START

NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE
STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

Reframing CVE as a Multidisciplinary Approach
to Promoting Community Safety

OVERVIEW

Lessons learned from mental health and education fields indicate that the United States needs to move beyond a criminal justice approach to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and to instead build a multidisciplinary approach to promoting community safety which includes addressing violent extremism, as well as the other salient forms of violence that afflict communities.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The overall goal of CVE is, "to stop those most at risk of radicalization from becoming terrorists." Generally speaking, CVE can be understood as "a realm of policy, programs, and interventions designed to prevent individuals from engaging in violence associated with radical political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies and groups." CVE aims to address violent extremism in all its forms, regardless of ideology.

CHALLENGES OF CURRENT CVE APPROACH

However, CVE has run into significant resistance from some Muslim American communities. CVE grew out of the recognition that counterterrorism approaches were not adequate for preventing radicalization to violence and that community-based approaches were needed. However, many community members are resistant to CVE due to past targeting, stigmatization, and stereotyping of Muslim American communities. Our experience in participatory research, a technique used in certain public health scenarios, suggests that part of the difficulty has been that community-based prevention and intervention of violent extremism does not adequately fit under a criminal justice framework, and CVE programming has been too narrowly tailored to violent extremism, when other forms of targeted violence are of equal or greater concern to communities. Furthermore, CVE initiatives have not yet adequately engaged mental health professionals and educators.

PROJECT GOALS

This study began with the recognition that CVE needs more than simply a name change and sought to build knowledge that could inform changes in policies and programs. The study was designed to:

- Identify lessons learned from the mental health and education fields that could contribute to moving beyond CVE as a criminal justice framed approach, to one of enhancing community resilience to all-hazards.
- Delineate how professionals from the mental health and education fields could best become involved in multidisciplinary approaches to promoting community safety.

Unlike a criminal justice approach, basing violence prevention efforts in mental health and education approaches offers significant promise in building community participation and buy-in, the necessary foundation for community-based initiatives.

METHOD

This project involved a review of education and mental health literature by a multidisciplinary team inclusive of education and mental health professionals (N=5). The search focused on English language literature post-1985. An iterative consensus process was used to identify key concepts and best practices that could potentially contribute to the development of healthy, resilient communities and counter targeted violence.

Multiple relevant themes from education and mental health were identified and integrated into one overall framework. The results of the literature review were then presented and discussed at a two-day meeting, supported by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate's Office of University Programs and comprised of experts from education, mental health, law enforcement, federal agencies and Muslim communities (N = 25). This convening led to a revised framework, report, and other materials for dissemination.

REFRAMING

CHANGE	the conversation to be about strengthening communities and fostering community resilience rather than securitizing and surveilling them.
MOVE	beyond criminal justice approaches to CVE to build a broader approach to community safety that utilizes public health and psychosocial approaches.
SHIFT	to developing healthy, resilient communities that are resistant to a spectrum of violent threats.
EXPAND	beyond a focus on radicalization to violence to a focus on a spectrum of targeted violence inclusive of radicalization to violence, but also other violent threats such as gang violence, workplace violence, hate crimes, and domestic violence.
DRAW	on the collaborative resources of community members, educators, mental health professionals, and law enforcement.
BUILD	on individual, family, and community resilience and strengths.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

EMPOWER	communities to define for themselves their most crucial concerns regarding targeted violence and to generate solutions that will build healthy and resilient communities.
PARTNER	with community members to solve community concerns in the local context.
MAINTAIN	collaborative networks of community members, educators, mental health professionals, and law enforcement to ensure availability of resources.
DESIGN	and implement initiatives in partnership and in continued close collaboration with communities.
FOSTER	successful community-led approaches.
GIVE	communities and their youth a voice in how to prioritize and organize actions intended to make them strong.
OBTAIN	community acceptance of and support for any proposed services.
FOCUS	on communities' desires to provide alternatives to arrest, prosecution, and incarceration.
PROMOTE	leadership and ownership of initiatives by community-based agencies and individuals.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

FORM	multidisciplinary teams that incorporate individuals from different disciplines (e.g., education, mental health, religion, law enforcement, etc.) who work collaboratively to address the multilevel and multidimensional needs of persons and communities.
EMPOWER	community-based multidisciplinary teams to lead efforts to address the needs and build on resources of local communities.
HOLD	regular multidisciplinary conferences for law enforcement, academics, educators, clinicians, community advocates and others.
RELY	on stakeholders other than law enforcement to disseminate information and offer training and resources.
RAISE	knowledge across disciplines through cross-training of all relevant disciplines and spheres, including law enforcement, mental health, and education professionals.
DEVELOP	parenting and peer education activities which offer training for families and community members related to awareness, early warning signs, and procedures for enacting supports for those intent on violent action.
SEPARATE	surveillance and enforcement from prevention and intervention.

RESEARCHERS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Stevan Weine, M.D. | Professor | College of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry |University of Illinois at Chicago |
312-355-5407 | smweine@uic.edu
Project Team: Heidi Ellis, Ph.D.; Chief Ronald Haddad; Alisa Miller; Rebecca Lowenhaupt; Chloe Polutnik