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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGY FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SCOPE	2
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	2
DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY	2
PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPLEMENTATION.....	2
 GOAL 1	
ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THREAT AND DEVELOP EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COUNTER THE THREAT ..	4
OBJECTIVE 1: CONDUCT AND SUPPORT RIGOROUS, EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND AND COUNTER THE VIOLENT EXTREMIST THREAT	4
OBJECTIVE 2: EXCHANGE RESEARCH RESULTS WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS...	5
 GOAL 2	
RAISE COMMUNITY AWARENESS BY DISSEMINATING INFORMATION TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS	7
OBJECTIVE 1: DEVELOP AND SHARE TIMELY INFORMATION TO RAISE BASELINE NATIONAL AWARENESS OF THE THREAT FROM VIOLENT EXTREMISM	7
OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCE DIRECT OUTREACH, TRAINING, AND EDUCATION ON THE THREAT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES TARGETED FOR RECRUITMENT BY VIOLENT EXTREMIST GROUPS.....	8
 GOAL 3	
SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED EFFORTS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM	10
OBJECTIVE 1: PROMOTE A NATIONAL MESSAGE OF INCLUSION, RESPECT, AND NON- DISCRIMINATION.....	10
OBJECTIVE 2: CHALLENGE VIOLENT EXTREMIST MESSAGING THAT SUPPORTS IDEOLOGICALLY-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE	11
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE COMMUNITIES' CAPACITY TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY	11

GOAL 4	
ENHANCE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION OF DHS CVE ACTIVITIES.	13
OBJECTIVE 1: LINK AND INTEGRATE CVE-RELATED DEPARTMENTAL STRATEGY AND PLANNING, BUDGETING, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.	13
OBJECTIVE 2: EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS OF CVE PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES ..	14
CONCLUSION	15



INTRODUCTION

Violent extremism presents a critical threat to the United States. Individuals who commit acts of violent extremism are inspired by diverse political, religious, and philosophical beliefs, and are not limited to any single population or region. No matter the motivation, attacks by violent extremists have devastating effects on our communities.

The United States unequivocally condemns ideologically-motivated violence. Although counterterrorism and law enforcement efforts to disrupt plots are a continuing priority, the evolving threat environment requires more proactive, community-based prevention and intervention. The United States must work to counter violent extremism by dissuading individuals from radicalizing to violence in the first place. This means supporting and building trust with diverse communities across the country. Research shows that parents, neighbors, colleagues, peers, teachers, and community leaders are best positioned to address the underlying causes of violent extremism, recognize when an individual becomes ideologically-motivated to commit violence, and intervene before an individual or a group commits an act of violent extremism.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is dedicated to countering violent extremism and plays a leading role in the Federal Government's efforts. To accomplish this, DHS equips CVE community partners¹ with the necessary information, grants, tools, training, and other support to help them identify and counter radicalization to violence. Through these efforts, the Department ensures that families and communities are empowered and well-informed to resist violent extremism.

Countering violent extremism (CVE) refers to proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence.

¹ CVE community partners are those who have an expressed or identified role in CVE, including, but not limited to: State, local, tribal, territorial, and local governments and law enforcement; communities; non-governmental organizations; philanthropic organizations; academia; educators; social services providers; mental health providers; and the private sector.

***Vision:** By 2019, communities possess the information, resources, and tools to effectively counter radicalization and recruitment to violence.*

Scope

DHS leads domestic CVE efforts for the Federal Government, in partnership with the Department of Justice, to ensure community partners have the research, information, and tools required to intervene and counter violent extremism. DHS Components will develop budget submissions and participate in Department planning activities to support this strategy.

Guiding Principles

DHS's approach to CVE is aligned with the [2016 White House Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States](#) and consistent with the following guiding principles:

- Violent extremists have many motivations and are not limited to any single population, region, or ideology;
- Local community partners are most effective at safeguarding individuals in the United States against violent extremist radicalization and recruitment to violence;
- Intelligence and law enforcement investigations are not part of CVE activities; and
- Preservation of individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law and respect for civil rights, civil liberties, and privacy are fundamental to CVE.

