Valley*.
- 2 Los Angeles County Regional Violence Prevention Coalition. *SPA 1 (Antelope Valley) Regional Violence Prevention Coalition Landscape Analysis Report*. February 11, 2022.
- 3 LA County Department of Medical Examiner / Office of Violence Prevention. *Mortality from Firearm Violence in Los Angeles County: 2018–2022*.
- 4 *The Trials of Gabriel Fernandez*. Directed by Brian Knappenberger, Netflix, 2020.
- 5 U.S. Census Bureau. *2020 Decennial Census, QuickFacts: Lancaster city, CA; Palmdale city, CA; Los Angeles County, CA*.

Photos courtesy of AVPH and AVVP-ACH



The Antelope Valley Violence Prevention Coalition brings together community leaders and residents to discuss community violence and develop solutions through youth and family-focused resources and programs.



Antelope Valley Partners for Health

Community Collaborative Promoting Health and Wellness

Antelope Valley Partners for Health's mission is to educate, strengthen and advocate for the community through services and partnerships, achieving optimal health and quality of life for all people in the Antelope Valley.

AVPH's vision is that all children, families, and individuals in the Antelope Valley will have optimal psychosocial, physical and environmental health.



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The [California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative](#) (CACHI) is driving a statewide shift in how health systems, social services, community organizations, and residents collaborate to improve population health and equity. In partnership with [Accountable Communities for Health](#) (ACHs) in 36 communities across the state, CACHI is advancing community-rooted, multisector infrastructure that aligns local resources, policies, and investments to tackle the root causes of health disparities.



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