



Homeland
Security

Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council

Academic Subcommittee on Countering Violent Extremism: Report and Recommendations

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Preface

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is dedicated to countering violent extremism (CVE) 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 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.

DHS understands the value and impact of the higher education community in supporting its CVE efforts. To further engage the higher education community, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced the establishment of the Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC) Academic Subcommittee on CVE in October 2016. The subcommittee was initially asked to explore how DHS can establish strategic partnerships with K-12, colleges and universities, and local communities for CVE. Specifically, the subcommittee was charged with providing recommendations in response to the following three taskings:

1. How DHS can establish strategic partnerships with colleges and universities to increase awareness and understanding of CVE;
2. How to create strategic partnerships between DHS, colleges and universities, and the K-12 community to encourage students to participate in CVE-related academic programs and research efforts; and
3. How DHS can help campuses integrate with local communities to establish CVE initiatives and partnerships.

This report provides specific recommendations related each of the three taskings. Each recommendation is supported by CVE research from academic disciplines such as: law, social science, criminal justice, public health, and public policy. The recommendations align to the following four categories: 1) mechanisms for improved information sharing; 2) enhancing public safety and resilience; 3) new academic programs and resources; and 4) increased support for CVE research. Table 1.1 organizes recommendations by category:

Category	Tasking 1	Tasking 2	Tasking 3
Information Sharing	1, 2, 3	N/A	1, 6
Public Safety and Resilience	4, 5, 7, 8	N/A	3
Academic Programs and Resources	6	1, 2, 3	5
Research and Grants	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	4, 5	2, 4, 7, 8

Table 1.1: Recommendations organized by category

The subcommittee co-chairs President of Pennsylvania State University Dr. Eric Barron and President of the University of Minnesota Dr. Eric Kaler thank the subcommittee members and supporting researchers for their efforts to develop this report. In addition, the subcommittee thanks the following organizations for their advice and resources:

- DHS Office for Community Partnerships (OCP);
- CVE Task Force;
- DHS Office of Academic Engagement (OAE);
- DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A);
- DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T);
- DHS Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC);
- DHS United States Secret Service (USSS), National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC);
- Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism;
- Department of Education (ED);
- National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS); and
- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA).

This coordination enabled the subcommittee to gather resources and data to better understand and build on intra- and inter-agency and non-governmental CVE efforts.

General Findings

The subcommittee believes the following findings inform recommendations across all three taskings:

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to CVE for K-12, colleges and universities, and local communities. Unique geographic, demographic, cultural, and religious characteristics warrant diverse CVE strategies tailored to the needs of the school or community.

Misconceptions about DHS’s CVE efforts hinder partnerships with K-12, colleges and universities, and local communities. While no formal academic study has quantified the pervasiveness of misconceptions, there have been vocal and organized opposition to CVE both on² and off college and university campuses. This includes the misconception that CVE is focused solely on Muslims. In reality, federal efforts are rapidly bridging a gap between the theory of CVE as an “ideologically ecumenical” concept and CVE in practice. Recent federal efforts include addressing anti-Muslim violent extremists espousing white supremacist and militia extremist rhetoric, whose actions have ranged from threats of genocide³ and armed protests⁴ to plotting terrorist attacks.⁵

Experts often recommend CVE infrastructure and desired outcomes be focused on “CVE-relevant” rather than “CVE-specific” programming. In some cases, experts recommend removing the CVE label altogether. Many local service-providing entities have limited resources and encounter other issues more directly relevant to their experiences than violent extremism. For example, violent gangs may be a more prevalent and higher priority issue than violent extremists.⁶ As a result, CVE programs are increasingly adopting a multi-hazards approach that allows resources and gained skillsets to be applied to more than one issue of public safety (e.g. domestic abuse, drugs, gang violence, trafficking, etc.).