Development of the Strategy

To develop this strategy, the DHS Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) and the DHS Office of Policy consulted DHS component leadership; interagency partners; State, local, tribal, and territorial governments; subject-matter experts; communities; the private sector; and other organizations with CVE interests. This strategy builds on the direction provided by Secretary Johnson in his September 28, 2015 memorandum, "Building Community Partnerships to Counter Violent Extremism."

Partnerships and Implementation

Partnerships. To implement this strategy, the Department will work with Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial governments and law enforcement; communities; non-governmental organizations; philanthropic organizations; academia; educators; social services providers; mental health providers; and the private sector. This multidisciplinary approach is particularly important given the complex and dispersed nature of violent extremism throughout the United States. DHS will take a four-pronged approach to implement this strategy:

1. DHS will identify opportunities to support community partners who are working to prevent recruitment and radicalization to violence.
2. DHS will ensure that the Department's CVE efforts are evidence-based, innovative, and achieve productive, enduring outcomes.
3. OCP will chair a CVE Executive Steering Committee (ESC) to coordinate Department efforts.
4. DHS will collaborate with the CVE Task Force and interagency partners, including the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other departments and agencies, as appropriate, to ensure that Federal support to community-based CVE activities is integrated and mutually reinforcing.

Implementation. DHS will assess implementation of this strategy's goals and objectives on an ongoing basis and report progress to the Secretary. These periodic assessments will highlight: (1) areas of success and best practices, (2) opportunities for improvement, and (3) any constraints impeding progress. OCP will lead this review with support from the CVE ESC.

DHS will review and update this strategy every three years, beginning in 2019, to ensure Department CVE efforts keep pace with evolving threats posed by violent extremism.



GOAL 1

ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THREAT AND DEVELOP EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COUNTER THE THREAT

Over the last decade, DHS and Federal partners have made considerable progress in understanding violent extremism. The threat is evolving quickly, however. International and domestic terrorist organizations are increasingly using the Internet and social media to inspire, recruit, enable, and train individuals to commit acts of terrorism in the United States. Additionally, the Nation faces a threat of attacks conducted by lone offenders motivated by their own perceived grievances or agendas. To best position the United States to understand and counter the evolving violent extremist threat, DHS must prioritize and expand on internal research, support external research, and continue to share knowledge gained from community, interagency, and international partners.

Objective 1: Conduct and support rigorous, evidence-based research to understand and counter the violent extremist threat

DHS conducts and supports CVE research that examines the underlying causes of violent extremism and identifies promising practices to counter the threat. DHS will maximize the full potential of Departmental CVE funding, grants, and external partnerships by focusing CVE research to address identified research gaps. DHS will ensure that research findings are accessible to CVE community partners.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Identify DHS CVE research gaps;
- ii. Establish a DHS CVE research agenda to prioritize research on these gaps over the next three years;
- iii. Align DHS CVE research funding, programming, and activities with the research agenda;
- iv. Regularly solicit and collect input from researchers and consumers of the research to refine the research agenda and inform training content and program development;
- v. Establish an electronic library for DHS-funded CVE research, ensure that all research sponsored by DHS is documented in the searchable library, and make research available to sponsors of CVE research and community partners, as appropriate; and
- vi. Ensure ongoing or planned DHS CVE research and direct support for external research (including grants) are not duplicative of interagency activities.

Outcomes

Rigorous, evidence-based research and analysis enhances DHS-sponsored and community-based CVE efforts. Improved coordination within DHS and across the Federal Government ensures that research and analysis is more relevant and accessible to CVE program implementers and community partners.

Milestones

- By December 2016, DHS will document all past, ongoing, and planned CVE research supported by DHS funding.
- By February 2017, DHS will share documented CVE research with interagency partners.
- By June 2017, DHS will identify and prioritize CVE research gaps, develop an agenda to address existing gaps, and use this agenda to inform CVE-related budget and programming activities.
- By October 2017, DHS will create a searchable library of all completed, DHS-funded CVE research projects.
- By December 2017, and annually thereafter, DHS will provide a summary of all CVE research grants issued during the prior fiscal year and make all products developed through this funding mechanism available through a searchable DHS CVE research library.
- By December 2017, DHS will establish a formal mechanism to receive feedback concerning DHS-sponsored research.

