FACT SHEET

A Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategies

INCORPORATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM INTO VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS

Developed by a collaborative of non-governmental and governmental stakeholders from the Greater Boston region

February 2015

BACKGROUND

In 2014, a range of stakeholders[1] from the Greater Boston area, with the support of the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security and National Counterterrorism Center, began the development of a locally-driven framework that promotes multi-disciplinary solutions to countering violent extremism. The framework will serve as a foundation to assist various communities build resilience and capacity to prevent individuals, including young people, from being inspired and recruited by violent extremists. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts has had a coordinating role in this process.

A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The locally-driven framework has been developed by a collaborative of non-governmental, governmental and academic stakeholders from the Greater Boston region. Contributions were made through in-person meetings, phone conversations, emails and other written correspondence. Working Group meetings were held on a regular basis to work through issues and craft an approach that could be customized based on the needs of those implementing the framework. Throughout the process, the Collaborative has worked to clarify the definition and approach of *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)*; to better understand the local challenges associated with providing services to vulnerable individuals; and to develop a framework that can be implemented by a range of non-governmental and governmental stakeholders. Identifying language and initiatives that promote resilience, respect and partnership has been particularly important to the Collaborative.

WHAT DOES THE FRAMEWORK INCLUDE

The framework contains sample problem areas, goals and solutions which will allow Massachusetts communities the flexibility to define their problem areas, create achievable goals and objectives, and develop realistic implementation plans. The suggested solutions provide ample options so that organizations and agencies will have a better understanding of the types of issues to be considered. Some may look to the framework as a starting point to help enhance existing comprehensive programs. Some may read the framework and better understand how their existing efforts can help to prevent individuals from being inspired and recruited by violent extremists.

WHAT ARE THE FOCUS AREAS

There are a number of violent extremist ideologies that are based in politics, religion or economics. The framework developed by the Collaborative in the Greater Boston region does not focus on any one form of violent extremism and does not target any one community. The Collaborative thoughtfully explored a variety of areas that have presented particular challenges with preventing violent extremism.

PROBLEM ONE: Some young people may be at greater risk of feeling isolated and alienated, making them more vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists.

PROBLEM TWO: Providing services to individuals before mobilization[2] toward violent extremism is challenging when there is a lack of understanding regarding violent extremism and limited intervention programs.

PROBLEM THREE: Social media and other media platforms are being used to recruit individuals to join extremist groups and to encourage individuals to engage in violence.

PROBLEM FOUR: U.S. policy and events around the globe can frustrate, anger and, at times, influence some to think that there is no effective alternative other than to express grievances or solidarity through the use of violence.

PROBLEM FIVE: Distrust between government and non-government hinders collaboration and effective decision making and problem solving.

PROBLEM SIX: Lack of knowledge in mainstream society regarding religions, cultures and thought systems which are unfamiliar or are maligned in the media contributes to poor perceptions that fuel and mutually reinforce fear and estrangement.

PROBLEM SEVEN: Individuals convicted of hate crimes and terrorism offenses require specialized support and services before and after release from prison.

NEXT STEPS

Considerable energy has been devoted to developing a consensus framework that can be customized and implemented broadly. The next immediate steps in the process will be to identify resources for implementation, establish a well-coordinated implementation plan and develop performance measurement tools. Among other things, enhancing training and technical assistance, expanding programs and services, increasing youth dialogues and developing a resource guide will be prioritized.

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[1] Stakeholders include mental health professionals, representatives of non-profit organizations, faith-based leaders, education administrators, academic advisors and government agencies, including local, state and federal law enforcement.

[2] Mobilization is a process by which radicalized individuals take action to prepare for or engage in violence or material support for violence to advance their cause. "*Radicalization dynamics: A primer" National Counterterrorism Center, September 2010.*