Public health and CVE research has shown that local community stakeholders feel that the term “CVE” stigmatizes the intended audience. Researchers and practitioners are increasingly turning to insights from public health to inform the conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of CVE programs in the U.S. These approaches typically use Community-engaged Research and Community-based Participatory Research models. Results from these models show recommendations from community stakeholders to avoid the term “countering violent extremism.” Instead, stakeholders prefer terminology that they feel positively resonates with intended audiences.⁷ For example, the Illinois Criminal Justice Authority runs a community outreach and awareness effort called the Targeted Violence Prevention Program (TVPP), which “uses a public health approach toward ideologically inspired targeted violence prevention.”⁸

Research suggests there is not a single pathway or factor that appears to facilitate an individual’s entry into violent extremism. A growing body of research has shown factors such as mental health,⁹ substance abuse,¹⁰ childhood abuse and trauma,¹¹ feelings of collective victimization,¹² and persistent black-and-white thinking processes¹³ (that are exploited and reinforced by extremist narratives)¹⁴ are associated with entry into ideologically-motivated violence. Additionally, studies have suggested that, similar to targeted violence mass shooters, lone-actor shooters engage in “leakage” or disclose their violent intent to peers, friends, and family.¹⁵

Tasking 1

How DHS can establish strategic partnerships with colleges and universities to increase awareness and understanding of CVE.

Findings

- A. **DHS fusion centers do not have liaisons for K-12 or colleges and universities.** The National Network of Fusion Centers brings critical context and value to homeland security and law enforcement by serving as information sharing hubs that provide comprehensive and appropriate access, analysis, and dissemination. NCCPS recently issued a survey to campus public safety officers to ask about their current and desired level of engagement with fusion centers. Results are scheduled to be released in 2017.
- B. **Non-governmental organizations have existing partnerships and resources that could be leveraged to create CVE information sharing training and programs.** Organizations such as NCCPS and IACLEA have well-established links with higher education and developed and delivered CVE awareness training for campus public safety officers. Leveraging and adapting existing training for different populations, with input from subject matter experts (SMEs), is an effective training multiplier.

Recommendations

- 1. **DHS should explore the viability of a multi-agency national CVE briefing and intervention training program for on-campus and community responders including institutional offices (e.g. emergency management, athletics, legal and risk management offices, facilities and housing, event management, parking and transportation, student activities, health services—including counselling services, and university ministries).**

Justification: Research suggests there is not a single pathway or factor that appears to facilitate an individual's entry into violent extremism. Higher education institutions have multiple offices that engage with faculty, students, and staff on topics ranging from mental health to planning student events. Many of these offices have limited, if any, awareness of violent extremism risks and indicators. A multi-agency approach would enable the federal government to engage with all institutional offices that should be participants in CVE on campus.

- 2. **DHS should establish liaisons at local fusion centers for K-12 and colleges and universities.**

Justification: By establishing liaisons at local fusion centers to engage with K-12 and colleges and universities, fusion centers will improve their receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information.

3. **DHS should maintain a voluntary directory of academic CVE SMEs for potential partnership opportunities.**

Justification: SMEs possess the knowledge needed to assess and design CVE programs and resources. OCP can function as a central “connector” and network hub for organizations, SMEs, and campus law enforcement to share research-based best practices and lessons learned.

4. **DHS should expand opportunities for college and university participation in campus resilience events and programs.**

Justification: Experts often recommend CVE activities be incorporated into general public safety and resilience efforts. DHS currently has several programs that engage colleges and universities in which CVE could be incorporated. Specifically, DHS should expand opportunities for its Campus Resilience Program Workshop and Exercise Series and Community Resilience Exercises. DHS should prioritize development of a CVE training or exercise, including engagement activities between campus staff and law enforcement. The majority of DHS programs deal with response to threats, such as active shooter preparedness and other initiatives. Few current programs, the Peer-to-Peer: Challenging Extremism Program being an exception, focus directly on the threat of violent extremism.

5. **DHS should partner with NCCPS and IACLEA to develop and leverage CVE training programs to enable campus public safety officers and other on or off-campus groups to educate students, faculty and staff and community leaders about CVE.**

Justification: Many students, faculty, and staff do not understand the underlying causes of violent extremism. NCCPS and IACLEA have well-established links with higher education and the ability to develop and deliver CVE awareness training for campus public safety officers.

6. **DHS should partner with colleges and universities to develop a CVE campaign, leveraging the Blue Campaign as a model, to provide information and training to dispel misconceptions about CVE and share best practices.**

Justification: Research shows anecdotal evidence of misconceptions about DHS’s CVE efforts. To dispel misconceptions, DHS should consider the Blue Campaign’s model to combat human trafficking. The Blue Campaign has formed strategic partnerships with law enforcement and community organizations to initiate public service announcements and provided training to more than 60,000 people. Blue Campaign staff is also in the process of developing resources and tools specifically for colleges and universities. Strategic partnerships, training, and sharing of best practices would be key components of a successful CVE campaign.