Objective 2: Exchange research results with international partners

In coordination with other Federal partners, DHS will exchange research results with international partners to better understand potential behaviors associated with violent extremist activity, share promising practices in countering the violent extremist threat, and develop rigorous evidence-based measures to assess CVE program effectiveness.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Collaborate with existing international partners to share research results and promising practices, and identify opportunities to collaborate on CVE-related research and development;
- ii. Establish new and develop existing international partnerships through the DHS Attaché network, bilateral and multilateral agreements, and other international cooperative activities; and
- iii. Incorporate information gained through international engagements to inform DHS CVE activities.

Outcomes

DHS has robust relationships with international partners, shares research results with these partners, and incorporates promising practices and relevant research findings into ongoing Department CVE research efforts and activities.

Milestones

- By December 2016, and routinely thereafter, DHS will conduct and document bilateral and multilateral information exchanges with international partners working on CVE-related research.
- By December 2016, and routinely thereafter, DHS will integrate information derived from international partners into DHS CVE research efforts and activities.



GOAL 2

RAISE COMMUNITY AWARENESS BY DISSEMINATING INFORMATION TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community partners are best positioned to recognize and counter radicalization and recruitment to violence. In coordination with other Federal partners, DHS will develop and share information to help community partners understand the nature of the threat, including the underlying causes of violent extremism, violent extremist narratives and tactics, and behaviors commonly associated with violent extremism.

Objective 1: Develop and share timely information to raise baseline national awareness of the threat from violent extremism

DHS is a principal conduit of homeland security information from the Federal Government to community partners. DHS will raise baseline national awareness of violent extremism by developing and sharing timely and useful informational products with our partners.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Coordinate with Federal partners to appropriately share timely information on violent extremism trends and patterns with community partners and the public;
- ii. Develop a mechanism that community partners can share and use to conduct baseline self-assessments of their communities' understanding of the violent extremist threat;
- iii. Inform DHS CVE products using feedback from community self-assessments;
- iv. Create an online, publicly-accessible web portal to disseminate information, training, and education materials to community partners; and
- v. Develop and distribute printed material to help community partners understand the threat of violent extremism.

Outcomes

Community partners understand the nature of the threat of violent extremism in their communities and can take action to intervene at the earliest opportunity.

Milestones

- By June 2017, in coordination with Federal partners, DHS will create a DHS CVE information sharing plan that details existing DHS information sharing activities with community partners and intended expansion of those activities over the next three years.
- By June 2017, DHS will share a mechanism with community partners that they can use to assess their communities' understanding of the violent extremist threat.
- By December 2017, DHS will incorporate information gathered through the community self-assessment process to refine CVE-related informational and training products.
- By December 2017, DHS will create a publicly-accessible web portal to disseminate CVE awareness materials, including specialized awareness briefings for community partners, and implement a mechanism to understand product use and relevance to these partners.
- By December 2017, DHS will develop and distribute printed CVE informational products that inform community partners of the violent extremist threat.
- By December 2017, DHS will institute a feedback mechanism to solicit and gather routine community partner feedback on CVE awareness materials and use this information to inform and refine DHS CVE programs and products.

Objective 2: Enhance direct outreach, training, and education on the threat of violent extremism in specific communities targeted for recruitment by violent extremist groups

DHS will support and reinforce CVE awareness in communities most frequently targeted by violent extremist messages and recruitment tactics, addressing community-specific concerns through direct outreach and customized training and information.

Sub-Objective

- i. Provide customized training and information to help communities most frequently targeted for recruitment to help them understand violent extremist messaging, tactics, and potential behaviors commonly associated with violent extremism.

Outcomes

Community partners in regions and cities most frequently targeted by violent extremist messages and recruitment methods have the training, information, and support necessary to implement effective prevention and intervention models.

Milestones

- By June 2017, DHS will develop and implement a process to identify and support communities that may benefit from particular information regarding emergent violent extremist issues.
- By December 2017, DHS will create and disseminate materials to raise awareness of trends and patterns of ideologically-motivated violence in these regions and cities.
- By December 2017, DHS leadership will directly engage with community partners in identified regions and cities, and, through DHS field office engagements in specific communities, raise awareness of trends, patterns, and potential behaviors commonly associated with violent extremism.



