

# Text-enabled Terrorism Intervention 211 Hotline



Homeland  
Security

Science and Technology

## FILLING THE GAP: DEVELOP SAFE REFERRAL PROTOCOLS

The Department of Homeland Security issued the Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence in September 2019 to position the Department to deal with new and emerging threats. The Strategic Framework highlights the need to encourage a whole-of-society approach to prevention programming, which requires the engagement of a variety of professionals, experts, departments, and organizations specializing in various aspects of prevention programming to coordinate their prevention activities and efforts. To that extent, the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) aims to test the effectiveness of existing crisis-center referral protocols from a domestic partner (211 LA) while developing protocols for a text-enabled safe-referral system for friends, family, and others to help connect individuals with relevant prevention and intervention resources (e.g., counselors, social workers, etc.). This evaluation of 211 LA's assessment and referral protocols will be conducted by researchers from Georgia State University. The outcome of this evaluation will inform program development recommendations for 211 LA and other crisis helplines to expand their abilities and preparedness to help divert or disengage someone from violent extremism.

Virtually none of the crisis hotlines in the United States have protocols in place to prevent violent extremism by referring callers to community service providers other than police. Research has shown that people tend to be reluctant to contact law enforcement agencies when they see signs of violent radicalization for fear of getting friends, loved ones, or themselves in trouble. A safe-referral call center would provide and empower local communities with a convenient, readily accessible, and confidential means to connect people at risk of violent extremism with needed resources.

## PROCESS EVALUATION OF REFERRAL PROTOCOLS

In order to test the effectiveness of existing crisis-center referral protocols, S&T has partnered with Georgia State University, which will conduct a process evaluation to capture the extent to which people who present issues related to third

party violence were referred to service providers by crisis-center operators. This is intended to discover if there are any barriers or obstacles to such referrals, and, if so, how such barriers might be overcome. Results from this project will lead to protocol recommendations for future text- and call-enabled policies and procedures for crisis helplines.

As part of the project, 211 LA will develop replicable program tools and guidance, which will include training curricula, resource referral guidance, and care coordination services, to connect program participants with needed resources. 211 LA will develop, launch, and maintain a public webpage to educate and engage audiences who want to help prevent or respond to hate or violent extremism ideation or acts. 211 LA will also coordinate with providers to network and develop guiding practices for responding and connecting to prevention and intervention resources.

## PERFORMERS, PARTNERS, STAKEHOLDERS

- Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia
- 211LA, Los Angeles, California
- DHS components including the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention.
- Local communities and service providers

The contractor and S&T will identify other stakeholders as the project progresses and deliverables emerge.



Artwork created by Amy Latzer, 211 LA.