- 7. DHS should partner with K-12, colleges and universities, and local communities to determine their specific CVE needs (through mechanisms such as comprehensive needs assessment surveys), and share best practices on prevention, intervention, and mitigation strategies that consider unique variables (e.g. an institution's demographics, geographic location, and history) as well as lessons learned from other CVE activities.**

Justification: There is no one-size-fits-all CVE strategy for K-12 and colleges and universities. SMEs and non-governmental organizations have the knowledge and resources available for DHS to create tools such as a comprehensive needs assessment. Once campus officials have identified unique needs, DHS can facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned to improve CVE efforts.

- 8. DHS should coordinate with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to adapt existing campus safety tools, such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), to address potential threats of violent extremism.**

Justification: DOJ, particularly its Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services, has substantial institutional knowledge in managing campus safety and community-oriented policing program proposals. In this context, DHS's value is its unique potential to take promising violence prevention practices, such as threat assessments, crisis intervention training, and behavioral intervention teams, and adapt them for CVE use.

While the aforementioned practices focus on CVE practitioners as well as individuals vulnerable to radicalization, colleges and universities should also consider CVE best practices meant to address the physical campus environment. CPTED is a widely accepted methodology to improve campus safety. Campus public safety officers use CPTED to recommend designs and modifications to the physical campus environment and infrastructure to deter crime. Approximately 45 years of research on this crime prevention concept indicates that campuses can deter potential acts of violent extremism (e.g. access control, addition of barriers, or modifications to roadways, lighting, and surveillance). For example, barricades at an event could mitigate a vehicle attack on a crowd.

- 9. DHS should promote and enable forums for sharing CVE research and best practices, including promotion of existing CVE-specific and CVE-relevant conferences.**

Justification: Non-governmental organizations currently offer many credible CVE events and opportunities. To avoid duplication of effort, DHS should promote non-governmental CVE conferences and forums that align with its strategy.

10. DHS OCP should utilize academic research to establish an international, comparative database of successful CVE programs with an educational component.

Justification: Specifically, DHS should explore the national deradicalization programs in Germany, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and international collaborative efforts under the United Nations (UN) umbrella—such as the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). DHS should support an online comparative database of successful education-oriented CVE programs, including drawing from comparative country experiences, as a way to advance knowledge and practice in this domain.

11. DHS should establish a grant to fund the development of empirical databases to address gaps in understanding radical ideologies that could lead to violence, the contributing factors in radicalization and violent extremists' recruitment strategies and group dynamics.

Justification: In addition to the University of Maryland National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Global Terrorism Dataset, DHS should prioritize, in future engagement and support, the development of empirical datasets to address some of the well-known gaps in research needed to understand dynamics of extremism and radicalization, especially as these issues pertain to homeland security and defense.

12. With input from academic SMEs, DHS should provide all CVE-funded research and initiatives with policy-based definitions of key operative terms, many of which are drawn from legislation (e.g. violent extremism, terrorism, countering violent extremism, resilience, radicalization, and disengagement).

Justification: Research is often conducted under various terminologies and includes such issues as organized political violence and inspiring ideologies; social and political movement theory; irregular actors and asymmetric warfare; correlations, causes, and motivations for terrorism; and the range of organized groups and terrorist organizations and their traits. Common terminology and definitions for CVE-funded research and programs, aligned with formal evaluation metrics, will strengthen overall CVE evaluation, including comparison of program outcomes.

13. DHS should fund research on the development of evaluation measures for CVE-funded projects with K-12 and college and university partnerships and components. This includes formative, summative, process, outcome, and impact monitoring.

Justification: DHS S&T has several ongoing and planned efforts to develop appropriate impact measures for CVE programs. However, none of these efforts are focused specifically on K-12 or college and university partnerships. Given the unique needs of educational institutions, S&T should build on its current research to create evaluation criteria for projects specific to K-12 and colleges and universities.

Tasking 2

How to create strategic partnerships between DHS, colleges and universities, and the K-12 community to encourage students to participate in CVE-related academic programs and research efforts.