GOAL 3

SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED EFFORTS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Violent extremism is difficult to predict, detect, and disrupt because there is no single cause or pathway to violence. Community partners are often best positioned to recognize potential behaviors associated with violent extremism. As a result, community-based CVE prevention and intervention models are generally the most effective approach to prevent violent extremism.

Objective 1: Promote a national message of inclusion, respect, and non-discrimination

Respectful and trusted relationships are the cornerstones of the Department's approach to CVE. DHS is committed to building trust with communities across the United States to create strong partnerships. DHS will engage directly with diverse communities to promote these fundamental values and reject the premise that violent extremism is linked to particular ideological perspectives.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Directly engage communities across the United States to discuss issues related to CVE, reinforce American values, and build trust between local communities and the Department; and
- ii. Support communities in the aftermath of violent extremist attacks by providing timely information and resources.

Outcomes

DHS leadership engages diverse communities to build trusted community relationships and partnerships to counter violent extremism. In the aftermath of an act of violent extremism, communities are supported appropriately with information and resources.

Milestones

- By June 2017, and routinely thereafter, DHS leadership will engage with diverse communities across the Nation to reinforce American values and build trust between local communities and the Department.
- By June 2017, DHS will develop and implement a process and corresponding tools to provide direct support to communities responding to, and recovering from, violent extremist attacks.

Objective 2: Challenge violent extremist messaging that supports ideologically-motivated violence

DHS routinely engages with individuals and organizations who challenge violent extremist messaging. DHS will collaborate with technology companies, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, public service providers, and academic partners to counter narratives using emerging tools and technology.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Collaborate with community partners to build and distribute community-generated content that counters violent extremism narratives; and
- ii. Document community-generated CVE campaigns, programs, materials, and related content that challenge violent extremist narratives on an open-access portal, which communities can access to conduct local outreach.

Outcomes

Technology companies, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, public service providers, and academic partners amplify impactful, community-generated narratives that counter violent extremist messaging and recruitment campaigns.

Milestones

- By December 2017, DHS will support over 50 teams at U.S. colleges as part of the annual “Peer to Peer (P2P) Challenging Extremism” program.²
- By December 2018, DHS will publish community-generated campaigns, programs, materials, and related content on an open-access portal.
- By December 2018, DHS will support a community-based CVE campaign in each community where DHS has a community advisor field presence.

Objective 3: Improve communities’ capacity to counter violent extremism at the earliest opportunity

DHS will empower communities with tools, training, and resources to develop and implement local CVE programs and activities that respond to specific communities’ needs.

² Launched in 2015, the “Peer to Peer” program is a government-sponsored competition to empower students at universities to develop innovative and powerful social media campaigns that include positive, alternative, or counter narratives to challenge violent extremism. Student teams work with a faculty advisor while earning academic credit to research, design, and launch social media campaigns that have a measurable impact on their campus, community, and country.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Provide support, tools and training to help community partners identify and counter radicalization to violence, and develop prevention frameworks and response plans to counter violent extremism;
- ii. Identify and prioritize U.S. cities and regions for expansion of DHS community advisor field presence to support community-based, non-law enforcement intervention and rehabilitation programs aimed at preventing individuals from engaging in ideologically-motivated violence;
- iii. Expand DHS community advisor field presence to high-priority cities and regions;
- iv. Establish regional community forums where community leaders can discuss CVE issues with their network; and
- v. Support community policing and law enforcement community engagement models that build trust, mutual respect, and collaboration between law enforcement and communities, and ensure law enforcement training sponsored or funded by DHS reflects the specialized role of law enforcement in CVE programs.

Outcomes

Communities across the United States have developed and implemented multi-disciplinary prevention frameworks and comprehensive, long-term response plans to counter violent extremism.