Findings

- A. **Colleges and universities are becoming increasingly involved in CVE research and academic programs.** Many universities and colleges have established programs or mechanisms in place for CVE research, including: Syracuse University, George Washington University, University of Maryland, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, Stanford University, and University of Michigan. Additionally, DHS engages colleges and universities in CVE through the Peer-to-Peer: Challenging Extremism Program, a public-private partnership with EdVenture Partners and Facebook. The program has engaged more than 5,000 students at 250 colleges and universities across 30 states to harness creative talents of university students to create a social or digital initiative, product, or online CVE tool.
- B. **Interdisciplinary social science researchers have devoted substantial efforts before and after the events of 9/11 to investigate core research questions associated with violent extremism.** Research is often conducted under various terms in diverse disciplinary and topic areas. Interdisciplinary fields and subfields include: terrorism studies, political violence, international relations, political science, criminology, anthropology, social psychology, and cognitive behavior. Topic areas include organized political violence and inspiring ideologies, social and political movement theory, irregular actors and asymmetric warfare, causes and motivations for terrorism, the traits and recruitment strategies of terrorist organizations, ‘big data’ approaches to global terrorist incidents, and cognitive phases of violent extremism.
- C. **Research suggests Holocaust education can be an effective CVE tool for K-12.** The purpose of Holocaust education, as described by Florida’s Public K-12 Education Code (1003.42(2)(g)), is to examine the history of the Holocaust as “the systematic, planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany,” many of “the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping,” and “what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.” These objectives, while not CVE-specific, contribute to desired outcomes of CVE programs. Holocaust education resources are available across several states’ K-12 curricula, DOS Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

- D. **Preliminary research suggests drug, violence, and gang prevention and intervention programs could be leveraged to include CVE.**¹⁶ The Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) is an example of a program with strategic partnerships with law enforcement, local communities, and families with a goal to deter specific unhealthy behaviors by youth. GREAT has been proven to reduce the likelihood that a student who participates in the program will join a gang.¹⁷
- E. **Research shows that women, especially mothers and teachers, are an effective deterrent of violent extremism.** UN Security Council Resolution 1325 passed in October 2000 called for full integration of women into all efforts regarding conflict resolution and post conflict implementation.¹⁸ Women’s involvement in CVE includes constructing the conditions of society to foster peace through education reconciliation and above all the restoration of community life. In many minority U.S. communities, women are often isolated from the wider community due to poor language skills, limited education, and restriction due to social and religious customs. CVE programs promoted by DOS show that women have the proven potential to build community resilience and challenge extremist ideologies that could lead to violence. Programs empowering women to be engaged in CVE efforts have potential benefits in other areas, such as reducing human trafficking, domestic and sexual violence, substance abuse, and gangs.

Recommendations

1. **DHS should establish a grant to fund the development and evaluations of curricula and teacher training for CVE applications. DHS should prioritize evaluations of best practices in K-12 Holocaust education and drug and gang resistance education.**

Justification: In Holocaust education, best practices could be combined with opportunities to listen to victims of violent extremism—whether mothers’ groups of foreign terrorist fighters in Europe, or family members or survivors of terrorist attacks (e.g. 9/11). In addition, organizations such as Life After Hate, which work to rehabilitate former extremists, could be a partner to provide students with opportunities to hear the perspective of a successfully rehabilitated extremist. CVE lessons for K-12 students will be more impactful by giving a human face to the learning material. In addition, DHS may want to engage in direct education-related outreach efforts by participating in student-led and student-oriented educational programs. DHS could design and support simulation competitions, such as Model UN or Army-War College Campus Security simulations, with CVE topics such as radicalization or recruitment.

In drug and gang resistance education, DHS should consider DOJ’s Bureau of Justice Assistance programs (DOJ-BJA) for CVE applications. DOJ programs emphasize rehabilitation, an underexplored research area of CVE. Drug, violence, and gang prevention programs could offer best practices for disengagement from ideologies that could lead to violence. DOJ programs may also offer insights into prevention by addressing specific risk factors that increase the “likelihood” that a young person will engage in drugs, violence or gang-related activity.¹⁹

- 2. DHS should initiate a CVE scholarship, internship, or fellowship program that supports students during their collegiate careers in return for commensurate federal service.**

Justification: DHS should play a role in encouraging student participation in CVE-specific and relevant academic programs. Student engagement through a scholarship, internship, or fellowship program would support DHS in identifying and developing the next generation of CVE specialists.

- 3. DHS should establish a Center of Excellence (COE) on CVE or expand current counterterrorism-focused COEs to include additional CVE research and programs.**

Justification: Financial resources are necessary to create and expand CVE research. The DHS S&T COEs develop multidisciplinary, customer-driven, homeland security science and technology solutions and help train the next generation of homeland security experts. DHS should provide resources to diverse college and university programs and prioritize financial support for COEs that can conduct longitudinal CVE studies.

- 4. The Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security should include opportunities to share research and best practices on CVE as part of its annual Summit.**

Justification: In addition to engaging academic SMEs and community leaders, conferences should involve students to encourage participation in CVE research and academic programs. DHS officials should also include community-based and K-12 seminars or workshops, where students and teachers could present their work. As a result, DHS will be able to better address misconceptions about CVE, encourage student research, and promote CVE internship and job opportunities.

- 5. DHS S&T should add a CVE research area to further examine the under-explored positive roles that women, especially mothers and teachers, play in community-based efforts to prevent entry into violent extremism.**

Justification: DOS has recognized successful international programs that leverage mothers and women in CVE activities in their local communities. In the U.S., women often attend DHS Community Awareness Briefings. Additional research on the role of women in CVE would benefit DHS in its current engagement in local communities.

- 6. DHS S&T should establish a grant program for research on potential CVE applications to existing programs and curricula.**

Justification: Our findings suggest that members of many campuses and local communities already work together on activities that promote CVE-positive outcomes, even if they are not labeled as "CVE." For example, some communities are actively involved in racial reconciliation efforts, such as the Greensboro Truth and Community

Reconciliation Project, which included the active participation of local colleges and universities. The outcomes of these initiatives, while not intended for or framed in the language of CVE, nonetheless have important secondary effects of reducing the social legitimacy of violence. The Greensboro case is an example of how to productively address social grievances that could be exploited by violent extremists.

In a similar vein, the American Democracy Project and The Democracy Commitment provide a national platform for 4-year institutions and community colleges, respectively, to teach democratic thinking and skills. These programs are CVE-relevant and have the potential to be CVE-specific through existing programs including: Campus Conversations, Stewards of Place, and Civic Learning—Bridging Cultures.

Tasking 3

How DHS can help campuses integrate with local communities to establish CVE initiatives and partnerships.

Findings

- A. **The federal government and DHS’s current CVE strategy is premised upon the need for community partnerships.** Local communities play a role in identifying individuals on a pathway toward radicalization to violence. The “first preventers” under this strategy are community practitioners with specialized skills in human services (e.g. mental health, education, social services, and pastoral counseling).
- B. **Community and law enforcement officials have voiced concern that prioritizing CVE could come at the cost of addressing more common public safety issues affecting local communities.** While an act of violent extremism is damaging to a local community, occurrences are rare. More prominent issues communities often face and prioritize include domestic, youth, and gang violence.
- C. **Most incentive structures within institutions of higher education do not reward engagement with the local community.** Community outreach and engagement is often not counted within a faculty awards and promotion system.²⁰ As one study notes, “Untenured faculty are more likely to receive promotions for publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals than for demonstrating an active commitment to addressing community problems. Faculty are thus reluctant to apply their expertise to community-based concerns. It is too professionally risky.”²¹
- D. **Local communities are involved in few CVE-specific activities, but they are very involved in CVE-relevant activities.** There are a few civil society organizations that are directly working with local communities around the U.S. to engage in CVE-specific programming. Some examples include the *Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) model*, originally developed by the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE),²² and *ExitUSA* run by Life After Hate, an

organization of former Neo-Nazis helping individuals stay away from and exit racist far-right movements in North America. These organizations and their programs focus on at least one or more of the four CVE lines of effort. Outside of formalized efforts, communities often informally participate in activities that are CVE-specific, but have not traditionally been labeled “CVE.” For instance, for decades Christian ministers in the U.S. South and rural Midwest were engaged in pastoral care and outreach to members of their congregations and local communities, who included supporters of the Ku Klux Klan and violent anti-abortion extremist movements. These efforts ranged from raising awareness about the dangers of online hate movements to engaging crisis counseling-type activities with individuals who disclosed their intent to commit acts of ideologically-motivated violence. Similar efforts appear to also be taking place in U.S. Muslim communities.²³

- E. **CVE-specific partnerships between communities and campuses in the U.S. appear to be at an embryonic, but growing stage.** One example is the University of Maryland’s *START Program Innovation and Design Thinking* course. Combining classroom and experiential learning, the course teaches both core concepts of CVE and “design thinking,” a collaborative innovation and problem solving methodology. As they are learning during the semester, teams of students are paired with community organizations and other civil society partners engaged in CVE-specific activities to develop blueprints for new programs and campaigns. At the end of the course, representing a mix of academic experts, government policymakers, and community practitioners, a panel of experts judges the teams’ proposals.²⁴

- F. **CVE-relevant campus-community partnerships, such as student service learning, are more prevalent.** Student service learning programs that address longstanding grievances in local communities, such as the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Project²⁵ or Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative Creative Writing Project,²⁶ are examples of CVE-relevant programs. One of the benefits of these programs is providing healthy outlets for young people to explore their civic identities and identify lawful and effective ways to create social change. While not CVE-specific, program outputs can support CVE-positive outcomes.