Milestones

- By December 2016, DHS will evaluate current field office activities to identify promising practices for future field locations.
- By June 2017, DHS will identify priority regions for field office expansion.
- By December 2017, DHS will support an initial set of communities interested in developing multidisciplinary prevention frameworks and comprehensive response plans.
- By December 2017, DHS will establish regional community forums for community partners to discuss CVE issues in every region or city with a DHS community advisor field presence.
- By June 2018, DHS will expand support to additional communities interested in developing multidisciplinary prevention frameworks and comprehensive response plans.
- By June 2018, DHS will collaborate with interagency partners to develop and share a CVE-focused community policing engagement model.



GOAL 4

ENHANCE OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION OF DHS CVE ACTIVITIES

Multiple DHS Components and Offices engage in CVE activities, including community outreach, law enforcement training, and research and analysis. DHS will strengthen these internal CVE efforts by improving oversight and coordination, ensuring that benchmarks and measures of performance inform CVE efforts sponsored by DHS, and integrating and unifying CVE planning, programming, budgeting, and execution. Through these processes, DHS will align its CVE efforts with community needs to adapt to the changing violent extremist threat environment and improve accountability to the public, Congress, and our partners.

Objective 1: Link and integrate CVE-related departmental strategy and planning, budgeting, research and development, programs and activities

DHS will ensure that funding, personnel, and other resources are optimized to meet the goals and objectives outlined in this strategy by linking, integrating, prioritizing, aligning, and, when appropriate, discontinuing CVE activities across the Department.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Establish a CVE Executive Steering Committee (ESC), chaired by OCP, to oversee policy, strategy, and operational issues concerning CVE programs and initiatives;
- ii. Develop evidence-based guidance, informed by the ESC, for ongoing decision making related to DHS CVE activities;
- iii. Integrate and align cross-Component CVE activities; and
- iv. Prioritize CVE-related budget, programming, and activities within the Department in accordance with this strategy.

Outcomes

DHS CVE efforts are synchronized, transparent, cost effective, and evidence-based.

Milestones

- By December 2016, DHS will establish a CVE ESC that provides evidence-based policy and operational guidance to DHS Components and Offices.
- By June 2017, all DHS CVE programs will align with this strategy and have documented requirements, milestones, metrics, and outcomes.

- By the FY2019 budget cycle, OCP will document and prioritize all DHS CVE planning, programming, budget, and execution activities to inform DHS leadership decisions.

Objective 2: Evaluate Effectiveness of CVE Program and Activities

As the threat from terrorism evolves, DHS must keep pace and routinely evaluate the effectiveness of CVE programs and activities to ensure that the Department's resources are invested appropriately.

Sub-Objectives

- i. Develop outcome metrics for CVE programs;
- ii. Review and evaluate the effectiveness of DHS CVE programs and activities;
- iii. Incorporate outcome-based analysis and assessment into the overall CVE-related strategy and policy, budget, and program decisions; and
- iv. Routinely solicit input on CVE programs and priorities from external CVE subject matter experts, including the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) CVE Subcommittee, and when appropriate, implement recommendations from these experts.

Outcomes

CVE efforts sponsored by DHS are responsive to the needs identified by program implementers and other community partners.

Milestones

- By December 2016, OCP will develop a plan to address recommendations that are developed by the HSAC CVE Subcommittee.
- Beginning in 2017 and annually thereafter, OCP will document engagements with external CVE subject matter experts, any program and policy guidance provided, and the disposition of those inputs.
- By June 2017, DHS will further mature resource allocation processes by defining specific outcome metrics to measure program effectiveness.
- By December 2017, OCP will use these outcome metrics to recommend and justify continuing program support and allocation of available resources. OCP will identify any programs lacking clearly defined outcomes and will evaluate their continued funding.



CONCLUSION

Over the past several years, the threat of violent extremism has evolved and with it, so has the DHS response. DHS will continue researching and analyzing the underlying causes and methods of radicalization and recruitment to violence, raise awareness of the CVE threat in local communities, support community-based efforts to counter violent extremism, and enhance oversight and coordination of DHS CVE programs. In accordance with this strategy, DHS will align programs, activities, and funding to support these goals and objectives, and provide the Secretary with annual updates on its implementation.

DHS remains dedicated to supporting the Federal Government's vision of empowering communities and local partners across the United States to counter all forms of violent extremism. This strategy incorporates the many lessons DHS has learned from years working in close partnership with local communities, and establishes the foundation for CVE efforts in the years to come.