- G. **Public-private partnerships (P3s) are proven to improve public services through enhanced capabilities (e.g. new technology).** After the financial crisis of 2008, P3s and cross-sector collaboration strategies have become highly valuable in public policy and public affairs.²⁷ In addition to early statements of P3 utility by the World Bank and the Government Accountability Office (GAO),²⁸ several agencies have taken the lead in developing administrative systems hospitable for P3s—whether building a security vetting mechanism for potential nonprofit and private sector partners at the State Department’s Secretary’s Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP) or changing federal regulations to encourage collaboration at USAID’s Global Development Alliance (GDA), or relying on private sector technology and innovation to better provide public services and operational efficiency at FEMA. Since 2009, S/GP in particular has a track record of strengthening its core mission areas (U.S. defense, diplomacy, and development) by

leveraging the core business assets, expertise, and resources to enhance impact across the private sector, civil society, and government.

Recommendations

1. **DHS should engage community leaders and academic researchers in CVE-specific and CVE-relevant disciplines as key stakeholders in the development and implementation of DHS’s CVE strategy. Engagement should occur through mechanisms such as standing roundtable discussions.**

Justification: The federal government’s current CVE strategy is premised on the need for building strategic partnerships with local communities. As DHS’s webpage on CVE notes, “Building relationships based on trust with communities is essential to this effort.”²⁹ Despite this stated importance of partnerships, there have been proposals to change aspects of CVE that, if not carefully weighed and informed by critical stakeholder input, may cause unintended negative consequences. For example, efforts to narrow the focus of CVE efforts to a single religious, political, or cultural group, if implemented, is likely to further harm relationships with intended audiences.

2. **DHS should continue expanding its move toward an “ideologically ecumenical” CVE approach in practice and ensure its research and grant funding are comprehensive to address all forms of violent extremism, regardless of ideology, focusing not on radical thought or speech, but on preventing violence.**

Justification: Research suggests there is no single pathway and no single factor that appears to facilitate an individual’s entry into violent extremism. Evidence also suggests that for CVE to be successful, in the context of community-campus partnerships and beyond, it needs to take a “big tent” approach in terms of the types of violent extremism being addressed. While actors associated with Al-Qa’ida and ISIS pose significant threats to the U.S., they are not the only violent extremists seeking to do harm. Data from START found that from 2001-2016, far-right extremists have committed 89 acts of violent extremism compared to 31 by Islamist extremists.³⁰ Yet despite improvements made, a recent study of U.S. Attorney Offices showed that their CVE activities are primarily focused on Islamist extremism (71%), compared to far-right extremism (47%), antigovernment extremism (46%), and environmental extremism (40%).³¹ The perception that CVE efforts are primarily focused on a single group has resulted in charges of discrimination and criticisms that serious threats from other domestic violent extremists are being ignored.

Moreover, insights from START’s Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization project suggest that a disproportionate focus on any particular community runs the risk of further facilitating entry into violent extremism. It notes, “Programs that place an undue focus on particular communities are likely to be counterproductive by exacerbating feelings of collective victimization. Successful programs, on the other hand, will be tailored to specific ideological groups and sub-groups, and will address the underlying psychological and emotional vulnerabilities that make individuals open to extremist

narratives.”³² For example, DHS officials in Denver, Colorado work with multiple racial, religious, and ethnic communities to combat several forms of violent extremism, including white supremacy, anarchist, militia extremist, Al-Qaida, and ISIS-related actors.

3. **DHS should broaden its CVE engagement with colleges and universities and local communities to include resilience building and awareness of public safety issues.**

Justification: Compared to other types of violent crime, violent extremism is a high-impact, but rare-occurring event. As a result, some critics question the utility of encouraging local communities to make CVE a priority when other, frequently occurring challenges demand attention on a daily basis. The factors associated with entry into violent extremism often parallel other non-ideological forms of violence, such as school rampage shootings. Similarly, online violent extremist recruitment techniques appear to be analogous to “grooming” tactics used by pimps, sex traffickers, and child sex predators. These findings suggest that DHS policies should draw from existing practices in similar contexts to build community awareness of and resilience to violent extremism.

4. **DHS should modify future CVE research funding solicitations to include explicit research transition requirements such as a plan for providing briefings to the local community and community-based organizations.**

Justification: Colleges and universities are often regarded as trusted brokers of information in their local communities. However, most incentive structures within colleges and universities do not reward engagement with the local community. Community engagement requirements within grant funding solicitations would provide an incentive that aligns with many college and university performance evaluation systems. The “research transition” plan requirement is common in federal research solicitations. DHS could review examples of how federally-sponsored studies have required a plan to make research accessible to a larger, non-academic audience. An example of university engaging in proactive outreach to the public at-large is Bay Path University’s “Community Outreach on Deradicalization and Radical Behaviors.” The effort involves public presentations at local community colleges in Massachusetts where students, community members, law enforcement officials, and professors can hear expert opinion on CVE in a neutral space.³³ DHS can encourage similar efforts through its existing research grant vehicles. This action would also mitigate results of the finding that misconceptions about DHS’s role in CVE are common.

5. **DHS OCP should develop a sector-specific CVE public-private partnership database.**

Justification: To facilitate successful CVE partnerships, including those involving educators, DHS should take advantage of comparable government agency public-private partnership resources and identify a database of potential partners in CVE-related areas. Many organizations working in the CVE domain possess valuable practical knowledge, a track record of success, and community connections that could benefit DHS—whether by

acting as mediators between government, law enforcement, communities, and schools, or by reporting successful program models and outcomes back to communities.

6. To destigmatize the distribution of CVE funds, DHS should explore the option of using third party intermediaries to distribute CVE grants.

Justification: DHS should explore the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Minneapolis as an example.³⁴ Third party intermediaries should be trusted partners in the community. The recent CVE grants offered by OCP, while successful in terms of the high number of applications received from community-oriented entities, nonetheless proved to be controversial because some critics claim such efforts “unnecessarily stigmatize communities, securitize relationships, and raise questions about the government’s true intentions.”³⁵ Given research on feelings about CVE stigmatizing the intended audience, expert recommendations to focus on CVE-relevant programs, and a finding that local communities’ CVE-specific activities are at an embryonic, but growing stage, DHS could benefit from trusted third parties to distribute CVE grant funds.

7. DHS should require state and local law enforcement agencies applying for CVE training grants to participate in DHS’ CVE train-the-trainer program to ensure training material that is customized by local agencies meets DHS standards.

Justification: In previous years there have been public controversies of the quality of CVE training material, often failing to adequately distinguish lawful political and religious beliefs from unlawful criminal behaviors. It is uncertain whether some of these flawed trainings were paid for using DHS grant funds. In response to public outcry, DHS FEMA issued Policy Bulletin #373 relating to quality of CVE training and included a 2-page document of guiding principles to assess the quality of training material.³⁶ To further enhance the quality of training, OCP and Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, in partnership with FLETC and a multidisciplinary group of external SMEs, developed a train-the-trainer program using a curriculum that is research-based, but also actionable in the field. Upon satisfactory completion of the program, which includes tests and quizzes to assess learners’ aptitude and understanding of the subject matter, participants are certified by DHS to train their agencies on CVE.

APPENDIX A: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICER

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SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

Eric Barron (Co-Chair) – President, Pennsylvania State University

Eric Kaler (Co-Chair) – President, University of Minnesota

David Dooley – President, University of Rhode Island

Carol Leary – President, Bay Path University

William Banks – Professor, Syracuse University

Alejandro Beutel – Researcher, University of Maryland

Laurie Blank – Professor, Emory University

Edwin Book – Chief of Police, Santa Fe College

Peter Forster – Associate Dean, Pennsylvania State University

Co-chair, Partnership for Peace Combatting Terrorism Working Group

Seamus Hughes – Deputy Director of the Program on Extremism, George Washington University

Spoma Jovanovic – Professor, University of North Carolina Greensboro

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Telisha Soto – Bay Path University

Samantha Weirman – Pennsylvania State University

APPENDIX B: REFERENCES

¹ 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.

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